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COMMUNITY BOARD 11 STATEMENT OF DISTRICT NEEDS FISCAL YEAR 2016

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District Geography and Demographics

Community Board 11 in Manhattan is bounded by East 96th Street and East 142nd Street, from Fifth Avenue to the East/Harlem River, and includes Randall's and Wards Islands.

According to the 2010-2012 American Community Survey (3 Year Estimates for Public Use Microdata Area 03804 in New York), there are an estimated 120,814 residents of East Harlem. The median age in East Harlem is 32.2 years with an ethnic composition as follows:

Race/Ethnicity	Population	Percentage of Total
Hispanic/Latino	55,836	46.2%
Puerto Rican	28,779	23.8%
Mexican	10,985	9.1%
Other	16,072	13.3
Black/African American	36,467	30.2%
White	16,880	14.0%
Asian	9,104	7.5%

Large increases in the population of Mexican, African and Asian immigrants has resulted in an increase in the percentage of foreign-born residents in East Harlem, with 21.1% foreign-born in 2000 and 26.0% foreign-born in 2012.¹

City Properties and Land Use

Background

In the 1970's and 1980's, the City of New York seized ownership of several vacant and underutilized abandoned properties throughout East Harlem. In the 1990's and 2000's most of those properties were developed through various City programs, primarily through partnerships between the Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD) and private developers. The new housing developed through HPD included several low-income housing developments, mixed-income housing developments (50% market, 30% middle-income, 20% low-income), affordable cooperatives and owner-occupied town houses. As a result of this very active period of development of affordable housing over the past two decades, only a small number of vacant City-owned properties remain in East Harlem.

The New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) also owns several under-utilized properties in East Harlem adjacent to existing public housing, which they are actively considering for development to help raise capital for the financially strapped public authority. These in-fill sites are currently used as parking lots for tenants or as passively consumed open space. A partnership of Harlem RBI and Jonathan Rose Companies is currently completing a mixed-use development on one such site located in Washington Houses. NYCHA has indicated that other sites in East Harlem have already been identified for possible future development.

Affordable housing developments which are sponsored by the New York City Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD) and/or the New York City Housing Development Corporation (HDC) must provide a local community preference for 50% of the available housing during an initial

¹ "State of New York City's Housing and Neighborhoods in 2013", Furman Center for Real Estate and Urban Policy – NYU, 2014, p. 108

lottery selection process. Unfortunately, many of the recently developed projects have not achieved the 50% community preference target, usually because of a combination of inadequate local marketing of the units, not receiving a sufficient quantity of local applications and/or unnecessarily disqualifying local applicants.

Recommendations

NYCHA must work with Community Board 11 to plan for the potential use of under-utilized in-fill lots throughout the district. Funding should be allocated by local elected officials or private sources to hire consultants who will work with the Community Board and NYCHA to create a development plan for these sites prior to the issuance of a request for proposals to develop these properties.

New development in East Harlem must serve a variety of needs and uses. Residential buildings should target a mixture of household incomes including low, moderate and middle income. Buildings that only have luxury market rate housing will further gentrify the community and displace long term residents. Buildings that only include low-income housing will further concentrate poverty. Mixed income buildings will ensure local residents have access to affordable housing and the opportunity to benefit from the exchange of social capital with more financially stable neighbors.

New development should also include family sized units with two or more bedrooms to accommodate local families looking for more comfortable housing. Developing more affordable homeownership opportunities will ensure that there are more residents with a vested interest in the quality of life of their blocks and community. Mixed-use developments should be supported that not only develop housing but also include commercial and even light manufacturing uses. Such mixed-use development will create jobs, diversify retail offerings and help support the rest of the building financially.

New development should include a higher number of accessible units that are move-in ready for Seniors and people with disabilities. The current standards of 5% and 2%, respectively, are insufficient to meet the increasing demand of East Harlem residents for accessible units. As such, we suggest that developers utilize the Universal Design Concept when designing their buildings as this will provide building owners and developers with ways to maximize their buildings responsiveness to an increasingly diverse residential marketplace. Buildings that are not usable by everyone grow more marginalized with each passing day and consequently may lose their relative value. Universal Design has become a cost-effective strategy for maintaining or enhancing the profitability of building inventories. Building construction, renovation and maintenance costs are more readily justified when all people benefit.

New developments should take advantage of green incentives and seek LEED certification to include energy efficient elements that will help keep costs down for tenants. Similar green incentives should be utilized by existing buildings.

To ensure that new developments sponsored by HPD achieve their 50% local community preference target, HPD and HDC should require all developers to adhere to the *Community Board 11 Affordable Housing Community Preference Guidelines*. These guidelines require the developer and its management company to host pre-marketing information seminars and financial education counseling workshops for prospective applicants. Guidelines require the developer and partners to work with Community Board 11 on a targeted outreach strategy which includes a project website. Public agencies that finance affordable housing should permit the expansion of income brackets, so that lower income applicants can qualify for the respective units.

Additionally, Community Board 11 requires developers and city agencies to adhere to our local hiring preference guidelines which set local hiring targets of 35% for pre-construction jobs, 35% for

construction and 50% for post-construction hiring, 50% of apprenticeship positions, as well as 35% of the total value of all contracts being awarded to local businesses.

Developmental and planning efforts must create sustainable communities for residents and families to live, work and shop locally. Reasonable housing costs and sufficient economic growth will create more disposable income, which can support local retail and commercial corridors.

Cultural Affairs

Background

Arts and culture are instrumental in building communities into vibrant and thriving entities. Working with leaders in political, business and civic positions, the East Harlem cultural community is on the rise with recent developments as outlined within this narrative.

This community is home to several theaters with the following seating capacities: Heckscher Theater (600 seats), The Red Carpet Theater (242), Julia De Burgos Cultural Center (180), The Poet's Den Theater (99), and National Black Theatre (242). Yet with over 1,000 available seats, local artists have difficulty procuring the venues and often resort to street locations, churches or community rooms to showcase their talents and productions.

The Heckscher Building and the Julia de Burgos Cultural Center are publicly-owned cultural/educational facilities and landmarked buildings but share their spaces with multiple tenants. The other three theaters have their locations entirely for the arts. The Harlem Arts and Educational Community Center LDC manages the Heckscher Building in which are located El Museo del Barrio, La Casa Herencia, Boys and Girls Harbor Harlem Center for Education and the NYC Department of Parks and Recreation.

The Julia de Burgos Cultural Center (JdBCC) provides local artists, arts organizations and the community with performance and exhibition space and programming in different forms, genres, media and styles. JdBCC shares a building with the Heritage School, which was previously administered by the New York City Economic Development Corporation (EDC). In 2013, EDC leased the building to the Hispanic Federation and a consortium of local artists which is in the process of upgrading the theater and exhibition space.

In August 2013, as jointly coordinated by El Museo and Councilmember Melissa Mark-Viverito, Los Muros Hablan, an international urban art festival, brought street artists, musicians and muralists together from Los Angeles, Puerto Rico and New York to install a series of public murals in East Harlem/El Barrio. Their mural exhibitions locations are listed on <http://www.losmuroshablannyc.com/>.

In 2014, El Barrio's Artspace at PS 109 will have created 90 affordable newly constructed spaces for artists to live and work. In addition, PS 109, a former public school building, will offer 13,000 square feet of community space that will house galleries, additional performance space and not-for profit office spaces. Minneapolis-based developer Artspace partnered with a local non-profit developer, El Barrio's Operation Fight Back, to build the project. This project was unanimously endorsed by CB11 who have been working with Artspace to ensure the 50% community preference goal for local artists is achieved.

The Caribbean Culture Center African Diaspora Institute (CCCADI) will be relocating to East Harlem. CCCADI was selected as the developers of the historic firehouse at 120 East 125th Street, which they are currently renovating and will be opening to the public in late 2015. This move places them strategically amidst the communities they aim to serve, while extending the rich cultural thoroughway of 125th Street

eastward. This new location will allow CCCADI to connect the African and African American communities of West and Central Harlem with the Latino populations historically residing in East Harlem.

While having such incredible cultural institutions, East Harlem does not have an arts and cultural activist organization to advocate and receive funding to cultivate and support local artists/groups and promote its wealth of cultural venues to a global market. Neighboring communities have groups such as the Harlem Arts Alliance, the Bronx Council on the Arts, and the Northern Manhattan Arts Alliance (Nomad) that serve this purpose for their area. East Harlem arts and culture groups have a need for such an association.

Recommendations

Funding is critical to the preservation and expansion of arts and culture programming for any community and foundation. We need to seek not only private and public partnerships, but creative ideas to secure necessary funding to sustain and grow arts, music talents of this community.

East Harlem needs an arts/cultural service organization to enhance, educate, and expand public interest in the arts and culture of East Harlem. The Department of Cultural Affairs (DCA) and/or the Upper Manhattan Empowerment Zone should provide seed funding to create this arts/cultural service organization. Once established and representative of a cross-section of the East Harlem community, the arts/cultural service organization should work to develop a comprehensive arts and cultural strategic master plan for the community.

An East Harlem Arts Alliance should at a minimum:

- reflect the diversity and heritage of the entire community
- serve as a centralized arts information center and distributing arts information through a newsletter , arts calendar, and job bank for artistic and cultural events
- advocate for East Harlem arts at the local, regional, state and national levels

The Community Board is working with local artists to develop an annual East Harlem Festival that will start in October 2015. There will be venues for art, music, theater and dance. The festival will span between El Museo, The Heckscher Building and Julia De Burgos. This will facilitate collection of much of the information addressed in the aforementioned points, and start the dialogue of a centralized arts organization among local artists. The project is in initial planning stages and funding avenues are being identified.

The Julia de Burgos Cultural Center needs additional capital funds from DCA, EDC and local elected officials for exterior streetscape and outdoor improvements, which include but are not limited to exterior LED signage communicating programming, public arts initiatives, way-finding systems, as well as improved landscaping and lighting.

CCADI's renovation and interactive technology retrofitting of the landmarked 125th Street Firehouse will require continual funding to meet their 2015 deadline and sustain ongoing operations.

DCA and local elected officials should continue to provide capital funds to preserve the city-owned Heckscher building as a vibrant hub for arts and education in East Harlem. Community Board 11 continues to support the tenants' efforts to seek funding to expand their educational programming for local youth, which will deepen understanding of the rich and diverse history of East Harlem.

The Museum of African Art on Museum Mile remains closed and is under new management as the New African Center. The African Center is the beginning of Museum Mile and indeed would be a welcomed tourist attraction. The City and DCA should work with and support the African Center to ensure it opens as expeditiously as possible.

In the 1990's, the Department of Cultural Affairs *Percent for Art Program* created and oversaw more than 100 public art projects across all five boroughs. The new Commissioner of the DCA was director of the Percent for Art Program in 1990's and should restore this program or a similar program. The Community Board will explore creative ideas using this concept in our Memorandum of Understanding with new construction projects and related private cultural activities in our community.

Cultural tourism offers a unique opportunity to help support and preserve local arts and culture while furthering economic development goals. The City's marketing and tourism agency, NYC & Company, should commit more resources to the promotion of East Harlem cultural offerings. Given the seating capacities of East Harlem theaters, NYC and Company should work with the local artists and theater owners to promote East Harlem as an Off Broadway site for local East Harlem artists and other aspiring city wide artists. This would clearly help to boost tourism to East Harlem. More DCA and NYC Co. joint collaboration with Community Board 11, local arts/cultural institutions is encouraged to develop additional tourism strategies.

As in other districts, NYC & Company should open a site in East Harlem and highlight the community's rich and distinct cultural identity on their website and related media outlets. NYC Department of Small Business Services Avenue NYC funding should continue for existing place-making and tourism efforts in East Harlem. EDC should encourage hotel development in East Harlem to promote tourism and job creation.

Economic Development

Background

According to the 2010 2012 American Community Survey (3 Year Estimates for Public Use Microdata Area 03804 in New York), the median household income of East Harlem is \$31,079 per year. Of the 98,625 working age residents of East Harlem, 51,102 people (or 52%) are either unemployed or not in the labor force. 47,523 residents are employed in the following industries:

Industry	Residents Employed	Percentage of Total Employed
Educational services, and health care and social assistance	14,354	30.2%
Arts, entertainment, and recreation, and accommodation and food services	6,550	13.8
Professional, scientific, and management, and administrative and waste management services	5,316	11.2
Retail trade	5,688	12.0
Finance/insurance, and real estate and rental/leasing	4,407	9.3
Other services, except public	2,840	6.0

administration		
Transportation and warehousing, and utilities	2,191	4.6
Public administration	1649	3.5
Construction	1373	2.9
Manufacturing	1255	2.6
Information	1240	2.6
Wholesale trade	625	1.3
Agriculture, forestry, fishing/hunting, mining	35	0.1

The Department of Small Business Services (SBS) funds the operation of a Harlem Workforce 1 Career Center that is supposed to serve the employment and training needs of East Harlem residents searching for work. Located at 215 West 125th Street, the Workforce 1 Career Center is sited to serve the entire Upper Manhattan area and has few formal partnerships with local East Harlem community based organizations, which are necessary to adequately serve our local residents. Other local employment/training providers based in East Harlem more regularly serve the needs of unemployed residents.

On March 12, 2014, approximately 60 East Harlem businesses were devastated in the aftermath of a gas explosion on Park Ave and 116th street that killed eight people and collapsed several buildings. The owners of businesses near the building explosion needed an immediate infusion of cash and ongoing legal and city agency services to reopen their businesses. The disruption as result of street closures and continual investigations to the area seriously hurt the corridor with the loss of customers, street safety and vibrancy.

East Harlem has active commercial corridors along East 125th Street, East 116th Street, East 106th Street, First Avenue, Second Avenue, Third Avenue and Lexington Avenue. There have been efforts to develop merchant associations and/or business improvement districts (BID's) along these corridors. As of this writing, only one merchant association has been established in 2013 for an active commercial East Harlem corridor – New Harlem East Merchant Association (NHEMA) on East 125th street which Community Board 11 supported in their successful Avenue NYC applications. Community Board 11 is currently working with various 116th street merchants and property owners and SBS Neighborhood Development Division with goal of establishing a 116th Street BID by 2015.

There are other local organizations that actively work to support local small businesses along commercial corridors – i.e., East Harlem Chamber of Commerce, Mexican Chamber of Commerce, Great Harlem Chamber of Commerce and East Harlem Restaurant and Bar Association. Many of these local organizations complain that the enforcement of City agency codes and regulations target local small businesses and their customers; thus threatens their financial viability.

The lack of retail diversity along commercial corridors causes local residents to purchase certain goods and services outside of the community. According to the “East Harlem Commercial Corridors Assessment” conducted by the Urban Technical Assistance Project for the East Harlem Business Capital Corporation, local East Harlem commercial corridors only capture 35% of the consumer expenditure potential of local residents and \$484 million in potential annual retail sales escape the community each year. Similarly, East Harlem Retail Analysis” prepared for Community Board 11 in 2010 found that residents shop locally for basic goods and services convenience stores, supermarkets, fast-food, pharmacies, dry cleaning, barber shops, hair salons, nails salons and discount. The same report found that

there is still a demand for local stores that provided entertainment services such as a movie theater, fitness/recreational services, sporting goods, books, electronics/computer goods and super markets with better quality foods.

To address the aforementioned issue and increase local spending and hiring within the community, Union Settlement in partnership with several non-profit and for profit businesses formed the East Harlem Community Alliance which will serve as a forum through which local organizations can create connections, share information, and continue to grow and thrive in the community. The Alliance has as its focus three initiatives: *Buy East Harlem*, *Hire East Harlem*, and *Serve East Harlem*.

As of 2012, only 14 firms in East Harlem were certified as a Minority and Women Owned Enterprise (MWBE). Many small businesses complain about the difficulty of the certification process, and therefore choose not to become a certified MWBE. As a result, local minority owned businesses cannot compete for contracting opportunities created by publicly sponsored development projects with MWBE targets.

Recommendations

East Harlem's workforce development infrastructure must address the needs of a large number of residents who require employment. Local employment and training organizations and the Department of Small Business Services should work to connect local residents to employment opportunities in growth industries and local development-based employment. SBS and the NYC Economic Development Corporation (EDC) should create and package incentives to attract growth industries to locate in East Harlem, with emphasis on attracting Science, Technology; Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) related businesses to open up additional career opportunities for local residents.

Local hospitals and medical facilities such as Mount Sinai Medical Center, Metropolitan Hospital, Harlem Hospital, and the Henry J. Carter Specialty Hospital & Nursing Facility should work with local workforce development providers to hire qualified local residents for employment – particularly for occupations that require minimal to moderate training and certification and pay living wages (such as nursing assistants, lab technicians/coordinators, medical billing, etc.). SBS must increase funding for training vouchers.

This funding would then be used by local residents for necessary advanced training and certification to compete for health care or STEM jobs opportunities. SBS should open an East Harlem Workforce 1 Career Center in the community to optimize our local residents' use of their services. Our local libraries can also be expanded to serve as workforce centers similar to those SBS opened in Brooklyn Central and Flushing libraries. In addition, we need to attract private workforce organizations (i.e. temp agencies, Maximus,) to open offices within the community.

The Department of Housing Preservation and Development and EDC must work with their development partners to ensure development in East Harlem benefits the community and creates employment opportunities for local residents. They must work with developers to ensure they adopt Community Board 11's local hiring targets – 50% of apprenticeship positions, 35% local for pre-construction employment, 35% local for construction related employment and 50% local for all post-construction jobs, as well as 35% of the total value of all contracts being awarded to local businesses. Project Labor Agreements should include local hiring targets and consequences for failure to achieve.

To reduce the income equality gap, the City of New York should continue through policy changes and relevant agencies ensure those who do business with the city expand opportunities that provide career

oriented jobs with union scale wages and benefits. Stakeholders should take concrete steps to recruit from traditionally underrepresented groups such as in East Harlem.

Small businesses constitute the majority of East Harlem's commercial sector and must be supported through the current difficult economic environment. SBS should expand local funding for Avenue NYC proposals. SBS must restore funding for the development of business improvement districts (BIDs) and prioritize proposals that organize BIDs on East 125th Street, East 116th Street, Third Avenue and East 106th Street. Avenue NYC funds should also be made available to create or expand merchant associations in East Harlem.

City agencies that regularly enforce codes and regulations which impact small businesses (such as the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, Department of Sanitation, Department of Consumer Affairs, Department of Buildings, NYPD, etc.) must create forums where local merchants can be educated on current and changing agency rules and solicit feedback from merchants with complaints of unfair treatment. Such agencies should also ensure that inspectors enforcing agency rules in East Harlem are bilingual (particularly Spanish speaking).

Public and private sources of funds should be made available to assist local businesses to become more energy efficient as a way to reduce their costs and support broader sustainability efforts.

The NYC Economic Development Corporation and Department of Small Business Services must streamline and simplify the MWBE certification process to encourage more local firms to certify.

EDC and SBS should partner with local small business associations and non-profit organizations to organize outreach efforts and provide MWBE certification workshops. They must also work to reduce barriers in the contract bidding process to increase MWBE participation.

To increase the number of young adults in the workforce the Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD) should expand funding for the Young Adult Internship Program, Summer Youth Employment Program, and In-School/Out-of-School Employment Program. DYCD, Department of Education and CUNY should create partnerships with East Harlem local middle and high schools to create science and technology career focused curriculums and internship opportunities.

Health and Human Services

Background

The environmental conditions in which community residents live and work have an enormous impact on our health and have led to several inequalities. East Harlem residents suffer from higher than average rates of disease and often lack access to reliable health care. They are more likely to die prematurely and have higher than normal rates of heart disease, obesity, diabetes, HIV/AIDS, asthma, teenage pregnancies and infant mortality. They are also more likely to be out of the workforce and receiving some form of public assistance and food stamps.

The following health related data was sourced from the NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene's (DOHMH) Community Health Profile for East Harlem in 2006.

Premature death (people that die before the age of 75) – of all NYC neighborhoods East Harlem had the second highest rate of death for people under the age of 75. Premature death is also measured by the number of years of potential life lost if a person dies early. Using that metric, the primary causes of premature death in East Harlem are:

- Heart Disease (17%) – 1,968 years lost
 - HIV-related (16%) – 1,923 years lost
 - Cancer (15%) – 1,776 years lost
 - Drug-related (7%) – 847 years lost
 - Homicide (5%) – 612 years lost
 - Other (40%) – 4,763 years lost
- TOTAL years of potential life lost – 11,889 years

Access to Health Care – 29% of East Harlem residents are without a primary care physician (NYC average 24%) and 27% of East Harlem residents are uninsured (NYC average of 18%). Of all NYC neighborhoods East Harlem had the highest avoidable hospitalization rate in 2004.

Tobacco, Alcohol and Drugs – 27% of East Harlem residents smoke (NYC average of 18%). The alcohol related hospitalization rate in East Harlem is 190% higher than the NYC average. The drug related hospitalization rate in East Harlem is 181% higher than the NYC average.

Heart Disease, Obesity and Diabetes – Heart Disease hospitalization rates in East Harlem were 45% higher than the NYC average. 31% of adults in East Harlem are obese (NYC average of 20%), which is the highest proportion of obese adults among all NYC neighborhoods. 13% of adults in East Harlem have diabetes (NYC average of 9%). Almost half (48%) of East Harlem residents report not exercising at all.

HIV/AIDS – East Harlem has the second highest HIV-related death rate in NYC, 277% higher than the City-wide average. The total number of people diagnosed with HIV in East Harlem is 144% higher than the NYC average. Only 27% of East Harlem adults who had more than one sex partner in the past year reported using a condom at their last sexual encounter (NYC average of 38%).

Asthma – The number of adults with asthma is 60% higher than the NYC average. The asthma hospitalization rates among adults are 200% higher, and among children 100% higher, than the NYC average. The asthma hospitalization rate in East Harlem is among the highest of all neighborhoods in New York City.¹

Births – The average birth rate among teen mothers in East Harlem is almost 90% higher than the NYC average. The infant mortality rate in East Harlem is 50% higher than the NYC average.

The following *social/economic* data was sourced from the 2006-2010 American Community Survey 5 Year Estimates for PUMA 03804 in New York:

- The number of people in East Harlem not in the labor force – 43,627
- Total number of households in East Harlem – 44,695
- The number of households in East Harlem receiving:
 - Social Security Income – 11,712 (26.2% of all households)
 - Supplemental Security Income – 6,176 (13.8% of all households)
 - Cash public assistance – 4,009 (9% of all households)
 - Food stamps – 11,457 (25.6% of all households)
- Percentage of people in East Harlem with income below the Federal poverty level – 32.5%

¹ “State of New York City’s Housing and Neighborhoods”, Furman Center for Real Estate and Urban Policy – NYU, 2013, p. 108

Recommendations

Adopt the New York State Health Improvement Plan: Prevention Agenda for 2013-2017 as a guide and template to address the Health Needs of the community.

Asthma

The high rates of adult and childhood asthma impact resident's ability to work and attend school. According to the Department of Environmental Protection, asthma rates are more closely correlated to poverty rates than the amount of particulate matter (PM) found in the air, though particulate matter does exacerbate asthma. Addressing issues core to the causes of poverty could potentially alleviate asthma rates.

The Department of Sanitation and the Metropolitan Transportation Authority should work to find alternate locations for the East Harlem Sanitation Garages and Bus Depots, which likely contribute to the airborne PM that triggers asthma. While they work to find viable alternate locations for these facilities, both agencies should immediately upgrade their existing East Harlem facilities and fleets with the most advanced indoor air filtration systems and zero emissions buses and sanitation trucks. The Department of Housing Preservation and Development and New York City Housing Authority should host a series of workshops to educate tenants and landlords on the various indoor triggers for asthma and how they can be mitigated, including pest control.

Obesity/Diabetes/Heart Disease

Various NYC agencies and local community based organizations should coordinate efforts to increase the availability of fresh and healthy foods in East Harlem

- Promote and market the City's FRESH program that is available in East Harlem to provide property and business owners zoning and tax incentives to open new grocery stores with fresh foods.
- Expand the DOHMH's healthy bodegas initiative in East Harlem.

Additional funding should be targeted to expand existing community-based peer-led interventions to promote weight loss and prevent diabetes, which have already produced effective results². The Department of Education should devote additional resources to develop physical education programs for all local schools and expand organized athletics. As many of our local ball fields are often permitted to user not local to the community, the Department of Parks and Recreation should identify regular times to make available local ball fields for "walk-on" community use (which would not require a permit). They should partner with local schools, churches and tenant associations to promote "walk-on" ball field use.

STD's/HIV/AIDS

The Department of Health and Mental Hygiene should make additional funding available to support local community groups that could manage HIV/AIDS more aggressively and promote treatment that extends life and reduces East Harlem's high rate of HIV-related deaths. DOHMH should partner with local tenant associations, community centers, senior centers and schools (through DOE) to promote STD prevention and condom use.

Health Care and Insurance

² "Results of a Pilot Diabetes Prevention Intervention in East Harlem, NYC: Project HEED", American Journal of Public Health, 2010 April; 100(S1): S232-S239.

Federal initiatives to expand health care to the uninsured must be supported locally to help reduce the high number of uninsured residents of East Harlem. Local, State and Federal officials must work together to increase Medicaid reimbursement rates so local hospitals that serve low-income residents don't suffer financially. DOHMH and the NYC Health and Hospitals Corporation should work to promote greater use of primary care physicians and expand the availability of urgent care programs to reduce the strain on local emergency rooms and decrease the number of avoidable hospital visits.

Human/Social Services – Poverty Alleviation

With so many East Harlem residents out of the labor force and receiving various forms of public assistance, government must refocus its approach from poverty maintenance to poverty alleviation. The NYC Human Resources Administration should partner with the Federal Social Security Administration to develop a pilot program in East Harlem with the goal of eliminating generational dependency on government benefits and shift resources away from transfer payments to human capital development. Funding should target successful early childhood education programs, local schools, job training programs and higher learning, and participants should work towards the goal of self-sufficiency to break the cycle of poverty.

Housing

Background

The housing stock of East Harlem is largely rent regulated, but with recent development of new housing, or renovation of existing housing, housing prices have appreciated substantially. The community has a total 39,422 units of occupied housing; of the renter occupied units 38.1% is public housing, 34.3% is stabilized housing, 16.5% is other regulated housing and 11.1% is unregulated housing.³

While the community has a large housing stock of affordable housing, much of it is in danger of being deregulated. The Regional Plan Association conducted a study in 2011 of expiring rent regulated buildings and found 12,500 units may become deregulated within the next 30 years (or 31.7% of the entire housing stock):

Year of Expiration	Number of Units
2010-2020	2,600
2020-2030	5,200
2030-2040	4,500
2040 and later	200
TOTAL	12,500

The deregulation of affordable housing is being driven by new development and increased property values. In 2012, East Harlem ranked third, with 497, among all neighborhoods city-wide for the number of units issued new certificates of occupancy.⁴ All the new development has led to the appreciation of housing values and subsequent increases in rent. Again East Harlem ranked number one City-wide in the index of housing price appreciation for 5+ family buildings.⁵

³ "East Harlem Rent Regulated Housing Inventory and Preservation Strategies", Regional Plan Association, July 2011, p. 7

⁴ "New York City's Housing and Neighborhoods", Furman Center for Real Estate and Urban Policy – NYU, 2012, p. 150

⁵ Ibid

There are still several opportunities for additional development in the community. Both the Manhattan Borough President and Picture the Homeless (PTH) have conducted studies identifying vacant lots and underutilized buildings. Many of the “tax payer” buildings that have ground floor commercial space and boarded up upper stories are located along the southern section of Third Avenue. According to PTH’s 2011 *Banking on Vacancy* report, there are a total of 143 vacant buildings and lots in East Harlem.⁶

At the same time, while the stock of affordable housing is under threat, the number of owner-occupied units in East Harlem is relatively low. In 2010, only 5.9% of housing units were owner-occupied and East Harlem’s homeownership rate ranked 54 of 59 neighborhoods.⁷

Recommendations

East Harlem has one of the highest concentrations of public housing in the City. While budget constraints have impeded the New York City Housing Authority’s (NYCHA) ability to make substantial capital investments in their existing public housing stock, the residents of our community should not have to endure less than adequate housing conditions from a public authority.

NYCHA must focus its efforts on replacing persistently broken elevators, improving outdoor lighting and installing cameras for safety. NYCHA tenants regularly complain about their inability to secure necessary repairs to their apartments. There must be more accountability and efficiency in how repairs are made. With long waiting lists of potential tenants, NYCHA must set aside capital funds to repair warehoused apartments that have been vacant for years.

NYCHA’s original purpose was to demolish old dilapidated tenement buildings and provide new clean housing for those in need of low cost temporary shelter or working families who couldn’t afford more expensive housing. Over the years the quality of NYCHA housing has deteriorated and persistently poor families without working adults are found more commonly living in public housing. NYCHA must redirect resources toward programs that assist in poverty alleviation instead of poverty maintenance.

NYCHA should pilot a demonstration project in East Harlem selecting one small NYCHA building with a strong tenant association and allowing them to manage their own building, toward the goal of self-sufficiency and possible homeownership. This would be similar to the Tenant Interim Lease Apartment Purchase Program (TIL) that gives Housing Development Fund Corporations (HDFCs) ownership of the building.

Using the data gathered through the Regional Plan Association report, buildings most at risk of rent deregulation based on the anticipated date of expiration must be addressed and supported. Community partners, local non-profit housing developers and the Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD) should contact building owners and tenant associations to communicate the anticipated date of deregulation and explain the potential impact on tenant rent. In consultation with HPD and pro-bono lawyers, community groups must work together with tenants to develop affordable housing preservation strategies for each building under threat of deregulation.

Several large developments within the community have been purchased by private equity firms that are deregulating affordable housing. Existing tenants of the newly deregulated buildings, as well as tenants of other poorly managed buildings, complain about poor housing conditions and have accused landlords

⁶ “Banking on Vacancy – Homelessness and Real Estate Speculation”, Picture the Homeless,

⁷ “New York City’s Housing and Neighborhoods”, Furman Center for Real Estate and Urban Policy – NYU, 2012, p. 142

of purposefully neglecting their responsibilities in order to push tenants out. Tenants regularly complain about broken appliances, holes in floors/walls, no heat or hot water and erroneous eviction notices when rent has been paid. Community advocates must work together to secure funding to hire dedicated lawyers to provide legal representation for tenants that are being harassed by landlords. Sources of potential funding include elected officials and private fundraising.

Ownership of many City-owned buildings has been transferred to resident occupants through the TIL program which works with residents of City-owned residential buildings to organize tenant associations to become managers of their own buildings. If self-management is successful, the building is then sold to the tenants for a nominal fee and converted into a HDFC cooperative. Unfortunately while the goals of the program were good, many of the TIL/HDFC buildings in East Harlem have fallen into disrepair and financial distress. As part of the TIL program, HPD and selected community partners are supposed to provide technical assistance in helping the HDFC buildings become self-sufficient. It is critical that HPD and the partners be more proactive in the participants' self-management to expedite the transfer of TIL/ANCP buildings into HDFC and provide need funding support to ensure the success of the HDFC's and the program.

As aforementioned, there remain many vacant properties or under-utilized buildings in East Harlem. It is imperative that the community, elected leaders and HPD work collaboratively to create the necessary incentive(s) for private property owners to upgrade their sites. These upgraded sites should include a balance of mixed-income affordable apartments and the community should receive preference for 50% of the newly developed housing to ensure local housing needs are addressed. Further, they should explore opportunities and ownership models that create and preserve permanently affordable housing such as community land trusts and mutual housing associations.

HPD should coordinate workshops for property owners to educate them on the various incentive programs available to make their buildings more green and energy efficient.

Parks and Recreation

Background

Obesity rates among children and adults in East Harlem are very high. Consequently, the need for high quality, well maintained, secure and modern multi-cultural parks and playgrounds is paramount to the well-being and health of community residents.

According to the NYC Department of Parks and Recreation, there are 28 parks and playgrounds in East Harlem and approximately 92 community gardens. While the data indicates that the total area of East Harlem is 45.3% (544.52 acres) public open space, Randall's Island and Wards Island alone comprise 89.9% of our total public open space. Unfortunately community residents often have difficulty accessing Randall's and Wards Island as they are not directly adjacent to the community and require residents to cross a footbridge over the East River, or walk/take an automobile across the Robert F. Kennedy Bridge from 125th Street.

The median ratio of public open space in East Harlem is about 1.5 acres/1,000 residents, while the City designates an area with at least 2.5 acres/1,000 residents as a well-served area. East Harlem has four major parks:

- Randall's Island – 273 acres
- Wards Island – 68 acres
- Marcus Garvey – 20 acres
- Thomas Jefferson – 15 acres

Through the efforts of the Randall's Island Parks Alliance (RIPA), major capital investments have been made over the past several years to public parkland at Randall's and Wards Islands which have transformed the space into a regional destination. Much of the passive recreational space was redeveloped into over 60 ball fields that can accommodate soccer, baseball, softball, football, lacrosse, field hockey and rugby. Two natural environments, a salt march and fresh water wetland, were reestablished to create new habitats that can be used to educate local children. RIPA and Sportime, the operators of the tennis center concession on Randall's Island, have proposed an expansion to the tennis center to add 9 courts.

The following public open spaces are currently, or will soon be, redeveloped and improved:

- White Playground – complete reconstruction
- 110th Street Playground and its Environs (Central Park) – reconstruction of playground and Meer pathways
- Blake Hobbs Playground – complete reconstruction in progress
- Poor Richards Playground – replacement of deteriorating playground safety surface
- Baseball field and club house at Marcus Garvey Park in progress
- Thomas Jefferson Park – new Skate Park and upgrading of the “Hoops by the River” basketball courts

Recommendations

The Department of Parks and Recreation and local elected officials should work together to identify funding for the following capital projects:

1. Repair and Reconstruction of the East/Harlem River Esplanade from 96th Street to 125th Street – The esplanade is slowly deteriorating and falling into the East/Harlem River and needs major infrastructure improvements to rebuild or reinforce the super-structure underneath the parkland and the FDR Drive. CB11 working with CIVITAS and other stakeholders consider it a critical time to improve the East/Harlem River Esplanade in our community (96th – 142nd Streets). While north of 125th Street is still a TBTA construction site, a clear and comprehensive plan for this section of the waterfront is needed. Immediate attention should be given to the 107th Street pier, and the 117th Street wooden pylons. The City should conduct a study that examines the feasibility of ferry service from the East 107th Street Pier, or the 111th Street concrete outcropping, or the 117th Street pylons at the East River Plaza to Randall's Island and other stops south and north along the East /Harlem River. Ferry and Water Taxi services need to be considered from East Harlem.
2. Complete the Construction of Phase A of the East/Harlem River Esplanade (125th Street to 135th Street) – This area has been closed and used as staging area for the Third Avenue and Willis Avenue bridge reconstructions. As both projects are soon to be complete, the Department of Transportation has indicated it will continue to use the area to stage construction of the upcoming 127th Street viaduct reconstruction. Funds must be allocated to start construction of the esplanade parkland and bikeway immediately following DOT use of this area.

3. Construct a Comfort Station in Harlem River Park – As the park is located on the opposite side of the Harlem River Drive, residents who use this space are often far away from bathroom facilities and need a nearby comfort station.
4. The rehabilitation the Historic/Landmark Bell Tower in Marcus Garvey Park is in progress. The Mount Morris Park Community Improvement Association, Marcus Garvey Park Alliance and Community Board 11 must press local elected officials to allocate funding for the rehabilitation of the Acropolis, which affords spectacular views of the surrounding neighborhoods.

Yearly cuts to the expense budget of the Department of Parks and Recreation has meant steady reductions in staffing and consequently parks maintenance staff are unreasonably overextended. Parks and Recreation staff visit and maintain East Harlem parks less often as a direct result of the budget cuts. The Department of Parks and Recreation must increase funding for district staff to ensure our parks and playgrounds are clean and safe. Local community organizations and businesses should form alliances or “friends of” organizations to pool private sources of funds and support local parks and playgrounds.

The Department of Parks and Recreation must ensure local ball fields are not just used by organized groups outside the community that secure parks permits annually. Local residents often do not use the permitting system and opportunities must be preserved at local ball fields for “walk-on” community use which would not require a permit.

Parks and Recreation must also keep our local swimming pools open and maintain sufficient hours of operation. They need to keep playground sprinklers working more regularly as they are often inoperative. Pools and sprinkler may offer low-income residents their only opportunity to cool down in the oppressive summer heat.

The Randall’s Island Parks Alliance must continue to work with Community Board 11 on future planning and development of Randall’s Island. RIPA and the Department of Parks and Recreation must ensure that on-going development does not limit uses to sporting activities but also includes playgrounds for young children and passive recreation space for picnics, pick-up games, etc. Transportation and access issues to Randall’s Island must be addressed. The M35 bus route that goes to Randall’s Island must be reevaluated to improve safety. The bus route should also be extended to Fifth Avenue to ensure residents from the entire district have better access. Ferry and Water Taxi services need to be considered from East Harlem and funding should be allocated for a study to explore the construction of an additional bridge linking East Harlem and Randall’s Island.

There are several forms of community gardens in East Harlem. Green Thumb Gardens are publicly owned by the Department of Parks and Recreation. Other non-profit organizations such as the New York Restoration Project, the Trust for Public Land and the Manhattan Land Trust all have gardens in East Harlem. Typically most gardens have community residents and/or members that serve to maintain the gardens and are required to keep them open to the public a minimum of 10 hours per week when the weather is warmer. Unfortunately many of these gardens do not maintain the required public open hours and often have exclusive membership that privately consumes these spaces. Green Thumb in particular needs additional funding to properly execute their oversight role and ensure these gardens are open to the public. Non-profit organizations that own community gardens must regularly check to determine if garden members are keeping these spaces open to the public. Members of all gardens who are not maintaining public hours must be removed.

Problems with the Million Trees NYC program are now becoming evident in CB11 as the newly planted trees are left to either grow or die. Young trees need water, healthy soil and protection (tree guards) in order to flourish in the harsh urban environment. Growing trees also require pruning and tree pit

maintenance including the tending of holes created by rats. Dead trees require removal, including the stump, and the remaining open tree pit requires replanting. Since Parks Department workers do not maintain tree beds, the City must provide necessary funding to the program and non-profit organizations such as Trees New York to provide the critical tree care work that their mission statements declare.

Public Safety and Transportation

Background

While crime rates in East Harlem have decreased over the past two decades from historic highs, there has been a recent increase in gang related activity, particularly among youth, which has led to increased violence and isolation for residents of public housing. According to a report compiled by the Harlem Community Justice Center titled “East Harlem Juvenile Gang Taskforce 2011 Needs Assessment”:

- Between 2007-2009 the NYPD reported an increase in youth gangs in Upper Manhattan from 10 gangs and 150 members to 29 gangs and 1000 members
- Gang involved youth were responsible for 29% of all gun related homicides in Upper Manhattan
- Between 2009-2010 arrests rates in East Harlem were up 63% for murder, and gang arrests were up 134%
- 63% of East Harlem youth surveyed felt that gangs are a “very serious problem”
- In 2008, East Harlem had the 7th highest rate of detention for youth in NYC and the 4th highest rate of admission to juvenile state placement in New York State
- The NYPD reports that there are 13 active gangs in East Harlem, with 11 of the 13 gangs involved in ongoing rivalries or conflicts
- The number of shootings in public housing developments (where most gangs are located) almost doubled from 2008 to 2010
- 37% of youth surveyed in East Harlem avoid areas of the community due to gang-related concerns, and 22% of youth stated that they carry a weapon

While gang activity may have increased, innocent neighborhood residents have complained about increased NYPD stop-and-frisk tactics, which disproportionately target African Americans and Latinos and was utilized more in 2011 than any previous year. As a percentage of the total population, the 23rd Precinct (East Harlem – south) and 25th Precinct (East Harlem – north) had the second and fifth highest number of total stops City-wide.⁸

With further development of the community, there have been increases in quality of life reporting, especially pertaining to nuisance bars and loitering around the intersection of 125th Street and Lexington Avenue. Many of the quality of life concerns raised are a result of resident interactions with clients of social service providers, particularly drug treatment facilities and homeless shelters. There are 10 methadone clinics in the immediate area surrounding 125th Street and Lexington Avenue. The following is an aggregate list of all such facilities in East Harlem⁹:

Facility Type	Capacity
Chemical Dependency Services – Residential	1,157 beds
Chemical Dependency Services – Non-Residential	4,299 capacity
Mental Health Services – Residential	1,021 beds

⁸ “Stop and Frisk 2011 – NYCLU Briefing”, New York Civil Liberties Union

⁹ “Manhattan Community District 11 – District Profile”, NYC Department of City Planning, 2011

Mental Health Services – Non-Residential	2,486 capacity
Residential Facilities (Adults and Families)	2,112 units or beds
TOTAL	11,075

The impact of vehicular traffic and congestion in East Harlem has no doubt contributed to particulate matter in the air that triggers asthma. Several bridges and heavily traveled commuter corridors are adjacent to or pass through East Harlem including the Tri-Borough/RFK Bridge, Willis Avenue Bridge, Third Avenue Bridge, Madison Avenue Bridge, the Harlem River Drive/ FDR Drive and several popular avenues and cross streets (with most AM and PM commuter vehicles not originating from this community). Heavy vehicle traffic has a negative impact on pedestrian safety at several key intersections and it causes issues of reliability of NYC Transit bus lines.

Along with the heavy vehicle congestion, East Harlem has two Sanitation garages and three MTA bus depots. The emissions created by the additional bus trips and sanitation truck trips to the garages/depots add to the particulate matter in the air which triggers asthma. The asthma related hospitalization rate in East Harlem is higher than any other NYC neighborhood¹⁰.

Recommendations

Community efforts to curb youth violence, particularly among gangs, cannot rely on traditional policing alone. The NYPD should expand the Juvenile Robbery Intervention Program (JRIP) in East Harlem that works more closely with juvenile offenders, their families and local social service providers to develop more holistic interventions aimed at preventing future crime. The NYPD should also pilot the “call-in” approach in East Harlem, developed by John Jay College Professor David Kennedy. This model has proved successful in other cities and works by pulling together several gang members into a meeting with community representatives they respect, and law enforcement officials who communicate their desire to keep the youth out of jail if they cooperated, but also aggressively target gang members if they do not participate.

While aggressive NYPD tactics are necessary within the appropriate context, the excessive use of stop-and-frisk must be reformed. Most stops are unfairly targeting innocent African-Americans and Latinos and create distrust between the NYPD and the local community. The NYPD should provide officers on patrol with more clear guidance on when a stop is appropriate and refocus efforts on developing trust with the community. Police officers that work in a specific precinct for an extended period of time build stronger relationships and respect for the local community. Unfortunately police officers rarely stay at one precinct for very long and are often reassigned to other units or precincts based on fluctuations of crime, and consequently never develop close connections with a particular community and its residents.

The NYPD and the New York State Liquor Authority must work more collaboratively to mitigate the impact of problem bars within the community. Through the use of the Multi-Agency Response to Community Hotspots (MARCH) program, which are coordinated enforcement efforts of multiple State and local agencies, nuisance bars must be persuaded to adjust behavior and respect resident quality of life.

Resident quality of life is also impacted by the disproportionate amount of special needs facilities that are sited in East Harlem. While there are social needs within the community that many of these providers address, often many of their clients come from outside the district and loiter at major intersections like 125th Street and Lexington Avenue. All City agencies must consider “fair share” requirements when choosing where to site facilities, to ensure communities are not unfairly burdened by facilities that impact

¹⁰ “New York City’s Housing and Neighborhoods”, Furman Center for Real Estate and Urban Policy – NYU, 2011, p. 100

quality of life. As such, no additional chemical dependency facilities or homeless shelters should be sited in East Harlem without the approval of Community Board 11.

In addition to the above facilities, the siting of sanitation garages and bus depots in East Harlem has been detrimental to our community. The impact on the environment and health of our community are evidenced by the high asthma hospitalization rates for both adults and children. The two Department of Sanitation Garages and three Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) bus depots must be relocated in the long term and modernized in the short term to mitigate the environmental impact.

The MTA and City must work aggressively with Federal partners to secure funding for Phase 2 of the Second Avenue Subway, to ease congestion on the Lexington Avenue lines, and provide an alternative to often unreliable bus lines. The most inconsistent bus lines along Madison and Fifth Avenues, particularly the M1, must be improved and made more dependable. The MTA and the Department of Transportation (DOT) must also work to improve conditions around the 125th Street Metro North Station, including the installation of better lighting, pedestrian safety improvements at the intersection and renovation/utilization of the old comfort station on the south side of 125th Street across from the Metro North Station.

The Department of Small Business Services should work with local community partners to develop a business improvement district along East 125th Street to address quality of life concerns along the corridor and enhance economic activity.

The MTA and Department of Homeless Services (DHS) should relocate the bus stop for their Randall's Island bound buses (the M35 and the DHS charter bus) from its current location on Lexington Avenue between East 125th Street and East 126th Street. The sidewalk on Lexington Avenue is very narrow and pedestrian flow to and from the subway station often creates excessive congestion. Passengers waiting for the buses on Lexington Avenue, or entering and exiting the buses, obstruct passing pedestrians and create an unsafe situation as pedestrians are often forced onto the street.

Excessive vehicular traffic has created safety problems at key intersections throughout the community. The DOT should conduct engineering studies of the following locations, with the goal of improving pedestrian safety and easing vehicular congestions:

- East 125th Street and Lexington Avenue
- East 116th Street and Lexington Avenue
- East 135th Street and Fifth Avenue
- East 96th Street and Second Avenue
- Madison Avenue between East 96th Street and East 101st Street

The DOT must continue the installation of pedestrian crossing signals with count-down timers at all East Harlem intersections, starting with the above problem intersections. The DOT should conduct studies of the entire 125th Street corridor and East 96th Street corridor to develop recommendations to improve vehicular traffic flow and pedestrian safety. Community Board 11 and the DOT need to work collaboratively to identify commercial corridors that currently do not have parking meters and work with local businesses and residents to consider installation of parking meters to encourage vehicular turnover during the day.

The Department of Transportation's efforts to incentivize alternative modes of transit into and around New York City must be supported. Daily commuter traffic through East Harlem impacts resident quality of life and health. In the next round of Bike Share station siting, the DOT and the selected Bike Share vendor should find several key sites around East Harlem to make Bike Share available as an alternative to

vehicles. The City's efforts to implement a congestion pricing system to toll commuters and provide a disincentive to vehicular travel should be supported, with the inclusion of a residential parking permit system in East Harlem to ensure commuters don't park on local streets.

Seniors

Background

Community Board 11 seniors need a safe and secure environment which includes quality affordable housing or assisted living options and reliable health care.

There are an estimated 13,522 residents of East Harlem living over the age of 65 (or 11% of the community's population).¹¹ East Harlem seniors suffer from greater mobility impairment and higher rates of poverty than seniors in Manhattan as a whole¹²:

	<u>East Harlem</u>	<u>Manhattan</u>
<i>Seniors, % Mobility Impaired</i>	28.7%	17.5%
<i>Seniors, % Living at Federal Level of Poverty</i>	48.7%	29.3%

The primary language of East Harlem seniors is evenly split, 46% English speaking and 47% Spanish speaking.¹³ Seniors living in the community often must contend with the needs of dependents as 1,704 grandparents in East Harlem are responsible for grandchildren.¹⁴

General Needs – Aging Improvement District

In 2011 the New York Academy of Medicine, sponsored by Councilmember Melissa Mark-Viverito, in partnership with the NYC Department for the Aging, created an Aging Improvement District (AID) in East Harlem. Through the AID, seniors in our community met with city officials, local businesses and leaders of local institutions to think strategically of low-cost quality of life improvements for an aging population.

The AID conducted a series of community discussions with over 200 older adults to determine what they thought were their most pressing needs. Through these discussions they identified the following five priority areas of need:

- Increasing seating for older adults inside and outside, especially in locations where people wait on lines
- Improving access to laundry
- Improving access to swimming pools
- Improving safety and access to the intersection of 125th Street and Lexington Avenue as a transportation and shopping hub

¹¹ 2006-2010 American Community Survey 5 Year Estimates, PUMA 03804, New York

¹² NYC Department for the Aging, Profile of Older New Yorkers, February 26, 2010, p. 24-25

¹³ Ibid, p. 26

¹⁴ 2006-2010 American Community Survey 5 Year Estimates, PUMA 03804, New York

- Connecting older adults to existing community events and resources and making those resources and events more age-friendly

Recommendations

Community based organizations and the Department for the Aging (DFTA), work to consolidate information on resources currently available to seniors. The information should be shared with seniors through existing networks, such as senior centers, through multilingual public service announcement and by hosting a series of public forums.

In addition, the work of the AID has served to organize community efforts and started to address some of the concerns identified by local seniors. It is essential that this work continue and receive additional funding through the NYC Department for the Aging (DFTA) and the NYC Council.

As previously noted, almost half of the seniors in East Harlem live at or below the Federal level of poverty. Consequently the increased cost of housing has drastically impacted seniors. They have fewer housing choices, particularly those that are mobility impaired and need access to elevators or more intensive assisted living arrangements. The Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD), along with DFTA, must identify local, State and Federal sources of housing subsidies to encourage the development of age-friendly affordable housing and a range of assisted living options in East Harlem.

As there is lack of and a great need for affordable, safe “senior friendly” housing throughout the Community District and within NYCHA developments in East Harlem, Community Board 11, in concert with Metropolitan Hospital Community Advisory Board and local elected officials work to advocate with NYCHA, DHS, HHC to provide opportunities and subsidies for seniors living within East Harlem NYCHA Developments receive “Community Preference” of new Senior Housing being developed at Draper Hall.

Many of our seniors have been living in the same homes for decades and the deteriorating conditions of their homes have often been ignored by landlords. Unfortunately as they age and become more dependent on their local network of nearby family and friends, seniors often choose to cope with their poor housing conditions rather than move to a more habitable home. HPD should create a specific program that will regularly monitor and inspect the housing conditions of vulnerable seniors. HPD should also encourage landlords to make necessary repairs in buildings with high concentrations of seniors, particularly broken laundry machines and broken elevators.

Additional funding is needed for home health aid programs in East Harlem to expand the number of available aides and also pay higher wages to attract quality professionals. Home health aides are essential to assist seniors in their daily activities, particularly for those that cannot afford to hire a home health aide privately and would otherwise be isolated in their homes. DFTA and the Department of Youth and Community Development should partner to create a pilot program in East Harlem that would encourage multi-generational care of seniors, connecting youth to seniors who are mobility impaired.

In response to the need identified through the AID for increased seating for seniors throughout the community, the Department of Transportation should increase funding for its public benches program. The public benches program was recently created by DOT and already installed a small number of benches in East Harlem. Strategically placing benches in public areas throughout the community will allow seniors to walk further distances and rest when needed.

In order to improve safety and access to the intersection of 125th Street and Lexington Avenue, the quality of life issues in and around the intersection must be addressed. The Department of Small Business Services should work with the local community to plan and develop a business improvement district (BID) along East 125th Street. The BID would hire additional personnel to keep the corridor clean, particularly the intersection of 125th Street and Lexington Avenue, and advocate for increased security presence.

Youth and Education

Background

To address the unique challenges associated with a growing population of youth in East Harlem, the community and City must work together to reform local public schools, improve access to early childhood education and afterschool programs and curb youth violence.

According to the 2010-2012 American Community Survey (for PUMA 03804 in New York) an estimated 29,721 East Harlem residents, or 25% of the community's population, is under the age of 18 years. A disproportionate amount of youth in East Harlem live in poverty, with 42.8% of residents under the age of 18 years having lived below the poverty level within the last 12 months, compared with 26.9 % of resident 18 years and older. Of the 11,408 households in East Harlem which include children under the age of 18 years, 7,586 households are headed by single parents without spouses/partners.

Educational attainment in East Harlem begins to fall behind as early as nursery and preschool. While there are 7,126 children under the age of 5 years in East Harlem, only 1,541 or 21% are enrolled in nursery or pre-school programs. 27.9% of residents 25 years of age and older have not graduated from high school and only 28.6% have earned a bachelor's degree or higher.

Public education in East Harlem has often failed community children. According to the Department of Education (DOE) only 37% of children in elementary and middle schools in East Harlem passed their English and Language Arts (ELA) tests, and only 49% passed the Math tests. While the top five under-performing schools in East Harlem had ELA and Math pass rates ranging from 8.8% - 19.6% and 12.9% - 22.1% respectively, several schools have been more successful and demonstrate that local schools can produce positive outcomes. Over the past several years the Department of Education has phased-out several failing schools and opened a number of new smaller schools (including several charter schools) in an effort to improve the quality of education in East Harlem.

Recommendations

The Department of Education must reassess its strategy to reform local schools and more aggressively pursue measures that improve public schools in addition to phasing-out failing schools. DOE needs to ensure a greater percentage of teachers in East Harlem are certified with advanced degrees in their respective areas of specialization. DOE and the United Federation of Teachers (UFT) should work collaboratively to create financial incentives and promote outstanding teachers, and work to provide additional professional development or remove under-performing teachers. Together, the DOE and UFT must develop a performance evaluation tool that fairly and accurately evaluates teacher performance as the existing satisfactory-unsatisfactory evaluation is not helpful to schools or teachers.

DOE needs to provide additional resources to improve access to technology in our public schools (i.e. laptops, smart boards, adaptive software platforms, student/teacher/parent communication tools). DOE and the UFT should provide dedicated funding to organize an outreach effort to increase parent

participation in East Harlem. Local school principals can explore new ways to collaborate with Hunter College and their new East Harlem campus.

Community-based organizations, select local schools and the DOE should create a forum for local schools to collaborate and share best practices to encourage improvement at underperforming schools. DOE should also provide targeted assistance and resources, with greater accountability, to under-performing schools. School principals and DOE need to require greater accountability from “networks” and inquire how they have worked to support or assist local schools, particularly under performing schools. If after sufficient opportunity and resources schools continue to under-perform, DOE must focus efforts on more substantial intervention strategies. DOE must make these decisions in consultation with the community and Community Board. The Community Board should establish close working relationships with local schools to have a better understanding of how potential DOE intervention strategies might work, or if schools should be closed

The New York Public Library (NYPL) should provide greater access to technology at local libraries. Both the 125th Street Library and Aguilar Library have computer labs that are over-used. NYPL must purchase additional computers for both libraries and collaborate with community groups to create and offer computer literacy and programming courses at the libraries.

The Department of Youth and Community Development must preserve and expand funding for programming in East Harlem. With a growing population of youth, many of whom never had access to early childhood education and attend under-performing schools, the need for comprehensive complementary after-school and employment programs is vital. DYCD should expand after school and evening programming, providing viable alternatives to at-risk youth, targeting older teenage students with evening recreational activities. Additional funding is also needed for school-to-work programming such as the Young Adult Internship Program (with a site needed in East Harlem) and the Summer Youth Employment Program. The community, DYCD and local hospitals should collaborate to create a program that partners local youth with internships at local hospitals.

Recent increases in gang related violence (see Public Safety and Transportation for data) requires a response that goes beyond traditional policing and responds more broadly to the needs of at-risk youth in East Harlem. The NYPD needs to expand the existing JRIP program (Juvenile Robbery Intervention Program) to encourage home visitation and social intervention of youth arrested for robberies. The NYPD and local social service agencies should pilot the “call-in” model in East Harlem, pioneered by John Jay Professor David Kennedy. This model of intervention has reduced violent crime by up to 60% in Boston, Chicago and Los Angeles. Often referred to as Operation Ceasefire, it has brought gang members into meetings with community members they respected, social services representatives who could help them, and law enforcement officials who told them that they preferred not to make arrests and instead wanted the gang members to stay alive, but that they planned to aggressively target people who retaliated.

Zoning

Background

East Harlem is generally zoned as medium density residential districts with commercial corridors along the avenues and two-way cross streets. In 2003, the area east of Lexington Avenue between East 124th and East 99th Streets was rezoned to create contextual zoning districts with height limits, as well as to encourage development. The rezoning aimed to preserve the residential low-rise character of mid-block

streets while adding density to the avenues. In 2008, the 125th Street corridor was rezoned to promote commercial growth, arts, culture, and housing development between the Hudson to Harlem Rivers. The remainder of the district is generally zoned R7-2, with light manufacturing and antiquated commercial zoning throughout the area. Unfortunately the district has been subjected to spot-zoning or smaller zoning changes and development with no coordinated vision for economic growth, affordable housing and the general overall needs of the community.

Recommendations

In 2010, the Community Board resolved to move forward with a rezoning effort to change zoning districts that did not meet with the needs of the community. The board is currently working with CIVITAS, a locally based civic not-for-profit organization, to rezone a section of the district bounded by East 115th Street and East 132nd Street, from Lexington Avenue to Madison Avenue. This area includes several potential development sites, particularly along the Park Avenue corridor. It also includes recent developments that are out of character with the surrounding community. Most of this area is currently zoned R7-2, with manufacturing uses permitted along Park Avenue north of 126th Street. Community Board 11 has identified three core goals for the rezoning area:

- Plan for economic opportunities particularly on vacant lots, including the Park Avenue corridor
- Create opportunities for affordable housing by mandating the inclusionary housing program
- Encourage appropriate height limits and contextual zoning in mid-blocks and on avenues

After reviewing existing conditions in the rezoning area, we are now working to engage local community partners and residents to work collaboratively and identify new zoning districts that will meet the needs of the community. Once the rezoning framework is developed, Community Board 11 will forward our recommendations to the Department of City Planning (DCP). Subsequently DCP will conduct all necessary environmental assessments and submit an application for review through the Uniform Land Use Review Procedure (ULURP).

Future rezoning initiatives should review the inclusion of a commercial-overlay along East 106th Street to reflect the current commercial character of that street, and the development of rezoning recommendations for the area south of East 115th Street to East 96th Street, between Lexington and Fifth Avenues reflecting current needs.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Matthew S. Washington", enclosed within a thin black rectangular border.

Matthew S. Washington
Chairman
Community Board 11