



# **THE CITY OF NEW YORK BOROUGH OF THE BRONX**

## **COMMUNITY BOARD #5**

*Honorable Adolfo Carrion Jr., Bronx Borough President*

Chairperson  
**Beverly Smith**

District Manager  
**Xavier Rodriquez**

### **District Needs Statement**

Bronx Community District 5, known as the West Tremont area, is located in the mid-West Bronx. It is bounded by the Harlem River on the West, the Cross Bronx Expressway on the South, Webster Avenue on the East, and the northern boundary zigzags from Hall of Fame Terrace at Bronx Community College to Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard and 183rd Street, east to Jerome Avenue and north to Fordham Road.

Bronx Community District 5 is comprised of the following four neighborhoods. South Fordham, University Heights, Morris Heights, and Mount Hope.

Morris Heights is the lowest density area in District 5. Morris Heights is along the western ridge of the district, covering the area from Jerome Avenue valley to the Harlem River valley. Here the zoning ranges from R5 (typically 2 and 3-family roughhouses and small apartment buildings). In addition to the low density development, several high rise developments including Sedgwick Houses, a NYC Housing Authority development, several large private apartment towers along Undercliff and Sedgwick Avenues, River Corporation, and the NYC Housing Authority's 31-building University Avenue Consolidation.

This area has seen a great deal of rehabilitation work, including the University Avenue Consolidation collaboration between Housing Preservation Department –New York City Housing Authority to rehabilitate 180 dwelling units and building 30 new units creating 210 units of affordable housing.

University Heights is part of the same rock ridge that characterizes most of Morris Heights, and is similar, architecturally. One of the key landmarks in this area is the beautiful Bronx Community College Campus, which gives the neighborhood its name. This public facility, which is the highest geographic point in New York City. University Heights is the least dense area of the district and benefits from a large proportion of 1-4 family housing stock. This area will soon undergo the development of approximately 13 new three-family homes in the area of Phelan Place and Billingsley Terrace.

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**SERVING THESE NEIGHBORHOODS:**  
Fordham, Morris Heights, Mount Hope, University Heights

We are also delighted to see the long abandoned Hebrew Institute of University Avenue will also undergo renovation into a new West Bronx Clubhouse for Kip Bay Boys & Girls Club which will provide education and recreation services for Community Board 5 Youth.

The area east of Jerome Avenue and Fordham Road, encompasses two neighborhoods: South Fordham, north of Burnside to Fordham Road, and Mount Hope, south of Burnside Avenue to the Cross Bronx Expressway. Both extend east to Webster Avenue. The Mount Hope/South Fordham neighborhoods are densely populated mostly with five and six-story housing. At the eastern edge of these neighborhoods is a large residential development known as Twin Parks West, consisting of four residential towers. This area will also undergo the development of approximately 7 new three-family homes on Valentines Avenue.

At the northern portion of this area is the Fordham Road Shopping District, the third largest generator retail sales in the City of New York. Fordham Road has approximately 1-million square feet of retail space. Separating South Fordham from Mount Hope is the Burnside Avenue Shopping Strip, a strong and vibrant local commercial corridor, and at the South east area of these areas is a small manufacturing zone, which contains heavy auto uses, small manufacturing shops and warehouses. The Burnside Avenue Shopping Strip is now home to a new state of the art-technology Citibank Branch, which is the first of its kind in the country.

The injustice of regressive tax policies and shortsighted fiscal practices of local, state and federal administrations, as well as the effects of bad policy and consequent fluctuations in the economy among those directly affect many residents in Bronx Community District 5, in our city. The current Fiscal Year 2005 Budget appears bleak for areas such as District 5 in the Bronx, where the physical and social ills that affect poor and minority communities continue to be most concentrated.

Community District 5 is a severely stressed area. Listed are some of the conditions we face in our neighborhoods.

- Some of the highest crime rates in the City (over 1,000 number of arrest for violent felonies);
- Many streets remain overrun by drug-dealing;
- Some of the dirtiest streets in the City;
- Very little acres of usable open space for every thousand people; far than the city average;
- The largest overcrowded school district in the state; large number of schools in very poor physical condition
- Concentrated and large immigrant population;
- Severe shortage in youth services yet we have over 27,5+83 children per square mile;
- Approximately 49% of households have income below \$10,000;

- Approximately 40% of residents pay more than one-third of their income on rent (1996);
- Approximately 61% of housing units are in fair to poor condition with 44.4% of rental housing overcrowded (placing CB#5 third in the City of New York)
- Approximately 14.6% adult unemployment rate;
- Approximately 82% of children born into poor families and children receiving public assistance;
- Over 40% of the population on welfare.

While much of this is very grim, many positive things are happening to improve the quality of live in some areas of our district. These are hundreds of units of new and rehabilitated housing, business strips are organizing to create improvement districts new community organizations are beginning to get hold of their blocks and local schools.

However, while there has been recent enormous improvement in some areas, Community District 5 falls short of resources in order to address our devastating needs. As advocates for our community, we will continue seeking specific funding in the areas of recreation, parks library, youth services, and education.

In this regard, it is essential to the district's well being that the Mayor's Budget reflected funding for Community Board #5 district in the following areas of priority:

**1) Department of Transportation:**

Creation of a Step Street Task Force (Community Board #5 has approximately 14 Steps Streets in its district);

**2 ) Department of Parks & Recreation:**

Improvement of the Aqueduct Lands; Increase in budget allocation for the hiring of additional PEP officers;

Increase in budget for the construction of additional neighborhood Playgrounds, as identified by CB #5 and residents;

Development of the Harlem River Waterfront esplanade, with greater access by our constituents.

**3) City University of New York**

Increase funding to CUNY schools (Bronx Community College located in CB#5 is one of the major learning institutions in the Bronx, it is therefore imperative that services are maintained to continue providing quality Education to the less advantaged);

**4) Department of Youth & Community Development:**

Increase in Youth funding services specifically in the area of Summer Youth Employment;

**5) Department of Business Services:**

Creation of the merchant's associations for University Avenue /W Tremont

Avenue & Featherbed Lane as well as Burnside Avenue;

**6) New York City Board of Education:**

Increase funding for reconstruction and infrastructure development of our schools;

**7) Department of the Aging:**

Improvement of senior citizens' facilities in Community Board #5;

**8) NYC Police Department**

Acquire and construct a new 46th Precinct with parking facilities;

Additionally, listed are areas where the budget responses from the agencies once again fall short of need. It is noteworthy, that while many of these capital and expense budget requests have in some form received favorable responses and approval, the actual implementation of capital projects continues to remain idle to lack of effective coordination and communication among the appropriate city agencies. It is imperative that agencies become more responsive in the implementation of these capital projects, and constraints to community boards and community residents.

**Youth Services (Department of Youth & Community Development)**

Restoration of million of dollars in Youth Services and programs including additional funds for CB#5 Area Youth Programs: Fair Share, Delinquency Programs, Specialized Programs & a Beacon School  
Senior Services (Department for the Aging)  
Rehabilitation of the senior center luncheon club MS 115x

**School Improvements (New York City Board of Education)**

Rehabilitation of MS 319x  
Reconstruction of retaining wall supporting PS 109 playground  
Rehabilitation of PS 26X  
Completion of scope and design for rehabilitation of PS 33X  
Construction of school playground at site adjacent to PS 204X  
Construction of school playground at PS 91X

**Street Reconstruction/Milling & Resurfacing/step Streets (Department of Transportation)**

Construction of University Avenue Traffic Islands W. 181 Street  
Reconstruction of West 174th step Street, between Popham & Undercliff Avenues  
Rehabilitation of Step Street at Davidson Avenue between Featherbed Lane & Davidson Avenue  
Mill and resurface sections of Tremont Avenue: West University to Jerome E.  
Tremont Ave. from the Grand Concourse to Webster Avenue  
Rehabilitation of Step Street at 183rd Street, between Tiebout Avenue and Folin Place  
Completion of scope and reconstruction of Grand Concourse Bridges over 175th Street  
Increase resources for the Bronx Bureau of Highway Maintenance Division  
Increase resources for the Bronx Bureau of Traffic Maintenance and Bridges

**Sanitation- Cleaning/Enforcement (Department of Sanitation)**

Creation of Step Street Task Force to clean the 128 Step Streets in New York City  
Increase personnel to service baskets in district (especially commercial areas)

Over grown weeds on step streets – (black top/weed killer)

**Parks Improvements & Maintenance (Department of Parks & Recreation)**

Rehabilitation of University Park, including Park House  
Acquisition and development of site located in front of 3017-2019 Morris Avenue  
Acquisition and development of site at W. Tremont Avenue & 177th Street  
Development Block 3194 Lot 27 to extend existing parks managed property at  
180th Street & Grand Avenue  
Increase funds to Parks Department for Miscellaneous Park repairs  
Reconstruction of Aqueduct lands and Aqueduct walkway Morton to  
W. Burnside Avenue  
Increase funds for the hiring of additional parks recreation specialist  
Increase funds for the hiring of additional parks maintenance employees  
Increase funds for additional parks enforcement personnel PEP  
Safety/ (New York City Police Department)  
Acquire and construct new 46th precinct with Parking facility.  
Increase funding for narcotics' enforcement  
Increase funding for personnel maintenance  
Increase allocation of police officer CPOP/Safe Halls-Impact program  
Increase funding for the purchase of additional noise measuring devices

**Housing (Department of Housing Preservation & Development)**

Increase funding for capital improvements of city-owned buildings  
Increase funding for the expansion of the Anti-abandonment program  
Increase funding for the expansion of Narcotics Control Unit  
Building Maintenance/Inspections (Department of Buildings)  
Increase funding to hire additional inspectors for the office of the Bronx  
Increase funding to expand Quality of Life Unit into the Bronx

**Health/Safety (Department of Consumer Affairs)**

Increase funding for expansion of Pest Control unit including additional personnel  
Increase funding for additional field inspectors/Exterminators

**Human Resources (Department of Human Resources Administration)**

Increase funding for workfare to work initiatives in Community District #5  
Increase outreach services to large immigrant population in Community District #5

**Economic Development (Department of Business Service & Economic Development)**

Creation of Business Improvement Districts (Fordham Road, Burnside, W.  
Tremont Avenue, University Avenue/Featherbed Avenue.

**Fire Prevention/Education (New York City Fire Department)**

Increase funding for fire safety houses, medical kits for each Engine Company,  
the Juvenile firesetters program, and fatal fire teams

Additionally, it is imperative that the Executive Budget maintains resources to the New York City Public Library Branches to allocate for additional materials, increase in staff and exterior renovations, and maintenance for extended library hours.

It is also vitally important to recognize that Economic Development in Bronx Community District 5 is a priority, especially since the district is comprised of major commercial strips such as Fordham Road, Burnside Avenue, and Tremont Shopping areas. In this district, with such a high level of unemployment rate, the need for commercial revitalization and community involvement is of the utmost important. The creation of Business Improvement District is a mechanism to improved conditions in our neighborhoods and bring a sense of pride and ownership to local merchants. We continue to encourage and support community and business collaborations.

Finally, Community Boards are indeed the link to the city. In this regard, Community Board 5 continues to advocate for the increase in Community Boards operating budgets, allowing for further strengthening and improvement in the delivery of services to communities at large. Equally important, are the obligations mandated to Community Boards by the New York City charter, which includes the development of a 197-A plan for each community district. Community Board 5 recognizes the significance and contribution that a 197-A Community Development Plan affords a district, specifically in preparation for future capital budget requests. Bronx Community Board Five has recently begun to engage in a planning process for the future development and preservation of its neighborhoods. In the last decade, this part of the mid-west Bronx, known as West Tremont, has seen the development of new and rehabilitated housing, the opening of regional shopping centers, some improvements to schools and community facilities, and increasing signs of community organization to improve commercial and retail strips. Nevertheless, there are still many major challenges facing the people living and working in the vibrant neighborhoods of Mount Hope, Morris Heights, University Heights and South Fordham. Community District 5 continues to have many serious social, economic, and housing transportation, improved pedestrian circulation and amenities, increased economic development and commercial revitalization. In addition, the community board has continued to identify quality-of-life issues relating to safety, service delivery and effective programs for both its youngest and its oldest residents. As the Community Board began to work with planners and government agencies to develop and implement comprehension plans and improvements in its district, the Board recognized that full citizen participation is essential to the success of its efforts. To facilitate deeper community involvement, Community Board Five initiated a "Visioning Process" for leaders and citizens working together to develop shared goals, objectives and strategies to fulfill their hopes for the future of their community. We therefore, wholeheartedly, urge that the City of New York to allocate funds to each of the 59 Community Development Boards for the planning and implementation of a 197-A Community Development Plan, which is a very costly and time-consuming process.

Community District #5, in echoing the sentiments of a community at large, understands that the budget development process has never been a painless exercise. We are deeply concerned, however, that the most vulnerable – children, senior citizens, and poor people Are forced to bear a disproportionate share of the pain. At a time when the city is reporting a surplus, we must insist that our community basic's needs not be sacrificed in an attempt to seek a balance budget in the outer years. Our city government must examine means to improve its efficiency without being mean-spirited. We are certain that with a proper revisit to these issues, the City of New York could find ways to maintain and secure a respectable quality of life for all of our citizens. Community District 5 priorities remain a reflection of economic and community development, improvement of quality of life issues and most importantly, services to the future of our city-our youths.

Respectfully submitted

Beverly Smith  
Chairperson

Xavier Rodriguez  
District Manager