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DISTRICT NEEDS STATEMENT – SUMMER 2007

CHANGES NEW YORK STYLE – A C.B. # 13 PARALLEL? Once upon a time a very young colonial city became the New World's initial center of commerce and development. It was transformed into a Boom Town filled with a growing population. Newly born was Manhattan. Therein were a myriad of opportunities for all but with an equal amount of urban problems. As a result of the city's hustle and bustle, located at its southern tip, those who had become wealthy as a result of this volcanic burst of New World prosperity, sought quieter, private living space away from the milling whirlwind of those downtown throngs. These rich, enterprising entrepreneurs sought the wide open spaces on which they could build their mansions and estates. So they moved their homes further north into the 'upper reaches' of Manhattan. Some moved further north than even 14th Street! Businesses, restaurants, theaters, vaudeville, burlesque, along with confidence men and women, soon followed the roads northward. Times Square, nee Longacre Square, was a relatively nondescript area along this 'Broadway' northern passage, but it would come to define a unique American style of fun and entertainment.

Throughout these early years, and beyond, this 'uptown' Square, named for the newspaper that had set up shop there, would remain the beacon of Manhattan enjoyment. Its changing facades would mirror the ever-altering mores of the years to come. From a stronghold of theatrical ventures, running the gamut from The Bard and O'Neill to Getting Gertie's Garter and The Ziegfeld Follies, Times Square playfully zipped through the booze-less years of Prohibition and the Depression to remain the neon-lit center of the entertainment world. Its façade was in a constant state of flux. There were night clubs, speakeasies, cabarets, and high-class rooftop restaurants as magnets for the joy-seeking crowds who relished hobnobbing on an almost daily venture.. But changes continued and continued. Eventually new twists in the lifestyle of a city further altered the Square's topography. While the city's growth continued its northward exodus, Times Square nonetheless held sway as the magnet for tourists, as well as city dwellers. In time, sadly though, the mythic centerpiece of 42nd Street eventually was transformed from an era of musicals in lavish theaters into a netherworld of the tawdry.

Today, the result of still another pendulum swing has turned 42nd Street and its neighbors into a glitzy Disneyland-Midtown 'Vegas' with garish signage camouflaging what had once been the home of the majestic Hotel Astor, movie palaces, and classy eateries. Only fading nostalgia keeps alive images of the following decades of the Automat, Rector's, Toffennetti's, the Howard John-

sons' and Childs' Restaurants, along with the marquees of the Roxy, Paramount, Strand, Capital, Criterion, State, Morosco, Rivoli, Mayfair and other time-honored homes of live and celluloid escape. Still, Times Square remains a 21st Century 'Siren Call' for tourists. Change meant LOSING some of those valuable historic strongholds in the ever-expanding annals of the world's most famous metropolis.

The patterns of Times Square have changed with the times. Its rebirth, some feel, has taken on the look of a sanitized world of Lion Kings and Disney-staged spectacles. The Square's tapestry is one of iPHONES and plasma TVs, of karaoke and segues, garishly constructed high-rise buildings all almost fogging over aura of nostalgia. Changes, changes, changes. And now one's attention can look at the oddly unsettled look at the alterations in the landscape of the communities of C.B. #13. The metamorphosis of Coney Island, Brighton Beach, and Gravesend today seems to parallel that of this Manhattan. Brooklyn too, in those early days of the 20th century, had been a city unto itself before finally merging with the other boroughs to become the most famous metropolis in the world. Community Board #13, representing much of the southern shorefront areas of Brooklyn, has found itself caught in the eye of the increasing hurricanes of change. And, at the time of this writing, the future of its neighborhoods, although filled with renewed vigor and promise, remains in a state of suspended animation. What shape will the latest changes take? The answer is fraught with rumors and semi-truths. The one thing certain is that the business and civic lifestyles of C.B. #13's Coney Island, Brighton Beach, Sea Gate, Gravesend, Bath Beach, and sections of Homecrest and Bensonhurst are filled with hope, and the citizens await a renewed, positive thrust forward. But there are difficult roads to navigate as they take that giant step into their own place in the 21st Century, even more difficult to navigate than those faced by people moving north of 14th Street in the Manhattan across the river. What will be lost by change? What are the positive elements? Can a neglected infrastructure handle ultra-modern alterations to the landscapes? What is the promise of affordable housing accompanying the changes, and what, indeed, is ahead for the middle class? What can alleviate the free floating anxieties of less affluent people who have lived in southern Brooklyn for their entire lives? What defines the role for 'affordable housing'? Many questions must be answered in the immediate future.

Southern Brooklyn's history is marked with the same kind of signposts that helped develop the island of Manhattan into the world's center of economic activity, of the arts, of mercantile growth, of struggle and achievement for millions of newcomers to America. By the onset of the 20th century, those of wealth had discovered the salt water washed shores of Brooklyn's oceanfront, and they sailed to Norton's Point. Ocean bathing cool breezes, clear skies and clean air welcomed them. As the summer populations grew so did the hotels-formidable structures like the Brighton Beach Hotel. Soon, new roads linked the mainland to the island that had been named in honor of the rabbits that had been found there. Railways were constructed to bring people, of all economic classes, to an area where they could escape from the city heat and where they could find the 'let-it-all-hang-out' fun sites that began to take shape there. Electric lights, like those that had emblazoned the famed Times Square on the other side of the new Brooklyn and Manhattan Bridges, took on newer emphasis on this new surf-washed Brooklyn wonderland. And what a Shangri-La it had become!! Big and then bigger splashes of blinking lights and new fangled fun rides appeared. Dreamland beckoned as did Luna Park and Steeplechase. Race tracks and boxing arenas appeared. When fires leveled areas, the southern shore, like a phoenix, arose anew and didn't stop. Even brighter attractions rose up from the ashes of what had been. Summer bungalows were constructed proving a bonanza for landowners. Scream-inducing motorized rides allowed the visitor to howl with delight and more than a little fear. Feltman's Restaurant introduced an item that encased a sau-

sage in a role, and the frankfurter was created, an eating delight elevated to epicurean heights at Nathan's. And, here too, in the midst of a completely new experience for a growing city of people of numerous ancestries, came those would resemble the ne'er do wells that had flooded the streets of Manhattan – the crooks, the con men and women, and political powerhouses like the notorious John McKane whose Coney-Brighton-Bath Beach activities and subsequent questionable fortunes eventually paved his own roadway to prison.

The peninsula has gone since through many transformations, but it has remained one of the most famous and visited areas in the City. As it had been with Times Square, the initial warm weather population of rich property owners was quickly joined by hoteliers, amusement operators, restaurateurs, and people from every walk of life. Performers en route to Broadway, or with names from the vaudeville circuits, joined the jovial proceedings. Archie Leach from England did his stilt walking act on Surf Avenue prior to his career on Broadway and then Hollywood as 'Cary Grant'. New peninsula theaters and dining establishments headlined a wide range of talents from Jimmy Durante to Sophie Tucker. The lights of the big amusement parks flooded the streets where the latest tunes from Tin Pan Alley were tried out for the first time before even Broadway had heard them. The movie pioneers from the nearby Vitagraph Studios ably used the area for its silent films, and Rudolph Valentino, before he went on to become a silent film star, worked as a dancing partner at one of the many pavilions. The decades kept adding and subtracting from the shore areas – Dreamland burned as did Luna Park; Steeplechase lasted until the 1960's before its glass structure toppled under the wrecking ball. But the frankfurters remained, along with crowd delights like cotton candy, knishes, soft ice cream. The Boardwalk and Surf Ave., along with Brighton Beach Ave., Mermaid Ave., Coney Ave. all thrived. History captures such historic names as the Thunderbolt, the Tornado, the Bobsled, the Brighton Baths, the Brighton Beach Theater (home eventually of the famed Subway Circuit of live Broadway shows), the B&B Carousell (sic), the Sodamat, the Atlantis, along with a long roster of movie and live theaters, including many ethnic centers. Loew's Coney Island (later the Shore Theater) still stands, though unused, across from Nathan's. Gone are RKO's Tilyou Theater, the Surf Theater, Mermaid Theater, the Tuxedo. Brighton's beloved Oceana Theater is now a catering/restaurant facility on the first floor and a live performing space on the second. BUT some landmarks are saved and play an enormous role in the future of the C.B. #13 neighborhoods – The Cyclone roller coaster, the Wonder Wheel, the Parachute Jump, Child's Restaurant Building on the Boardwalk.

The areas kept changing through the 20th Century. Carousels and bathhouses, pools and freak shows all came....and later disappeared. A changing America, after World War II, saw new things on the horizon to take the public attention – television, air conditioning, and the lure of the suburbs all helped to pull attention away from the sands of the long beach and its neighboring magnets of chills and thrill rides. Brighton Beach faced a decline along its streets but eventually came alive – busier than ever – with the emigration of people of Russian descent. The bungalow colonies of Coney and Brighton ceased summertime use and only a handful were turned into permanent residences. The homes of Coney Island itself toppled under the reign of Robert Moses to be replaced by high-rise housing developments. The fire-ravaged Luna Park site became another mammoth housing unit, and the erstwhile site of Dreamland proved the permanent home of the New York Aquarium. Changes. Changes. Changes. And now, all of the areas of Community Board #13 stand on the brink of enormous challenges related to its latest long-planned epic alteration for southern Brooklyn. Will the amusement area of Coney Island be maintained or will zoning changes permit new high rise and other residences that can endanger the peninsula of fun? Will supercharged, ultra modern changes destroy the atmosphere of the amusement district by obliterating the honky

tonk razzmatazz with the kind of super glitz that revamped the ambience of Times Square? Will the City finally get to downzone Brighton Beach where developers now buy small homes and build condos on already crowded streets? What impacts will be faced by increased traffic and by an aging infrastructure? Will the Federal Corps of Engineers help to preserve the beaches by building T-Groins that should halt the movement of sands from the ocean beaches to Gravesend Bay? What will the resultant be for the cleansing of the long-neglected Coney Island Creek, and will the positive end of the remediation process mean safe fishing areas and boating docks? These and other posers linger as part of the newest legacies of the world famous shore communities.

Brighton Beach, as noted, took new strides as its population increased with the arrival of an eager, enterprising new population from the USSR, but it is still home to a large population of lifetime and elderly Jewish residents, to African-Americans, and those with heritages carried from Puerto Rico, Pakistan, Mexico, and South America. Assistance to the newcomers, and to the longtime businesses and homeowners of Brighton, remains strengthened by the work of the Brighton Beach Business Improvement District and by the Brighton Neighborhood Assn., among others. Further west, Coney Island's future became the focus of the Coney Island Development Corp. (CIDC) as created through the NYC Economic Development Corp., working with C.B. #13; and also by Astella Development Corp. joined by area churches, and civic groups.

Here, too, a population change is noted. During the late 1960's razing of much of the area and the creation of the neighborhood's high rise housing developments, the vicinity appealed to Americans of African and Puerto Rican descent. Today, the neighborhoods, as they had once been, team with many other ancestries as well – Russian, Pakistani, South American, Mexican, Mid-Easterners, Asian Americans, and more. Astella Development, for example, led in the creation of new one-family homes and of the restoration of Mermaid Avenue as a mercantile center for the tens of thousands of residents. Across Gravesend Bay and Coney Island Creek are the Bath Beach-Gravesend neighborhoods, a generally stable area of a widely mixed populace in one and two family homes, as well as newer high rise developments and a sizeable amount of senior citizen residences. The private community of Sea Gate, located at the westernmost part of the peninsula similarly has undergone population changes but is faced with unique enigmas that sometimes threaten its very existence. A disintegrating beach line is subject to the worst of storms and its aged infrastructure needs considerable work to bring it up to contemporary standards.

Community Board #13 is made up of an elongated peninsula, including the neighborhoods of Brighton Beach, Coney Island, and Sea Gate; and additional areas north of the aforementioned Creek and Belt Parkway – Bath Beach, Gravesend, and portions of Homecrest and Bensonhurst. The proximity of ocean and Gravesend Bay waters is visible everywhere, and the Office of Emergency Management (OEM), aware of the potential devastations that could be the result of increased hurricane and nor-easter storm activity, actively has worked with local legislators, including Councilman Domenic M. Recchia Jr., C.B. #13, and civic/church/and housing groups, to develop a C.B. #13 Community Emergency Response Team (CERT), now comprised of volunteers, who took 11-week courses, from every section. At present, CERT involves some 30 members, but additional members will be added when renewed classes appear this fall. Its members have prepared themselves for potential storms and floods, as well as blackouts. They have already worked with communities on aid during actual major storms and power failures. The geographic boundaries of the Board are defined on the west by Gravesend Bay; on the south by the Ocean; on the north and west by Corbin Place, Avenues X and Y, 26th Avenue and 86th Street.

Although it is proposed for a section a few blocks north of the C.B. #13 terminus at 26th Avenue, the planned Waste Transfer Station has opened the door to considerable speculation about its overall ecological safety and traffic concerns. C.B. #13's residents have sought assurance that the WTS will be safely monitored and maintained so that the waters that flow south onto the shores of Sea Gate, Coney Island, and Brighton Beach remain clean and safe for the tens of thousands of swimmers and visitors. In addition, there remains an overall anxiety about the possibility of off-shore borrow pits should they ever be opened up for new garbage-dumping uses which could also negatively impact the shoreline. Indeed, the waters of the Creek and the Bay increasingly have been filled with returning fish of many varieties, as well as birdlife and healthy plant life. The beauty and nature-safe environment must be protected.

One of the most annoying ongoing threats to the health of the shorefront has been the toxic waterway of Coney Island Creek, which moves from the easterly end at Shell Road to the entrance-way of Gravesend Bay. A clean-up of this land and water area has been needed due to decades of contamination of many unhealthy elements that have seeped into the area from the years of its use by Brooklyn Union, now KeySpan. Investigations indicated the scope of ecological damage, and the State DEP mandated the cleansing of the site. Phase 2 of the operation is now underway due to the mandate given to KeySpan. Eventually, the Creek, from Shell Road to Stillwell Ave., will have been cleaned, as will the land abutting it. A portion of the land will be used by the Dept. of Sanitation for a new garage that would serve C.B. #13 and C.B. #15 Sanitation.

There are regular reports made to the Board's Environment Committee by KeySpan. What the future should hold is the cleansing of the remaining portion of Coney Island Creek, from Stillwell Ave. to the mouth of Gravesend Bay. The future can see the area used by fishermen, by environmental groups, by boaters, and for the general good of the population. Of course, there is no determination as to who will want to utilize the clean land area that is not going to be part of the Sanitation program. Alongside this waterway are two important park areas. Kaiser Park, on the peninsula side, is undergoing extensive work on its fields, park house, bleachers, and other widely used facilities. The Friends of Kaiser Park, working in tandem with the Board and with legislators, civic, church, and city units, already have created a new community focus on this park. A new running track, in addition to fields, has indicated the potential growing use of the once-neglected park. Councilman Recchia has proven a dynamic force in the renovation of the park, and evening concerts and daytime weekend festivals have become part of the Kaiser scene. The future is very promising for its widespread use by a community that has long needed it. On the other side of the waterway is Dreier-Offerman Park, an unusually large swatch of land that needs vast improvement. BUT its location and size indicate great potential. Today, it is the home for soccer and baseball activities. Tomorrow, its use can be widely expanded. A Master Plan for the future is now in the works, with phase 1 (2 ball-fields) (to be completed in a year, and other fields, wetlands development, better lighting, potential kayak areas, and more trees to grow in Brooklyn – all due in the following years..

Community Board #13 now has a convenient and spacious office at 1201 Surf Avenue, a healthier facility than an airless, windowless office that had been used for over a decade. The new office fronts on the busy Surf Avenue corridor and across from the amusement district. Visitors to the new office are many due to its high visibility and easy-to-reach site. It is here that complaints are monitored constantly, and it is here that debates and discussions focus on such imperative topics as the future of the famed Coney amusements, the downzoning of Brighton Beach, the beach and Boardwalk, street problems, and civic issues of a wide range. A wide range of issues are confronted every day by the Board office. Among the most heard concern beach closings (particularly prior to

July 4th) and due to the lack of lifeguards; clogged catch basins and sewers along with the resulting odors; Boardwalk trip hazards; garbage-dumping areas; parking problems in particular throughout the Brighton-Coney corridors; illegal and/or ill-conceived construction projects; issues related to homeless individuals and shantytowns in weed-filled lots and beneath the Boardwalk; increased traffic matters; and the overall concepts for the future of the entire southern part of Brooklyn. Overall, it can be observed that the communities within Board #13 are multi-economic and multi-ethnic. It is also obvious that the recent Census figures appear to be well under the reality of the actual population figures. Thus, these inaccurate (?) numbers have meant that funding for such imperative community needs as youth programs have been short changed. Many feel that the NYC Department of Youth & Community Development is in the dark as far as knowing the needs of the neighborhoods comprising C.B. #13. If funds are dispensed with these faulty Census numbers as a guideline, there is an inequity for the young people of the peninsula. It is thus quite fortunate, then, that one of CIDC's first projects has involved the development of a new community center, on Surf Avenue, to offer programming and space for youth and adults alike. There are other youth groups that have suffered cutbacks in funding that can be debilitating. At one time, C.B. #13 worked with the community in assessing youth programs; today, that is a positive activity that, unfortunately, was tossed out by DYCD. The JCC of Greater Coney Island maintains a busy schedule for all ages but can easily use, to great advantage, stronger funding. The same can be said for the Brighton Neighborhood Assn., Grace-Gravesend Athletic Assn., and others. Carey Gardens Community Center was abandoned as one of the arms of the Madison Square Boys' and Girls' Clubs, and lost much of its equipment and staff. Still, in true Coney spirit, it has strained but has kept active. Several contemporary sports figures, who trace their lineage to the shorefront communities, have proven to be of enormous help in underwriting some of the activities. If sports events are hampered by funding blindness, then one must also note that the cultural life of the area, once second only to that of Times Square, has suffered even more. Gone are the theaters – live and film, save for the attempts made at the Russian-speaking theater work at the Oceana in Brighton Beach.

Gone are live music venues although the sounds of music can be heard on the streets and Boardwalk carried aloft by emerging musicians and their groups. In the 1960's, while Coney Island was sweltering under a cloud of negative coverage, stage-screen star Geraldine Fitzgerald and Brother Jonathan Ringkamp, O.S.F., created by the Brooklyn Arts & Culture Assn. (BACA) and with the community to develop the Everyman Street Theater, inviting any and all people wishing to be part of this initial street production of "Everyman and roach". The show had many elements created by the cast and crew involved (coming from Coney Island, Sea Gate, Brighton Beach, and Gravesend for the most part). Results were far beyond the initial hopes of Ms. Fitzgerald, the BACA contingent, and the area residents. The show moved on to other play sites beyond the streets of Coney Island, Brighton Beach, Sunset Park, et al. It became the very first production ever staged at the Fountain area of Lincoln Center, a harbinger for the future and now-traditional Lincoln Center Out-of-Doors Festival. Several of the young people involved in the show went on to Juilliard!! Others stayed in the picture as future theatergoers and dance aficionados, as well as working individuals who also stayed with the arts as an avocation. Such an experiment was enormously successful, and other Everyman Companies, some of them still highly active, were born in other cities. The Everyman saga deserves to be further studied to indicate the positive impact that the arts can have on the healthy growth of a young population as well as the strong impetus to a neighborhood growth through the arts! The nearest one gets to live theater is the Ryan Repertory Co.'s Harry Warren Theater located one-and-a-half blocks out of the C.B. #13 district on Bath Avenue. The Paper Moon Theater, burned out of its Sheepshead Bay home, would love to find a space in the C.B. #13 area. The Brighton Ballet, due to a space problem, is now based in relatively

nearby Kingsborough College in C.B. #15, but it, too, wishes to come home again! A future cultural center in C.B. #13 that can harbor all of these... and galleries...and museums (as exemplified by Dick Zigun's Coney Island U.S.A., and Charles Denson's Coney Island History Project center beneath the Cyclone) is a natural attraction for potentially hundreds of thousands of visitors each year. There is even discussion related to the construction of a new ferry pier for the Island, one that could conceivably be built atop the old pilings of either the long-gone Iron or Dreamland Piers.

GRAVESEND/HOMECREST/BATH BEACH

As with all of C.B. #13 areas, the neighborhoods of Gravesend, Homecrest, and Bath Beach are filled with a wide diversity of people – all ethnic population, many young people, and senior developments. The Belt Parkway, Gravesend Bay, and Coney Island Creek separate these vicinities from the southern peninsula, but it is as if there were little, or no, separate needs and little, if no, break in the programs that unite them. These areas are filled with middle income high-rise structures e.g. Contello Towers, Waterview, and Harway Houses. Many one-and-two family homes dot the landscape, some of them relatively new. Here, too, development is rampant and some of it may well be deleterious to the health of the area. Higher rents have pushed out some restaurants, gas stations, and others, as developers have marched in to build what appear to be un-lovely condos and co-ops. There, however, is a feel of openness to much of the area. Little Dreier-Offerman Park, on Cropsey Avenue, is a delightful oasis that appeals to all ages, complete with bocce courts. Its reappearance as a major, albeit small, open space was due to the collaborative talks and work of the residents of Contello and smaller homes, with the Community Board and the NYC Department of Parks & Recreation. Only a few hundreds yards away is the much more spacious, and on its way to city-foster, beautiful development - Large Dreier-Offerman Park. Created, in part, by mass brought to the site during the construction of the Verrazano Bridge, this potential greensward has gone through several plans (including one that would have brought Family Golf into the picture) BUT there is, finally, definite work on the Master Plan for this important site, and the public is supportive. As mentioned earlier, it would have space for the obvious baseball and soccer uses but also for park houses and bathrooms, for environmental centers, and ecological beauty. All eyes, of course, still watch the development of the anticipated Waste Transfer Station nearby. The Mayor has assured crowds of complete safety on this issue.

Not far from these Shore Parkway-Cropsey Ave. buildings and parks are the structures of Marlboro Houses, created years ago with nice open spaces and civic amenities. In no change from last year's report, it must be noted that the NYC Housing Authority and the residents often find problems within this area. There are several resident groups trying to find a common bond to work on improvements. The playgrounds are not always in the good shape needed by a large residency of all ages. A senior center is a valuable part of the landscape. A sun-baked area, near Avenue X, had been a roller-skating site with a slightly raised portion that had been used for musical events. It is a large swatch of concrete desolation that can be used by the community if it could be maintained. Nearby, Transit Authority lands are not kept well, and trash is evident. This situation damages the effective use of a ball field on the TA property. Two major public high schools loom within a few steps – John Dewey High School and Lafayette High School, the latter of which has now been changed to the Lafayette 'Campus' with a group of smaller schools inside rather than the arrangement that had lasted for decades. The media has damaged the reputation of the schools, particularly Lafayette with its somewhat overbaked stories of racial incidents. True, there were some over recent years but never with the overall negative verbiage that flowed from newsprint. Lafayette had developed programs that linked ethnic and economic groups effectively, and had

student art in the hallways, student athletics on its large field, and student performers effectively capturing the giddy fun of "Bye Bye Birdie". John Dewey High School, similarly, has had positive programming, and one must cite student work concerning the environmental issues at nearby Coney Island Creek.

Easterly, separated from this area by the railroad yards and the highway, one finds the comfortable Beach Haven Houses and blocks of pleasantly maintained homes. The area is also zoned to allow auto fix-it stops. There are several one-block long streets that may have problems with parking and pot-holed streets created by trucks. The passage of trucks in this area may well become a growing concern when Sanitation trucks use Shell Road to go in and out of the soon-to-be-created Sanitation Garage on the remediated KeySpan land. Many meetings and discussions have already evolved on the issue. Still another element involved is the Gil Hodges ballfield on Shell Road where parking and additional space for athletes are needed. Traffic concerns are evident in that the field is opposite the exit from the Belt and Shell Road where sanitation trucks are apt to bring in additional vehicular movement. Vehicles from the Belt pour onto Shell Road just south of Beach Haven, and busy traffic concerns are added into the picture. One must note, as a reader scans these pages, that the crime rate has dropped considerably throughout these neighborhoods, though it was never as high as naysayers thought. Credit goes to the 60th Police Precinct, to Transit District 34, and Housing PSA1. However, in all conscience, additional personnel on all of these forces would be of great assistance today and tomorrow.

The Gravesend-Bath Beach area is served by one, ergo vitally important, library – Ulmer Park branch of the Brooklyn Public Library system. The library is built upon private property, and the owners have sparked problems for the branch, including threats of eviction. The Community Board had worked diligently with BPL on strengthening this facility in the past and remains firmly with the BPL in assuring the public that there is no threat to its continuance to serve the area. Discussions continue to work out a proper solution that will keep the Ulmer branch intact even if it should eventually mean going through eminent domain, a two-word term that usually is anathema to the residents of the area. Two other libraries well serve C.B. #13 and offer scores of programs, many of them involving language courses, children's activities, and more. The Brighton Beach and Coney Island branches, both of which were strongly supported in developmental work by C.B. #13's committees and full Board. Many public schools and parochial schools are still in these areas, although Our Lady of Solace, in Coney Island, has ceased its academic unit. The Ulmer Park branch, though, services both parochial and public schools as well as a huge population. Its current use and hoped-for additional construction remains one of the key issues in the neighborhood.

Traffic is one of the major concerns faced by residents, businesses, and motorists in and around the Cropsey Avenue corridor. Greater use has been seen as a result of an enormous return of beachgoers and as a strong resultant of the creation of a new Home Depot that meant the loss of several local streets. Trucks going to and from this major business had tried to avoid the Cropsey Ave. entrance by cutting through the remaining Bay 53rd Street, and signs and traffic lights have somewhat alleviated the problem, along with the creation of a West 22 St. to carry trucks through the rear of the Depot structure. Remaining, for the residents of Bay 52 Street, is a triangle that they would like to develop, by themselves, into a Green Thumb-ish landscape. But it is now partially fenced-in by an environmental unit, supposedly from Staten Island. Other areas of this triangle were filled with dumped wood from somewhat unknown sources. The wood is cleared, but the Bay 52 Street Green Thumb plan seems still to be in an unknown future state. Traffic coming from the Belt also must pass a busy Burger King, the Retro Diner, a large Pathmark, a drive-through

Starbucks, Linens 'n' Things, and a new development set to go up at Hart & Cropsey. Perhaps the biggest problem concerns the many auto shops along this route that create double and triple parking situations that block the flow of traffic. Similar problems occur in the same vicinity on Neptune and Stillwell Avenues. The bridge over the Creek at Stillwell has been notorious for overnight tractor trailer parking although the situation is also visible during the day! The traffic along this streetscape may indicate future as well as additional ills. A car wash built at the busy corner of Neptune & Cropsey is a successful venture, but cars waiting to get in to the facility back up onto the Neptune turn lane into north Cropsey. Other motorists make right turns from westbound Neptune into Stillwell north by criss-crossing lanes marked for bikers. In addition, cars going south on Cropsey and attempting to negotiate a right turn at Neptune face long waits and tie-ups because the streets do not line up. A turn signal is still needed here... and it has been sought for years. Motorists heading for the amusement district, the ballpark, along with local residents will all be facing difficult turns at this zigzag corner. The entire intersection should once again be re-studied. This traffic puzzle can and should be solved.

BRIGHTON BEACH

Two decades ago, one could have shaken one's head at the empty stores that filled Brighton Beach Ave. as well as the state of some of the smaller homes and former summer bungalows in the area. Then, things changed swiftly with the widespread arrival of newcomers from the former USSR. Today, Brighton Beach Ave. is one of the city's busiest shopping thoroughfares, and, among its many occupants, are operators of a score of restaurants offering Russian cuisine and stage shows. At the same time, developers charged into the area and bought up many of the small homes on the side streets, razing them, and quickly constructing new condos. All of this action has prompted not only joy but deep concern as well. Is the middle class and people who have spent their whole lives in the area threatened by all of the construction? Has the large-scale Oceana community created by Muss Development, a major residential success, created a situation that cannot be reversed in the light of overeager developers? The side streets, always narrow and filled with parked cars, are even more congested now. How much more development, if any, can the area tolerate? A new building seems to be straddling the street almost every week, and one wonders what will happen to the domiciles now home to not only Russians but to South Americans, Mid-Easterners, Mexicans, among many other groups. The blocks going south from Brighton Beach Ave. to the Boardwalk are largely well kept apartment houses, many of them longtime homes of longtime residents. New condos and co-ops seem to be springing up, crowding everything into a pile of brick and mortar. Parking is well night impossible at many times of the day, and double parking poses a critical problem. Delivery trucks may block the Brighton Beach Avenue thoroughfare at many times of the day, making bus passage as well as car movement difficult. Needless to say, the entire traffic movement indicates troublesome street navigation for the tens of thousands who flood into the strip for groceries and other services. The area has one municipal parking area off Brightwater Court, and half of it is supposedly set aside for rental for people in nearby homes. There may well be a plan to construct a high-rise above this widely-used and imperatively-needed parking lot. As a result, any move towards building involves deep thought. On one hand, it must be assured that at least two other levels must be created for parking beneath any new building. Even more critical, in the immediate sense, is a way to offer parking to those who might not be able to use the site during the construction period. Where will the car owners go? There are absolutely NO other sites for parking in the area. During any construction, the result can be devastating. As it is now, motorists can be seen driving up and down the crazy quilt streets now, becoming frustrated by the lack of spaces. It is even worse during the summer when beachgoers are added to the already

heavily concentrated crowds of this neighborhood. Downzoning plans were first sought from City Planning over three years ago. Nothing was done, and well over a year ago, the request was made again and meetings were held. The downzoning is a 'must' in a very immediate future. The Board awaits the official report and hopes that the action is taken quickly before more and more homes are razed and foundations are created prior to downzoning!

While Brighton BID and Brighton Neighborhood Assn. talk and work with merchants everyday, there are those who do not abide by health and sanitary regulations. It is known, for example, that there are storeowners (fruit shops in particular and restaurants that dump grease and/or rotted vegetables into sewers during the late hours). The result not only causes backups and clogged lines but evil smells that can appear almost toxic to shoppers. Others have disregarded the zero visibility rules and place merchandise on the sidewalks that are not allowable. Many vendors also mark this narrow street beneath the elevated train. Some may be legal e.g. veterans. Others simply come down to the street, block movement and cause havoc to pedestrians who sometimes walk into the gutters to avoid them.

When anyone thinks of C.B. #13 and its neighborhoods, one may immediately think of the vast and wonderful beach and Boardwalk. This three mile long seaside is the siren call for millions and is urgent to the economic lifeblood of the entire stretch from Corbin Place (the boundary line between C.B. #13's Brighton Beach and C.B.#15's Manhattan Beach) all the way down to the private community of Sea Gate.

The Boardwalk, today, in many places, is in dangerous condition. Decayed wood and nails mean trip hazards, and many such falls are reported each year. Part of the problem dates back to the replenishment of the beach by the Federal Corps of Engineers. Sand was moved right beneath the Boardwalk, and the wet sand, over the years, has escalated the deterioration of the wood. Other problems have arisen because of homeless encampments beneath the walkway, and fires have not been uncommon. Restaurants on the Brighton end of the Boardwalk e.g. Tatiana's and the Winter Garden have suffered damage due to fires that may well have been set off by fires under the famed walkway. The Parks Department, working with the 60th Police Precinct and the Volunteers of America, constantly surveys the area. Nonetheless, the result of years of neglect has left the wood in a precarious situation for those walking upon it. There are even more problems, including needed bathroom facilities along the sand-boardwalk areas, because there were facilities that were buried at the time of the sand replenishment. Admittedly, this bathroom lack is most obvious in the Coney Island areas.

CONEY ISLAND/SEA GATE

As is noted, it is the beach and Boardwalk that physically unites the southern areas of C.B. #13, and, certainly, all of the aforementioned issues of Boardwalk misuse follow through the shoreline down to the ill-made T-Groin/rock construction that separates Coney Island and Sea Gate. Although the Bays wending their way westward from the amusement district to Sea Gate are widely used, the lack of bathrooms is a sad health problem. In the amusement district, ride operators and the general public complain about the need for bathrooms at night when only one or two may remain open until, perhaps, 10pm. During the non-summer months, even fewer bathrooms are open although people are always finding a walk along the Boardwalk a need and pleasure. Maintenance of the beach, especially during and after a summer weekend, is a major chore for the personnel, but it is handled as well as possible. The shoreline is checked regularly by volunteers to ascertain

that no problem items have been washed in. Pavilions on the Boardwalk are lovely and used by the populace, but they are also sites for homeless sleeping quarters at night. The result may be uninviting in the morning hours. Coney Island, since the end of the 19th century, has been the scene of adventure and fun for generation upon generation. Today, one finds a firework spectacular every Friday night during the summer. The Mermaid Parade, which ushers in the warm weather months, attracts what appear to be a million people, as does Nathan's annual Hot Dog Eating Contest. Crowds have been added in the recent years by the advent of KeySpan Stadium, hope of the Brooklyn Cyclones and, therefore, a calling card for baseball fans from all over the city. The Coney Island Development Corp., created over three years ago by the Mayor, the Councilmember, the NYC Economic Development Corp. had worked on a Strategic Plan for the future of Coney Island, and it was widely heralded by the many ride operators, residents who had attended scores of meetings, church groups, and more. The Plan indicated that the amusement district would remain an amusement district, zoned for rides and fun-related activities. Thor Equities, then, bought up a great deal of the remaining areas between Stillwell Ave. and West 10th St., including the site of Astroland and offered its own proposal which included a 40-story residential building, hotels, time-shares, and commercial development in what had been an exclusive area for roller coasters, frankfurters, kiddie rides, and similar attractions for the throngs. There has been far less positive feeling for the Thor proposals, and no land use/zoning change paperwork yet submitted for the first ULURP stage that Thor must face with the Community Board.

The media has paid close attention but often has offered countless feature stories that, in truth, were based on rumors and the lack of factual data. The public has been confused by this widespread coverage. At the time of this writing, still further stories are pouring forth, but it is also evident that CIDC and city officials are regularly meeting to work out the 'right' plans for the famed amusement area. In the meantime, however, Thor Equities has torn down the sites of many of the small operators of amusements, thus depriving visitors from some of the fun they have cherished in the past and also depriving local youth from summer jobs so vitally requested. Empty, fenced-in lots are seen in the busy amusement district, but, oddly enough, the crowds, in the summer of '07 are enormous. Many feel that the loss of the amusement area could be a horrific one for Brooklyn and the city itself. There is little doubt that new housing will be part of the newer Coney Island, but it is strongly believed that such construction will not be within what people have always known as the center of the amusement area. Should Astroland close down after the '07 season, it will be a sad blow for the plans as outlined by CIDC. The image of Coney Island will be one that is negative to the world at large despite the fact that much of the amusements will remain, and despite the fact that the Cyclone roller coast, the Wonder Wheel, along with the Parachute Jump and the Child's Restaurant Building on the Boardwalk, are all official city landmarks and cannot be touched. The confusion over the future of the district must be clarified as soon as possible. Certainly, there will be a few slow-down years while the CIDC's proposal is implemented, but the public must know that the result will be a Coney for the 21st Century, one that is as friendly to visitors as it is to its new and longtime residents. In the meantime, huge lots throughout the peninsula play host to parked school buses – hundreds of them! Inappropriate for the world-famous 'people's paradise'.

When the Corps of Engineers crated a T-Groin between the beach of Coney Island and the beach of the private Sea Gate, several resultants were very negative. Sand was pulled from Coney and from Sea Gate and moved over to the northside of the peninsula at Bayview which overlooks Gravesend Bay. A vast new beach was created there, with mountainous dunes that blew sand onto the streets and into people's homes. There is a new plan endorsed by the Corps to correct what it has acknowledged as a mistake. The rocks on the southern area of the Coney beach would be shortened and

four new T-groins would be created. The result should prevent the tides from moving the sand from place to place, and, as a result, should restore the beach to Sea Gate. Without the sand buffer, Sea Gate is perpetually menaced by the destructive winds and tides of a hurricane, nor'easter, or massive snowstorm. Sea Gate is operated by the Sea Gate Association. Problems arise due to an infrastructure that is quite old; its sewer/catch basin system is a problem. Streets need repaving as well. Some illegal construction has been noted and reported, and SRO's are no longer unknown within the district that is still replete with spacious, large, and lovely homes.

While the Thor issue remains unresolved, CIDC is going ahead with plans that do not involve that company's properties. The new community center nears a start in the west end of the peninsula. Plans are in the works for the start of a Parachute Jump Park created below that formidable structure. This park would include the famed B&B Carousell which had been removed from Surf Avenue to be restored and placed at this location, along with possible restaurant(s) and other units one would envision for Coney Island. One block away, the now-landmarked Child's Restaurant Building (which had ceased being an eatery even before World War II) has been partially resurrected already by Taconic, which will be building around that site and which has been involved in assisting local Coney Island groups since it purchased properties in and around the Child's structure and on the northside of Surf across from the Stadium. Its use can be a powerful one for the entire community be it a catering hall, restaurant or series of restaurants, and other enjoyable uses. In the meantime, Gargiulo's famed restaurant has entered its 100th year of operation with a celebration hosted by the city with the entire community. New restaurants are becoming visible including a Surf and Turf Restaurant adjacent to the still-shuttered Shore Theater (nee Loew's Coney Island), and the Footprints Restaurant across from KeySpan Stadium, along with the Peggy O'Neill enterprise built into the stadium structure itself.

The New York Aquarium is an important part of the lifeblood of the peninsula, and it has been constructed on land that once was home to the fabled Dreamland amusement park. The Aquarium, too, is projecting a whole new image, and a large-scale search was held for designs for its future. The awardee has been named, and the work is exciting. Its start will be still another plus factor in the modernization of much of the area. A huge question, though, remains unsolved – the West 8th Street bridge that connects the West 8th Street station with the Boardwalk. It had been erected to carry people from the trains over Surf Ave. and onto the Boardwalk, beach and to the Aquarium. It is now a span in poor condition with stairways blocked to prevent people from using them. Designs have been proposed for a new bridge, but there remains debate as to whether or not it should be built. If built, the design seems to be a good one for the street, but the question will remain as to who will maintain it – the TA, the Aquarium, Parks, Transportation??

There are still problems with various businesses that are illegal in the C-7 zone as it now exists. Furniture stores are still visible even though the largest (Luna Park Furniture) has finished its two-year variance but still operates. Coney Island Furniture, near the rebuilt Stillwell Avenue Terminal, has been known to pile mattresses on the sidewalk; summonses don't seem to halt such an activity. The Terminal itself is a new marvel, creating the feel of 'ye olde' Coney with the new. For two years, the public has awaited word as to who will operate the still empty stores inside the structure. The TA has indicated that these shops should be in operation before the next warm weather season. A car dealership exists at 1201 Surf Ave. and was padlocked by city agencies. It has reopened its doors, and further summonses may well be in the offing. Flea markets, some selling stolen merchandise, had been an unwanted mainstay along the southside of Surf Avenue. Most have gone, but some vendors have entered a former storefront on the southside of the street

adjacent to the famed Eldorado ride. Here, too, permits must be reexamined.

While the amusement/beach/Boardwalk issues must be addressed, there must be a vigilant concern over the future of the high-rise buildings that are home to tens of thousands of people who have lived much, if not all, of their lives on the peninsula. Trump Village and Warbasse Houses stand near Ocean Parkway, which can be called the division line between Brighton Beach and Coney Island. They remain in good stable condition, with a sizable population of elderly. Because of this part of the Warbasse-Trump citizenry, greater attention must be paid to the crosswalks and traffic lights in the neighborhood. There have been many injuries and auto accidents in and around these streets, particularly at the junction of Neptune and West 5th Street, and at Ocean Parkway and Neptune Ave. Further west are the structures of the Housing Authority and others, including Coney Island Houses, Ocean Towers, O'Dwyer Gardens, Gravesend Houses, Scheuer Houses, Haber Houses, Sea Park, Luna Park, and Carey Gardens, among others. Senior housing is part of this Coney Island network as is the large and modern Shorefront Geriatrics Center, part of which was built on the onetime site of the famed Half Moon Hotel.

Smaller one-family homes have been built throughout Coney Island under the leadership of Astella Development. Mermaid Avenue, once the shopping hub of a bygone Coney, is again an important stretch for stores and restaurants of all varieties. For a number of years, the community had been minus a funeral parlor, and one has recently opened. The well-known Carolina Restaurant, near the Stillwell Terminal, may have closed but the site was quickly taken over by a now-prosperous Coney Island Buffet. Many other services can be found through these streets, including those provided by the Salt and Sea Mission, Amethyst Women, You Gotta Believe!, as three examples. All should receive strong support due to their needed work in the area. The churches play a pivotal role in the community as well. Help is offered in many areas by these facilities. As has been mentioned, the Friends of Kaiser Park have helped to restore a large park to a large constituency.

While the Stillwell Terminal has been moved into the 21st century, the buses that take people from the Terminal westward into the high-rise district are not necessarily reliable, and there are complaints about delays and timing. As a result, the dollar cabs, at the Terminal, are parked and ready to pick up fares at any time of the day and night. The jam up at the station is evident. There, of course, are other demands for this area, as well as other parts of the Board. Access-a-Ride, as an example, is widely utilized. Much of the C.B. #13 areas rely heavily on Coney Island Hospital, and it has been gratifying to see the hospital expand and grow with still more additions planned for the coming years. There is an ultra-modern new building to handle many situations that the hospital had been unable to accomplish in the past, or that the hospital needed better space in which to work. The hospital's off-shoot, the Ida Israel Center, on Neptune Ave., serves its own purpose and is satisfactorily used by a large patient core. But there are health issues throughout C.B. #13 that bring concern. The AIDS and HIV Positive problem, though often hidden, is nonetheless a formidable one. In addition, it is stated that the numbers are poor for pre-natal care and post-birth needs. Amethyst Women continues its outreach to try to deal with women who are suffering drug issues or spousal abuse. Local church and Salt and Sea Mission are on the streets to reach out to the homeless and disenfranchised. It must be noted, to the credit of those involved, that the Thanksgiving-Holiday seasons are made pleasant for these people through the work of Salt and Sea Mission, Marlboro Houses, churches, and many of the housing developments. Loneliness and need are most evident and sad during the otherwise song-filled season of presents and buying. A turkey dinner to a homeless person should not be limited to the holidays, but they express gratitude when they take part in a dinner with friends, neighbors, and those who care.

It should be evident to even the most cynical that positive changes are on the way to Coney Island's door. Such movements have been foreseen for years, and the Board and community it serves have all looked to the creation of a new pumping station to take care of the new buildings, the new homes, and the ever-present problems of the antiquated infrastructure. All would welcome a day, a morning, an evening when they would not have to be concerned about backed-up sewers, flooding, gummed-up outfalls clogged by sand and silt, among other ills. The pumping station had reached Design & Construction before disappearing, once again, into the planning stages. Now, DEP has informed the Board that the former Number One priority is not needed because the lines beneath the streets have been cleared of all blockages and that a lining would be inserted to keep things moving sans a hitch. Is this true? After years and years of working on the pumping station and its benefits, it is hard to accept that the additions to the peninsula can be handled by a line cleaning that could have been done years ago. As of now, however, with new work not yet forthcoming, the #1 issue is apt to be the horrible status of the Boardwalk. That structure brings together the people of Coney Island and the people of Brighton Beach along with their neighbors and guests to the community. It is a blight for the future projects, and it must be corrected. The relighting of Times Square would certainly have taken much longer if its walkway was in trip-hazard condition, and if flooding and odors from smelly sewers had been part of the scene. Coney Island's upcoming days of bright glory must be put on a par with that other enjoyment center across the river. Coney Island, though, is far less an expensive visit for its many guests. Where else in the city can a family or individual go for fun with only a few bucks in the pocket?

CITY SERVICES - POLICE

The 60th Police Precinct remains a paragon in the city system. Its men and women have been doing a yeoman job over the years. It is remarkably run, and the Board, fortunately, is coterminous with this well-run operation. The unity between the Board office and the Station House is strong, and there is constant communication and interaction. D.L. Johnson and the complete Community Relations and Crime Prevention Teams literally are on the phone, or meeting in person, almost everyday. The camaraderie is strong, and information is shared easily and promptly. As with other Boards, the District Manager stages a Cabinet Meeting every month, and he is gratified to see that he is visited by over 25 Cabinet members each, monthly meeting. The 60th Police have established a long and respected rapport with the community it serves. Whether there are incident or problems in Brighton Beach, Coney Island, Gravesend, and the other C.B. #13 areas, there is quick action by the men and women of the house. Their Community Council is in action at all times, and its meetings are moved from section-to-section with the Board area so as to reach as many people as possible. Add to their effectiveness the work of Transit District 34 and Housing PSA 1 and one understands why crime remains down and why a successful communication system exists between many parties in southern Brooklyn. Transit District 34 has moved into its new headquarters in the Stillwell Terminal while keeping alive its temporary situation at West 6 St. and Neptune Ave. opposite the entrance-exit of the Neptune Ave. (Van Siclen) train station. The police work closely with the Board office as well as with the C.B. #13 CERT team which has helped out during mock drills as well as the realities as the Mermaid Parade, July 4th, the Bandshe'll Concert series on both Tuesdays and Thursdays, as well as scores of special events. When Warbasse Houses blacked-out, the 60th Precinct notified the CERT Team through its Leader at the C.B. #13 office, and all worked together for the safety of the people in the stricken buildings. Together, they ascertained where troubled people might be stranded, and they worked and stayed together until the problems were totally corrected.

During the summer months, the influx of countless people to the area means a larger Summer Detail

from the precinct. The C.B. #13 District Manager is among those who meet with the Detail to keep them informed of what they will expect during the June to September season. The Detail is superb and must remain intact even during the years when construction may seem to limit activities. When fences and lots are present, the Detail must keep an even closer watch on the area's security. The Precinct is present at almost all of the happy events that are planned in the communities and in the amusement district. They assist and help by simply being on the scene. Considering the future of C.B. #13's communities, it is strongly stated that there should never be a cutback in the personnel at the Precinct. The men and women of the Police units must also deal with the negative and deal with it in a correct manner. Drugs, prostitution, and other negatives are present as they are in every neighborhood of the city. But the local units do a superb job in keeping things smooth and without many incidents. The future means a need to keep all of these people strong and on hand. Certainly, any 'new fangled' technical aid is needed e.g. up-to-the-minute computers and cell phones. The FIRE DEPARTMENT, too, is in this critical loop and works extremely well in the community and with the Board office. Some of the Fire Department facilities need help in facelifts (windows may be broken, missing, or un-operable). If the southern communities of Brooklyn have been known for fires in the past, including those on the Boardwalk, in shanties or old buildings, then it is obvious that the Fire Department personnel must be up-to-date on all equipment and needs.

With the ongoing, often completely unsubstantiated, but still menacing threats of terrorism, all agencies keep their eyes open to any and all suspicious actions within C.B. #13 as well as the rest of the city. The 60th Pct., the Fire Dept., the Office of Emergency Management, along with Councilman Domenic M. Recchia Jr., Assemblyman Alec Brook-Krasny and former Policeman Charles Barbiero have unified in their support of the C.B. #13 CERT Team which is working to be ready for any and all emergencies. A close communication tie is kept by the Team Leader and Mr. Barbiero (who now works for the Councilmember) with OEM. Besides any terror threats, the CERT Team maintains a vigil over the changing weather patterns that can provoke greater storms hitting this waterbound area. Blackouts and other service disruptions are carefully checked. The Team has already worked on the aforementioned mock subway crash, and others. Important materials have been purchased in the advent of a neighborhood problem. Funding is underway, assisted by Brighton Neighborhood Assn., and a list of future members is being compiled. Here, too, the communication between all of the previous mentioned agencies, and others, has made life easier for the CERT members. The members are also involved in crowd control at special events and concerts (the latter draw huge crowds to the amusement district e.g. The annual Siren Festival, and the Tuesday and Thursday evening events at the Asser Levy Bandshell.)

CITY SERVICES – ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Throughout decades, the renewed vigor of C.B. #13's neighborhoods can be traced to the activities and the follow-through of such units as Brighton BID, Brighton Neigh. Assn., Coney Island Chamber of Commerce and Board of Trade, Astella Development, and dozens of civic organizations, all of them paramount in all elements of the renewed importance of Brooklyn's south shore. The advent of the Coney Island Development Corp. has proven to be a burst of enthusiasm, involvement, and mind-boggling ideas for the future. CIDC meets with the civic associations, churches, etal of Coney Island, but its impetus are known to the other areas of the District. What happens in Coney Island directly and strongly affects the lifeblood of Gravesend, Brighton Beach, etal. There are other evidences of growth. Home Depot arrived, along with Linens 'n' Things and Starbucks on Cropsey Ave. Key Span Stadium has sparked the interest of sports fans who now regularly jaunt down to the areas of shore communities. Mermaid Ave. thrives as does Brighton Beach Ave.,

Cropsey Ave., and other arteries in and around the area. CIDC, of course, has a focus on the entire peninsula and is involved with discussions with Thor Equities, Taconic Investments, and many others about the future. CIDC is also committed to hold onto the great images of the past while seeking innovations for the future e.g. Streetscaping on Surf Ave. It must be underscored that ALL of Coney Island is involved in the work with a stated proviso that the longtime residents of the peninsula will not be threatened with the loss of their neighborhood and its residences.

CITY SERVICES – PARKS & RECREATION

Within the C.B. #13 vicinities, it is obvious that the Parks Department has an enormous responsibility, and the men and women working for the agency are commended for their zealous work. BUT there are simply not enough personnel to handle all of the current and future needs for which the agency must tend. Among the responsibilities are the great beach, the Asser Levy Park and its Bandshell, Dreier-Offerman Park, Grady Park, Little Dreier Park, Six Diamonds ballfields, Avenue Z Park, Nautilus Playground, Babar Yar Park, to name a few. Perhaps the most difficult aspect, as of now, is the state of the magnificent Boardwalk, which, as has been explained, has undergone extreme deterioration due to a great many causes. All of the work throughout the areas can be severely damaged if this world-famous walkway is not cleared of areas that are no more than treacherous trip hazards. Holes in the wood, along with protruding nails and rotted wood must be corrected as soon as possible lest areas be forced to be roped off. The safety of residents and visitors is of the highest priority. The handball courts on Surf Ave. at West 5th St. attract some of the best players in the metropolitan area and places even further away. The Ocean Parkway Malls, landmarked themselves, must be monitored and kept in shape. Kaiser Park, a rediscovered treasure, is undergoing its whirlwind change into the future, and its neglected park house is next on the revamping agenda. Tennis players at this park are plentiful as are the basketball, baseball, soccer, and other athletes. The track is excellent and new; the walkways provide a spectacular view. Nothing should be allowed to let this park ever fall again into disuse. Swimming races in the ocean, bike and marathon racing are regularly staged. Fishing has been a regular part of the Steeplechase Pier experience, but at least half of that structure jutting into the ocean is in dire shape. The Parachute Jump, overlooking the Pier and the Stadium as well as other sites and as a welcoming beacon to train riders and motorists as they approach the shore, was given a new lighting effect program last year, but it has failed to work as promised. A widespread feeling is one of disappointment. What happened to the lights that were supposed to denote different times of the year? Why the enterprise was seemingly lit for only one night with a happy crowd gawking at the wonders of light on the famed Jump? Whatever the reason, it is evident that a strong look should be made at the personnel in the C.B. #13 areas. There are remarkable, hard-working men and women, all working under steady leadership, but there are not enough to handle the present..... and the sparking future of the Parks' needs in C.B. #13.

CITY SERVICES – FIRE DEPARTMENT

Throughout the years of growth and sometimes deterioration, the Fire Department has assumed an enormous responsibility in C.B. #13. The annals of New York City reflect the giant fires that engulfed Dreamland, Luna Park, the first Steeplechase, as well as the Boardwalk itself. Today, the fire watch is a critical need – aging buildings, wooden structures, hidden SRO's, high rise buildings, illegal construction, and more, coupled with the threats of real and imagined terrorism. No one can ever forget the tragedies of 9/11, and a memorial has been created at KeySpan Stadium, along with other reminders in the neighborhoods, including street renaming in honor of the fallen. Throughout C.B. #13, the Fire Department personnel are lauded for being on the scene with effective and immediate

work. Fires are not uncommon, and the men and women of the Department and the EMS contingent are on guard at all times. Nonetheless, they are not given the proper attention in that their firehouses are often in need of corrective measures. Windows may be broken; but there are other construction problems with the aging buildings. Then, too, there are regular movements of local fire personnel to other sites, including Staten Island, leaving another firehouse, perhaps from another area, left to watch the neighborhood. Equipment must be kept in a constant state of upgrade, with communication systems in top form. The responsibility of the local fire personnel, and EMS, must be treated with the respect that is deserved, and the daily living quarters must be upgraded.

DEPT. OF HOMELESS SERVICES

The city must improve services that can assist the homeless population. The lack of adequate assistance leads to problems that hamper the health of any community. C.B. #13 is bombarded with complaints related to its high homeless population, a number perhaps far higher than the recent homeless census indicated. There is little doubt that the state of homeless shelters terrifies those who might be served at them. And problems for health and psychological help do not seem to reach out with seeming success. Volunteers of America works closely with the 60th Precinct, the Parks Department, as well as other agencies and other entities like the Community Board and Fire Department. Nevertheless, vigilance cannot be the only answer, because Police and VOA personnel respond to all complaints sent into the C.B. #13 office and to the 60th Precinct. Two ravaging fires took place, probably from homeless encampments beneath the Boards, at the sites of two Boardwalk restaurants – Tatiana and Winter Garden. These two separate fires damaged the abutting apartment houses, proving hardship for residents, as well as to the Boardwalk and the eateries that serve a wide populace. While a homeless man or woman may be removed from a site, the same man or woman will return to it as soon as possible. Sites along the Coney Island Creek, Ocean Parkway hillsides near Coney Island Hospital, Ocean Parkway, Boardwalk Pavilions, Six Diamonds, Dreier-Offerman Park, the Bandshell at Asser Levy, and even sidewalks in Brighton Beach are among the many sites where these emotionally or physically damaged people haunt. Tents are found along with hot plates, mattresses, clothing, papers, and, in one case, a working fax machine beneath the Boardwalk. All of this is unacceptable, whether the site is Manhattan or Brooklyn or.....! The Salt and Sea Mission, local churches, and others may try to help solve problems, but they cannot do it alone. The homeless issue is a longtime one in C.B. #13 and it must be properly addressed.

CITY SERVICES-CULTURAL AFFAIRS

As it was with Times Square decades ago, Coney Island gave birth to much of the cultural life that turned the city into the hopeful destination for musicians, songwriters, actors, writers, painters, and performers of all varieties. Live theater – ethnic and English speaking – was common. The Brighton Beach Theater, for example, played host, during its summer Subway Circuit season, to plays and musicals featuring the greats of the theater, like Bert Lahr, Mae West, Betty Hutton, Susan Peters, and nearly every performers who usually held sway on West 45th Street's Theater District. But they were not the only ones who could trace their background and/or performances to the area, and the list is endless with names like Louis Gossett Jr. Barry Manilow, Neil Sedaka (all former residents), along with the stars who appeared on stage at the Bandshell e.g. Liza Minnelli, Art Garfunkel, Linda Rondstadt, Natalie Cole, Dionne Warwick, The Village People, Debbie Reynolds, and many many more. Movie theaters abounded as did jazz clubs in the past, and, at least one or two people recall the appearance at the Atlantis on the Boardwalk by a very young and

very talented songstress named Doris Day. Television, Robert Moses, and other events evicted live theater, music, and more. Dick Zigun, many years later, brought Coney Island USA to the area and opened the door to renewed theatrical and sideshow fun. The Everyman Company, as noted previously, gave residents the opportunity to explore their desires for stage work, and many of them stayed with the company even into its off-Broadway run at a Central Park West venue. Today, however, cultural lifestyles are alive but seldom supported. The Brighton Ballet was forced to move to Kingsborough Community College. Local musicians struggle to find performing spaces, although some found a welcome on the Boardwalk thanks to the understanding owners of Deno's Wonder Wheel Park and Astroland. The Russian population in Brighton Beach makes use of the former Oceana Theater building where the term Millennium looms on the marquee.

Much more is needed. The arts, as well as athletics, are imperative to a healthy society giving ample opportunities for the young and the adult residents. Certainly, the area of C.B. #13 can once again shine with the kind of entertainment achievement as has been continued in Times Square.

CITY SERVICES – HEALTH

Coney Island Hospital is the mainstay facility serving C.B. #13, and its applauded new building and services alleviate anxiety in the communities it serves. Well regarded, the Hospital has mounted campaigns for up-to-date equipment and services... and it has been succeeding well beyond expectations. Together with its offshoot at the Neptune Ave. Ida Israel Center, the Hospital provides treatment for all. But there are health problems that still plague the area. The HIV-AIDS situation, still in the shadows, poses a threat. Pre- and post-natal care appears to be lacking or ignored. Outreach on these issues is needed. Fears are evident among the elderly in particular regarding shortages of flu vaccines that occurred two years ago. Media hysteria about bird flu and other ailments imported from distant lands does fuel additional anxiety among the residents. But one of the most obvious threats is very visible – rats. Large dangerous rats are reported throughout the district and not only along the obvious sites along the Creek or on weed-covered private – and city owned – lots. These same lots may prove settlement sites for homeless, adding to the problem. There are areas where garbage dumping is common...and often piled high. The Dept. of Sanitation works diligently, but some of the trash-strewn sites are private property or land owned by such agencies as the Transit Authority.

CITY SERVICES – YOUTH

There is a feeling of helplessness within the youth population of the District. The ramifications of the revamped Department of Education confuse the students and their parents, and there are constant queries about where local youngsters are being sent and how they can be kept in the neighborhood. There is also concern about whether or not smaller schools can work, with Lafayette High School, for example, becoming the Lafayette Campus with smaller schools being serviced therein. But there are other problems, and they involve the lack of support for youth groups in Brighton Beach, Coney Island, Gravesend, and Bath Beach. At one time, not in the long distant past, the Community Board played a pivotal role in the on-site assessment of existing youth programs and suggestions as to those that deserve funding. Meetings upon meetings were held after changes were made in the applications for city funds and for allocations to small groups. It became evident that a 'well-heeled' organization, with the ability to hire professional writers of funding applications was the ones that, sans Board involvement, would get the funding. Smaller units, operating at peak efficiency but lacking the funds to purchase the services of a writer with the right words at his/her

fingertips, lost out. C.B. #13 must hear the woes of groups affected by cutbacks, some of them to the extent of annihilation. What can be done to safeguard functioning and threatened groups? How can we all assist the work of the Brighton Neighborhood Assn., the JCC of greater Coney Island, Grace-Gravesend Athletic Assn., Carey Gardens Boys and Girls Clubs, the Sharks, Youth DARES, and scores more?? A new community center, heralded by CIDC, will rise in western Coney Island, but it cannot possibly handle all of the needs of all of the groups not only in Coney Island but throughout C.B. #13. Leadership is there, but funding is not. Schoolyards must be reopened to students, but groups need support. The associations that support groups that use the fields at Dreier-Offerman and Grady and Kaiser must receive assistance. IF, and only IF, there were mountains of funds available, it would be agreed that an organization like Music Masters receive monies to stage its short stays at local schools. Additional aid must be found to bring the Abe Stark Ice Skating Rink up-to-date and to open it more often to young people who can enjoy the activity. But there are not funds enough. Youth programs in sports and the arts must be supported if the next generation is to have more of a chance at healthy lifestyles. Perhaps nothing is more important in the final analysis.

Changes obviously loom in the very near future for the neighborhoods of Community Board #13. The city helped Times Square face its newer role in the changing world. Coney Island and Brighton Beach and Gravesend and Sea Gate and Bath Beach all deserve the same consideration. Their histories echo the history of a nation. All that has been written in these pages must be unified into a positive stride for the southern areas of Brooklyn.... New York City....U.S.A.

Marion Cleaver

Marion Cleaver
Chairwoman

Chuck Reichenthal

Chuck Reichenthal
District Manager