



# COMMUNITY BOARD NUMBER 1

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*SERVING PORT MORRIS • MOTT HAVEN • MELROSE*

**Ruben Diaz, JR.**  
*BOROUGH PRESIDENT*

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**GEORGE RODRIGUEZ**  
*CHAIRPERSON*

## STATEMENT OF COMMUNITY DISTRICT NEEDS FY 2012

### Community Board District 1

#### Borough of the Bronx

“We can no longer allow ourselves to be defined by the negative stereotypes promoted by the media’s outdated image of the South Bronx. Instead, we should embrace the vision of a “Downtown Bronx”, a gateway which symbolizes the renaissance of the Bronx”. – George L. Rodriguez, Chairperson.

#### Geography and Demographics

Located in the southern portion of the Bronx, The boundaries of District 1 follow the Harlem River; East 149th Street; Park Avenue; East 159th Street; East 161st Street; Prospect Avenue; East 149th Street; and the East River. The neighborhoods served are Melrose, Mott Haven, and Port Morris. The land use lot area of the district is 37,398,400 `square feet, covering 1,769.9 acres and 2.8 square miles. The land uses patterns consist of one and two family and multifamily residential properties, mixed residential commercial use, commercial, office, and industrial uses.

The dominant ethnic themes in the district are Puerto Rican, Dominican and African American. Recent immigrants to the district include persons from Mexico, the Caribbean, West Africa, and Central America. According to the 2000 Census, we have a total population of 82,159 people, of which 58,204, or 70.8 percent are of Hispanic origin. 21,272 people, or 25.9 percent are African-American, 1,097, people or 1.3 percent are White, 420 people, or 0.5 percent are Asian, 206 people, or 0.3 percent are American Indian, and 186 people, or 0.2 percent represent other races. The 2000 Census demographic profile of the district depicts a major portion of the population, 22,797, or 27.7 percent are 25 to 44 years old with 14,595, or 17.8 percent being 45 to 64 years old.

#### Introduction and History

Our Community District area, Bronx Community Board No.1, (CB1B) Gateway to the Downtown Bronx, is a district of three neighborhoods: Port Morris, Mott Haven, and Melrose. All three of these neighborhoods are rich with history.

The Port Morris section was developed as a seaport in the early 1800’s. In 1828 Jordan L. Mott, the inventor of a coal-burning stove, established an iron works business on the Harlem River at

East 134th Street. Mott was the first major industrialist to locate in the Bronx. Dividing land he purchased from the Morris family into smaller lots for homes for his workers, he called the area surrounding the railroad station at East 138th Street and Park Avenue the Village of Mott Haven. Mott also dug a canal where Canal Place is presently, from East 133rd to East 144th Streets. On both sides of the canal, coal and lumber companies moved in, transforming the area into the major distribution point for those products in the Bronx. The historical significance of this area was recently reaffirmed as the old C. Rieger's Sons Factory at 450-452 East 148th Street was listed on the 2004 National Register of Historic Places. The National Register is the nation's official list of properties worthy of preservation. The listing of the factory on the Register recognizes its importance to the history of our nation and will provide this property with a level of protection. In 1863, the first row houses were built on Alexander Avenue, and are now part of the Mott Haven Historic District. Besides the Mott Haven Historic District, CB1B is also home to historic districts, the Bertine Block Historic District, and the Mott Haven East Historic District. Industrial growth continued and by 1900, East 138th Street had become the main industrial and commercial district in the Bronx, and 50% of all American-made pianos were built here. In 1906 the Harlem River Rail Yards were built, providing freight rail service to upstate New York and beyond. Populated by Irish, German, and Jewish immigrants, who resided in the district in large numbers until the conclusion of World War II, an ethnic transformation began in the late 1950's and early 1960's. African-American and Hispanic persons, seeking employment and housing opportunities began to relocate to the area.

The 1949 passage of the National Housing Act, a federal law funding local slum clearance led to the demolition of many of the older houses in the district that had fallen into disrepair. On these extremely large land tracts were built a vast number of high-density, high-rise apartment buildings by the New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA). The majority of these developments were built in the Mott Haven section of the district in the late 1950's and 1960's.

In the 1970's and 1980's the district was stricken by a physical and social decline. Overwhelmed by drugs use, narcotic trafficking, crime, and social ills, neglected by the City of New York during its serious fiscal crisis, CB1B suffered through a twenty-year period of arson for profit, and landlord abandonment. The majority of the housing stock lost during the period of abandonment were multiple dwellings, the result of which now is a lower density of housing units in the district. The impacts on the district growth patterns were substantial. The middle-class exodus resulted in a concentration of disadvantaged residents. An economic change also peaked during this time as the last of the many good wages and traditional manufacturing jobs produced in the area began to diminish. The loss in local employment led to many residents to depend on government public assistance subsidies.

Today, CB1B, which consists of a vibrant community of low-to- moderate-income families, is undergoing a unique physical change. Welfare reform and the associated reduction of persons on public assistance, a decrease in the local crime rate, the reclaiming and improvement to our public spaces, and growing income diversity is changing the district socially. The economic risk to developers in building commercial properties and residential units has abated. Since 1990 construction starts in the district have added over 3,800 units of new and rehabilitated housing. The Board's pursuit of a balanced housing strategy – a development mix of low-to- moderate income multiple dwellings units and homeownership opportunities has over the past six years introduced a growing middle-income economic stratum to the area.

Privately, and publicly financed new affordable housing projects, such as the Melrose Commons Homes, have yielded a low to mid-rise residential community of 1176 housing units, open space, and

associated commercial uses. CB1B has been extremely aggressive in promoting the development of quality, affordable, and environmentally sound housing. An example of which is the level of new construction in CB1B's Melrose section in conjunction with Nos Quedamos, a local housing sponsor, the New York City Departments of Housing Preservation and Development and City Planning. In this regard all have worked to facilitate the development of this residential community. A major investment and infusion of public and private financing of over \$24 million from Chase Community Development Bank and the City helped South Bronx Churches construct 262 new homes in the St. Mary's area of Mott Haven. Since the housing revival began, the development process has advanced local smart growth. We see this as the planned creation of a holistic community, blended with mixed-use housing, a diversification of retail businesses, improved parkland and open space, the upgrade of public amenities and the development of new school facilities. In recent years housing projects have been completed by national, regional, and local entities including Habitat for Humanity, Enterprise Foundation, NYC Housing Partnership, Community Preservation Corporation, and private housing developers such as Atlantic Development Group.

Many national and regional retail convenience chains have begun to open stores in the area. The work performed by CB1B in conjunction with a number of local housing and economic development corporations and not-for-profit organizations have contributed to the sustained redevelopment and population growth that is now occurring.

The designation by the federal and state governments of Port Morris as an empowerment zone and an empire zone has allowed businesses located there to receive special tax benefits and additional financial incentives. These incentives helped to facilitate the recent relocation of the New York Post's newspaper printing operations from South Street in Manhattan to a new \$200 million, 501,238 square foot facility constructed on East 132nd Street. The relocation of the printing plant to CB1B resulted in the retention of 420 printing plant jobs and the creation of 79 new printing jobs with local hires.

A zoning change implemented in 1998 allowing mixed commercial and residential uses have tripled the value of properties on a two-block section of Bruckner Boulevard and Alexander Avenue. Its establishment has fostered an Antique Row area and artist node in this section of the district. Subsequent efforts by the City's Department of Business Services in conjunction with the South Bronx Economic Development Corporation, (SOBRO) have led to improvements to this area. Upgrades include new street trees, streetlamps, and benches. The further use of underutilized manufacturing areas for mixed-use will be achieved in Port Morris as outlined in the Department of City Planning's Port Morris Rezoning proposal.

The district has a very strong core foundation through the existing resources of its regional transportation systems. There is ease of connectivity via subway, bus service, and commuter rail, to Manhattan and Westchester County. Transit rehabilitation is taking place adjacent to the HUB, as New York City Transit is about to begin the preservation and rehabilitation of the Historic Jackson Avenue station, opened in 1904, and providing service for the No.2 and No. 5 trains. The work scheduled for this station includes restoration of Station Houses, Balconies, and Stairs. The district's truck routes, via the Bruckner and Deegan Expressways and freight rail system link the district to New England, upstate New York, New Jersey, and the other four boroughs of New York City. For the recreational pleasure of its residents and guests, the district has an extensive and improving park, playground, and Green Street system. In addition, the district's HUB area and the immediate environs are home to three institutions of higher learning. These colleges are creating opportunities for personal advancement for many individuals, including the mature student. They include Metropolitan College of New York, College of New Rochelle-John Cardinal O'Connor Campus, and with an enrollment of 4, 222 students, Hostos College of the City University of New

York. The Lincoln Medical and Mental Health Center of the New York City Health and Hospital Corporation also services the district.

Over the past six years, the City has been investing in Community Board No. 1. The capital plan includes funding for major bridge, street, park, cultural, and commercial rehabilitation. A \$26 million capital reconstruction project was recently completed on East 149th Street, Melrose, and Third Avenue. Within CB1B are several commercial shopping areas, including the HUB commercial area, one of the City's Business Improvement Districts and East 138th commercial shopping districts. A 160,000 square foot retail and office complex is to be developed on East 156th Street and Third Avenue in the HUB by the Related Companies. The New York City Department of Finance will establish a centralized, one-stop center for its activities.

The need to create opportunities for the constructive development of our district's waterfront is being realized by the proposed redevelopment of the district's abandoned waterfront. These plans include the creation of access to the Harlem River waterfront with pedestrian connection to Randall's Island from Lincoln and Park Avenue. With funding from the City's Economic Development Corporation, local community engagement is occurring regarding development of a continuous bicycle and pedestrian greenway along the waterfront of Community Boards One and Two.

The South Bronx Greenway feasibility study is presently being performed by Matthews Nelson Landscape Architects. The Bronx Borough President has outlined a Waterfront work plan through the creation of a Waterfront Taskforce. The task force has developed the following objectives to improve the Waterfront in the southern portion of the Borough: "Establish public access to the waterfront; create opportunities for area residents and workers; enhance the business environment to maximize job resources for Bronx residents; achieve consensus on waterfront use while improving the quality of life for both residents and workers; the protection of our natural resources; and the promotion of sustainability over the long term".

As the district is becoming more viable as a place to live, play and work, there continues to be a plethora of problems that must be overcome in order to complete the transformation that is occurring in our Community Board area. These include a dearth of opportunities for the youth of the district; chronic unemployment, predatory lending, limited access to capital and credit, pockets of substandard housing, the delivery of adequate health services, negative land uses, and diminished air quality. There must be a connect and synergy to the redevelopment effort underway in our community. Positive changes for our residents in the levels of local service delivery, education attainment, health outcomes, personal security, wealth building, and their quality of life must be realized along with the current improvement to the physical environment.

To ensure the continued improvement of Bronx Community District No. 1, funding and continued support from the Mayor's Budget are needed in the following areas:

### **District Needs Analysis and Priorities Section One**

#### **● New York City School Construction Authority:**

Complete the renovation and rehabilitation of P.S. 31 and FY 2005-2009 capital improvements For PS 277, PS30, PS220, PS43, PS154, PS157, IS162 and FY 2005 SIRA Program Improvements for PS25, PS29, and PS220.



● **New York City Department of Education:**

Increase funding for ESL programs and adult literacy, establishment of smaller classrooms. Close the student suspension center in the district located at 210 Alexander Avenue.

● **City University of New York:**

Increase funding for education programs and initiatives at Eugenio Maria De Hostos College located in the district.

● **New York City Department for the Aging:**

Increase level of operations in district senior citizen centers for Homecare, Legal Services, Nutrition and Recreation.

● **New York Public Library:**

Increase general operating support funding, days of branch operation, and the book budget for the Mott Haven and Woodstock libraries.

● **New York City Department of Parks and Recreation:**

Increase the budget allocation for maintenance supervisors and full-time seasonal staff positions. Increase the funding for street and park tree planting and pruning. Rehabilitate Flynn Park. Continue collaborations with organizations such as the Trust For Public Land that have helped expand and improve open space in the district through the creation of land trust organizations.

● **New York City Department of Transportation:**

Maintain planned commitments for district highway and water bridges improvements, including the East 153rd Street bridge replacement project. Develop, under the Bronx Step Street Program a step street at East 159th Street, from Eagle to St. Ann's Avenues. Reduce adverse traffic conditions through the installation of a raised intersection at East 139th Street and Cypress Avenue. Reconstruct East 149th Street, from Grand Concourse to River Avenue. Reconstruct East 132nd Street, from Willis to Lincoln Avenues.

● **New York City Department of Youth and Community Development:**

Increase funding for youth services and community development programs,

retention of funding for Beacon Schools, the Youth Development Delinquency Program, Summer Youth Employment Program, and the After School Corporation.

● **New York City Department of Health:**

Continuation of rodent infestation initiative in the district. Increase funding for AIDS education, teenage pregnancy, infant mortality, and asthma treatment. Maintain funding for childhood obesity programs. Increase funding for local Maternal Health Services, School Based Health Clinics, and Child Health Clinics.

● **New York City Health and Hospitals Corporation:**

Increase funding that supports the operation of the Adolescent Substance Abuse Treatment Clinic at Lincoln Medical Hospital and Mental Health Center located in the district.

● **New York City Human Resources Administration:**

Increase funding for the Office of Child Support Enforcement and Job Center operations.

● **New York City Administration for Children Services:**

Increase funding for Head Start programs and daycare slots.

● **New York City Transit Authority:**

Increase the level and frequency of bus service throughout the community during the peak rush hour periods. Continue operations at local subway stations by maintaining token booths and clerks.

**District Needs Analysis and Priorities Section Two**

**Public Safety**

There is presently a 243 police officer deployment level in the local service district of the 40th Police Precinct. CB1B is concerned that the department's and the community's public safety objectives cannot be met under this current force structure. New York City has remained on the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's second highest national alert status since September 11, 2001. Fourteen key locations within Community District # 1 are under alert status Omega as potential terrorist targets. Patrol manpower is needed to support these objectives as well. 159 and 132 officers, presently staff our Transit Bureaus- District 11 and 12, respectively. Two key transit

stations, with under the river tunnels, connecting the Bronx to Manhattan are in the district and also part of the City's constant alert status. Maintaining an adequate level of patrol police officers within the district to meet this threat is critical.

The persistent fear and perception of crime in a neighborhood can have a deleterious impact on the quality of life, the security of residents, and community rebuilding efforts. There was a period of time in the district when drug dealers and the constant sound of street gunfire at night controlled the movement of residents. Recent statistics show that violent crime has remained relatively low over the last three years. Continued work by the New York City Police Department (NYPD), has lowered the level of domestic violence and sexual assault cases district wide. Initiatives in school safety, the monitoring of pedestrian traffic around schools, and bicycle patrols have decreased local youth crimes in and around our schools. Several successful operations by the department in areas such as the New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) Adams and St. Mary's Houses have reduced the level of crack cocaine at these developments.

Unfortunately, there are still segments of the district that have sporadic violence attributable to street level narcotic trafficking and the availability of illegal guns.

Random felony criminal activity erupts frequently at the 1, 238 units, 5000, plus resident Mutual Housing Association Diego Beekman Houses in Mott Haven. Although reduced, narcotic use and distribution takes place in our streets, and our parks, especially St. Mary's. This activity is on going, despite the closure of park property at dusk.

To combat these occurrences, the NYPD has established various street-level initiatives, including Operation Impact. We applaud the department for these efforts and Operation Clean Sweep. However, major crimes of violence are prone to occur at our NYCHA developments. The carrying, selling, and use of illegal handguns have led to spikes in criminal incidents. These shootings are primarily associated with youth gang and drug activities that frequent the Patterson, Mill Brook, and Mitchell houses.

We are concerned about the recent elimination of the Public Housing Drug Elimination Program. The loss of funding for this public safety initiative reduces the resources to complete the department's patrol mission in a district that has 20 NYCHA developments with over 12, 055 units.

Of the modernization work scope envisioned for our NYCHA developments, general building security within the Authority houses has been an ongoing concern of this board. There are certain developments in our district that are susceptible to criminal activity. Although the Police Department's recent Operation Impact has bolstered coverage, our Police Service Area # 7 (PSA # 7) covers five community boards, including the developments within CB1B with only 198 officers. In an effort to enhance tenant security, CB1B needs the New York City Housing Authority to explore the installation of Closed Circuit Television (CCTV) within the building lobbies and public areas of the Millbrook, Mott Haven, Mitchell and Patterson houses. We believe the advancement of this security measure at these developments in our Board would greatly reduce the incidence of crime against development residents, particularly our seniors.

A recent and disturbing trend in the district is an increase in the number of cabaret clubs and adult entertainment establishments. Some of these businesses have attracted a negative clientele. There is concern that the placements of these establishments in the district will deteriorate of the local quality of life. Activity of this nature has resulted in the need for additional police resources to be deployed to these establishments, thereby reducing patrol coverage in other sectors in the district. To continue the crime reduction levels achieved by the department's initiatives, consideration for the retention of the deployed police officers beyond the completion of an operation is needed.

There is a need for additional appropriation for police patrol personnel to the 40th precinct. Police community relations have improved through the consortium of community organizations, SOBRO, the Police Department, the U.S. Attorney's Office, and the Bronx District Attorney's Office working in the neighborhood Weed and Seed program to reduce crime in Mott Haven.

The relocation of the New York City Fire Department, (FDNY) Fire Marshall Base at 3134 Park Avenue and the movement of the borough's 25 fire marshals to the Fort Totten, Queens base has directly impacted the level of investigative fire services in the district. The closing of the base and the plan to reduce the number of automatic investigations fire marshals undertake, responding to all-hands and second alarm fires only if the fire chief at the scene requests an investigation is shortsighted. CB1B needs the restoration of and the siting of the Fire Marshal Base services to the Bronx.

### **Technological Education and Entrepreneurship**

As part of the fiscal year 2006 Capital Budget Requests, Bronx Community Board No.1 agreed to advance as its second priority a new initiative, the development of a Science and Technology Center. The initiative would require the adaptive re-use and conversion of the current 40th Police Precinct upon its closure and relocation. CB1B's imagination and vision sees the stated architecture, craftsmanship, and unique location of the 80 year old 40th Precinct building as an opportunity to establish within the district the important foundation of science and technology for our children. The building, located at 253-257 Alexander Avenue and East 138th Street is part of the Mott Haven Historic District that was designated in 1969. The Historic District is located in one of the oldest settled areas of the Bronx. It has been stated by the Landmarks Preservation Commission that the police precinct is one of the primary architectural components of the historic district.

The challenges of this initiative are miniscule compared to its potential and severe need. According to the 2002 edition of "Keeping Track of New York's Children" by the Citizen's Committee for Children of New York, "Mott Haven is ranked among the highest risk communities for children in all data categories except health. Mott Haven has more children living in poverty, more reports of abuse and neglect, more special education students, and more students not meeting the state and city reading and math standards, more students with limited English proficiency, and more teens giving birth, not in school, or arrested, and fewer library books".

We believe one of the ways our community has the opportunity to escape from poverty and environmental degradation in the 21st century is through an understanding and growth in applied critical thinking. Technological reality and globalization have removed the traditional options for unskilled and technically illiterate persons. Education in science, math, and technology is the new global currency. Implications of globalization on education and employment are immense to our children as well as to adults.

The trend is a reduction in the proportion of children in the district mastering disciplines of science and math in their education, or gaining employment in technologies using these applications. The strong decline of student interest and scholarship in math, science, and technology threatens their long-term economic future. In periods of economic decline, our community in particular suffers greatly. Well-educated persons lead technological development and innovations. Successful communities are composed of persons competent in these and other professional fields. As an increasing percentage of our population, the youth will work in a technology-based economy, they must have the ability to compete fully in and be enabled to successfully enter into this market.

In addition to programs geared specifically to children, the Center will provide opportunities



for youth and adults to these technologies through learning and entrepreneurial facilitations. The evolution of centers of learning in science and information technology is readily viewed in many of our districts schools and in the New York Public Library-Mott Haven branch. The Center would be a model of community-based learning.

In the Executive Budget FY 2003 capital budget, \$15.3 million was allocated under budget line PO-141, for the new 40th Precinct Station House to be constructed on East 149th Street. However, monies were removed from the program budget line in FY 2004.

CB1B need restoration of the allocated level of funding in FY 2006 for the design and construction of the station house so the technology center project can be advanced.

### **Economic Development**

In their efforts to increase businesses opportunities in the Port Morris area the NYC Economic Development Corporation (EDC) has developed several job creation and retention initiatives. The financial benefits and incentives of these programs assisted in the NY Post plant relocation to the area and have improved the climate for business locally. EDC's "Digital NYC-Wired to the World" high technology districts program, contracted through SOBRO has brought technology and Internet firms into prewired buildings. The Port Morris In-Place Industrial Park provides targeted financial assistance to local manufactures, including the woodworking, beverage distribution, waterproofing, wire fabrication, and garment industries in the district. Workforce development and entrepreneurial training activities by several community development corporations over the years have facilitated the entry of local residents into the general economy.

While new opportunities for business growth and local employment in the district is evident, there is concern as the rate of "Grayfields" properties that now proliferate the district has increased. These empty, unused and underutilized commercial and industrial properties are a result of the loss of retail and manufacturing jobs in the district. The recent elimination of 100 local jobs with closure of the manufacturing plant for the 100 year-old Everlast Sporting Goods Worldwide Company in Port Morris and its relocation to Missouri has added to this environment.

Retention of prime manufacturing facilities has also been difficult. The 4.8-acre old Farberware plant site in Mott Haven, whose highest and best use would be a future return to economic development viability, has been acquired by condemnation for an electric area and transmission substation use by Consolidated Edison. This community board does not support the loss of the Faberware building for this purpose. We support opportunities created out of the Bronx Federal Empowerment Zone, Federal HUB Zone, and the State Empire Zone. Zone- associated financing assistance programs have helped to retain local employment, business ownership opportunities and to advance job training.

We believe there should be continuation and availability of tax-exempt financing for developers under the New York Liberty Bond Program. The program can help spur commercial and industrial activity in the district.

The retail sector of the district, declining since the 1980's is beginning to slowly stabilize. A fragmented collection of storefront retail lines, The HUB, is the oldest major shopping locale in the Bronx. The district's main retail corridor, the area is surrounded by high population density from the nearby public housing developments. Its shopping traffic is generated via foot, car and public transportation. Historically, the principal, regional shopping area for the southern and central portions of the Borough, it has borne the brunt of this retail loss. Formerly home to several department stores, the contraction, and consolidation of this industry, along with sales lost to suburban retail

outlets and malls contributed to the HUB being marginalized. The lower shift in population and income also adversely affected the expansion of retail opportunities to the district. Retail rents in the HUB area now range from \$50 to \$55 per square foot, and “name” street tenants include Modell’s, Duane Reade, GNC, Athlete Feet, and Foot Locker. However the lack of retail diversification, the similarity and duplication of goods and services is contributing to retail stagnation.

For residents with access to cars, suburban retailers in the tri-state area, new retailers in Harlem and Bay Plaza in the northeast Bronx provide consumers choices of higher quality merchandise, greater product selection, and better value. There is a dire need for the development of a regional supermarket in the district, such as a Pathmark or Stop and Shop. It is critical that future retail development in Community Board No.1 be a diverse mix of high quality national, or regional retail tenants, and mid-size to smaller merchants. Persons seeking to make a substantial financial commitment to the neighborhood in purchasing homes must be afforded similar products and services as offered in retail malls and commercial areas outside of the district.

The area is now starting to benefit from the investment of resources by the City in recent years for housing and public improvements. The 1998 creation of Banking Development Districts (BDDs) by the State of New York is expanding banking services in our commercial areas and promoting job creation and economic development locally. New York National Bank, located on East 149th Street is the financial institution with the BDD designation in CB1B.

Major activity in the local retail market includes the planned development of the Bronx Chester 12 site at East 156th Street and Third Avenue. Its construction will strengthen the continuity of retail uses along Third Avenue, in the northern part of the HUB. This project, and the development by the Starrett Corporation of retail sites 7, 7A, and 7B on East 149th Street and Bergen Avenue will provide office space and retail development. We support the program for retail improvement being pursued by the HUB Third Avenue Business Improvement District (BID) and the proposed Third Avenue BID Expansion to areas of East 149th Street.

However, programs for expanded commercial revitalization must be considered. The existing street level retail space along Third Avenue and East 149th Street should be renovated to conform aesthetically to the new retail structures being developed. Storefronts and signage that are small, in poor condition, with multi-layered awnings should be revitalized as part of efforts between area local development corporations’ and the City’s Department of Small Business. Improvements would make the district’s commercial space more appealing to pedestrians and commuters. Additionally, the marketing challenge of creating multilevel retailing through the leasing of second story commercial space in a large number of retail vacancies that exist in the HUB must be addressed. Tax credit incentives available to HUB merchants situated in the state Empire Zone should be aggressively marketed and promoted to attract retailers. The availability of tax exemptions now provided to large new retailers should be expanded to midsize and smaller commercial businesses relocating to the district. We support and need the City to embrace the managed street plan for infrastructure and transportation elements outlined in the “A Vision Plan for the Bronx HUB” developed by the Borough President’s Office in conjunction with the City College Architectural Center. The Bronx Tourism Council, along with the Bronx Council on the Arts with its local monthly trolley tours in the CB1B has performed magnificently to publicize the Bronx as a tourism destination. The City should take advantage of the HUB, and this district’s history by creating a future HUB Visitor Information Kiosk for tourists and visitors to the area.

## **Housing and Land Use**

The re-creation of a residential base in CB1B began with the 1986 New York Housing Program. The housing losses in the district began to be reversed as the In-Rem buildings and large tracts of lots in the City's inventory entered into rehabilitation or new construction programs. Subsequent development on these sites returned them to the housing stock. Concerns raised in the early 1990's regarding the long-term structural integrity of some homes constructed through city's first development initiatives were addressed. CB1B continues to conduct stringent and careful review, analysis, and monitoring of the development process for all projects.

In regard to our federally assisted housing, NYCHA properties, CB1B is pleased that major planning and development of new housing and recreation sites is occurring by the Authority in the district. In 2001, a brand new \$5.8 million, 20,000 square-foot, state-of-the arts Melrose Community Center was opened. Serving the 7,000 plus residents of the Melrose, Jackson and Morrisania Air Rights Houses, it provides a center for the enjoyment of educational, cultural, and recreational activities. Additionally, HPD, in cooperation with NYCHA has recently issued a request for proposals for the development of an affordable rental housing called Brook/Willis Apartments in the Mott Haven area. The development consists of eight vacant multi-family buildings with a total of 121 apartments.

We give kudos to the Authority for their creation of the Department of Senior Services. A large number of our development residents are aging in place, but don't reside in elderly housing. The establishment of NYCHA's Naturally Occurring Retirement Community (NORC) Program will provide needed comprehensive supportive and health care services to this population. However, we are concerned of the ability of our seniors and other residents to live in well-maintained and modernized buildings. The federal government's current protocol of capping modernization funding for development capital improvements will have a negative impact on the Authority's aging housing stock in our district. We ask NYCHA to continue its efforts to receive increased and uncapped allocations from the federal government for development modernization.

An assessment of the district's housing needs reveals the concerns we face are ones the entire city is confronting. It is that housing production lags behind our population growth. Since 1990, almost five thousand additional persons have relocated to the district. The scarcity of housing and the inability of persons to find affordable housing for a district that continues to grow are critical. The cost of shelter is also more expensive. Housing affordability problems in the Bronx have been a persistent problem, with 29.1% of Bronx residents spending more than 50% of their incomes on housing, the highest rate of any other borough. The housing gap number does not include those persons "doubled and tripled up" living in overcrowded conditions with relatives or friends due to the shortage of housing.

The challenges in completing the housing agenda for the district are profound. The Mott Haven area has the highest percentage of people in poverty, 65.3% more than in the entire City of New York. Having a median income of \$16,800 it also has a homeownership rate of only 10.4%, one of the lowest in all of New York City.

In an effort to address this issue, the City has recently implemented "The New Housing Marketplace: Creating Housing for the Next Generation" plan. According to HPD, the plan has a goal of increasing development in targeted neighborhoods through rezoning and by leveraging remaining HPD-controlled property with other public and private property. Its impact on the district is to provide an opportunity for additional funding and site assessment. CB1B states the need for site assessment work is crucial. The district has been identified by the City as having a concentration of vacant or underutilized industrial or commercial properties. The "Brownfields",

sites of actual or suspected presence of contamination are primarily in Port Morris. At some of these locations, data base records of the New York State Department of Environment Conservation indicate that cleanup standards were not met in our district, particularly with respect to petroleum contamination. Bronx Community Board No.1 endorses and needs enactment of a corrective action plan for these parcels.

CB1B states, as one of its needs in this area is the examination of zoning laws to advance the expansion of affordable housing production in the district. Currently, within the Port Morris section, the losses of industrial employment have left many former manufacturing buildings idle and unproductive. The New York Department of City Planning (DCP) has concluded a rezoning plan for a thirteen block area in Port Morris that encompass the Special Mixed Use District to encourage mixed-use development. The re-zoning of existing manufacturing zones to mixed-use zoning would promote new mixed uses for underutilized blocks of land and buildings while ensuring the retention of manufacturing uses.

## **MELROSE COMMONS URBAN RENEWAL AREA**

### **COMMUNITY BOARD ONE**

#### **NEW CONSTRUCTION PROJECTS**

**2004-2005**

Completed Projects	Programs	Units (*plus Commercial Space)
Plaza de Los Angeles	Partnership	105
Sunflower Way I	Partnership	90
Sunflower Way II	Partnership	123
La Puerta de Vitalidad	Perm. Hsg for Homeless Families	60*
		378

#### **Projects in Construction**

Palacio del Sol	NYS Homes for Working Families	124*
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Peter Cintron Apts.	421A	162*
La Casa de Felicidad	HUD 202	85
		<hr/> 371

### **Projects with Designated Developers**

2003 RFP Site 14	Cornerstone	250*
Courtlandt Avenue Apts.	LAMP	168
Addition to Park/Courtlandt	New Foundations	9
		<hr/> 1176 Units

### **Homeless Facility Placement**

In regard to special needs housing, a major land use concern is the level of homeless facility placement in the district. Our community board recognizes the necessity to provide quality social services and shelter to the special needs population of our city. It is through this charge that we have been supportive of accommodating such projects and treatment facilities in the past under the City's Fair Share criteria. The residents of this board have incorporated these men, women and families into the fabric of our community. However, over the last six years, these facilities are now being imposed disproportionately on a low and middle-income community with out any adherence to Fair Share.

Currently the distribution of DHS funded homeless shelters in our board currently totals nine, consisting of four family hotels, totaling an 88-bed capacity, three family Tier II shelters, totaling a 210-bed capacity, one 138 bed adult women's shelter, and one 36 bed men's shelter, totaling 472 DHS beds in the district. A recent contract between DHS and the Citizen's Advice Bureau will add 101 beds to the CB1B for the operation of shelter services for homeless families with children citywide at 190 Willow Avenue in the Port Morris section. This facility would provide emergency and temporary housing with referrals from the Emergency Assistance Unit in the Bronx. In 2005, a 400-bed men's transitional homeless facility is planned for construction.

The City of New York's procedure for seeking to locate facilities, or contract with private entities to do so is flawed. DHS has not adhered to Section 203 of the Charter of the City of New York. Factors of compatibility, concentration, and Fair Share distribution of these uses citywide as stated in the Criteria For the Location of City Facilities are not being incorporated into siting decisions. Fifteen out of fifty-one Council Districts do not have any placement of homeless facilities.

The selection protocol utilized by the City has resulted in the siting of family and adult transitional facilities for homeless persons in CB1B without public review. As part of the government structure specified in Section 2800 of the New York City Charter, CB1B is not, nor are its elected officials being consulted and notified of the significant expansion of the City's homeless population to our district.

Bronx Community Board No. 1 strongly believes and urges the highest and best use of the extraordinary level of funding being provided for projects of this nature is to direct it to a solution to the City's homeless population, the development of permanent housing in the district for the families of the working poor and low income persons.

## **Environmental**

Bronx Community Board No.1 is the location of a disproportionate amount of the city's industrial and manufacturing facilities, which release dangerous levels of pollutants into the local environment. For the residents of the district, air pollution is their primary exposure to environmental contaminants. Among the district's 82,159 residents exist "sensitive, subset populations". "Sensitive populations" include children, pregnant women, elderly people, and persons with respiratory or immune deficiency illness.

We are part of the East Harlem- Southern Bronx "asthma corridor". The result of which is the compromising of the district's permanent and transient working population's general health. Our resident's failing respiratory health is exacerbated by the totality of the dispersal of emissions and odors from the various waste transfer facilities, rail yards, and four power plants that are alleged to be operated under ideal conditions in Port Morris. In addition, the proximity of the district to the rings of major arterial ingress and egress- the Bruckner Expressway, Interstate 87 and our major thoroughfares creates air quality issues from vehicle emissions and congestion.

Several initiatives and studies have been performed in the district to examine air quality and improve health outcomes. In 1999, the New York City Department of Health (DOH) through its Childhood Asthma Initiative began a public health effort in the district and beyond to reduce the morbidity and mortality of childhood asthma. According to the NYC Department of Health, persons in Mott Haven are 20% more likely to die from chronic lung disease as compared to NYC as a whole. The asthma rate in the district is also higher than in New York City as a whole. A "South Bronx Children's Asthma's Study" was conducted in 2001 by the New York University School of Medicine-Nelson Institute. The project consisted of measurement of local air pollution levels, particularly black carbon, or soot from diesel trucks and buses in several Bronx community boards, including CB1B. A second project phase sampled common urban air pollutants that impact human health, which are particulate matter and gaseous pollutants.

The goal was to characterize exposures to traffic-related pollution. The work performed by these institutions, and similar recorded environmental analysis over the years confirmed the high incidence of pollution, some attributable to our local industry, uses and facilities.

These facilities are located in an M3-1 zone which permits as-of-right development of land for heavy manufacturing and industrial uses. Certain projects, however, such as these are subject to permit requirements by the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) and the New York City Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), and enforcement by the New York City Department of Sanitation (DOS) and DEP. As recently as 1998, the community was still impacted and severely exposed to substantial releases of uncontrolled gases and the inappropriate handling of medical waste from the previously permitted and now closed Browning Ferris Industries (BFI) incinerator.

Regrettably, BFI has been reconstituted as Stericycle, Inc. Stericycle has been permitted for the processing of radioactive medical waste at the former BFI plant. Community concerns of local ground contamination from its operation include the long-term holding of this infectious medical waste for over a 90-day period, wastewater discharge and the possible growth of infectious organisms, and increases in truck trips per day to the facility.

Waste Management, Inc. in Port Morris was recently permitted to increase the capacity of its Harlem River Yard Transfer (HRY) station by 1,000 tons per day, for a total 4,000 tons-per-day. The Draft Environmental Impact Statement that is currently being prepared under the city's New Solid Waste Management Plan by the DOS includes an evaluation of alternatives to developing the converted South Bronx Marine Transfer Station (MTS), presently in the Hunts Point area of Bronx Community Board No. 2. The alternative site locations are 98 Lincoln Avenue (Harlem River Yards) and 920 East 132nd Street, in CB1B. The sites, identified by DOS through an RFP issued for private waste transfer stations if selected by DOS would preclude construction of the MTS. The resulting action would be a long-term contract to accept and process DOS managed Bronx generated waste for containerization and export by barge, or rail at the aforementioned locations. With the closest residential zone located approximately 1,000 feet from the HRY property, the impact on the local Mott Haven and Melrose community would be the burden of increased truck traffic, emissions, nuisance odors and poor air quality.

As of July 2002, the New York Power Authority (NYPA) constructed and now operates gas turbine facilities in the district producing 79.9 megawatts of power in total. Two plants are sited at Hell Gate, and two at the Harlem River Yards. The plants occupy a tremendous area of the district's waterfront, thereby reducing the opportunity for recreation and commercial development at these locations.

According to the 2003 M.J.Bradley & Associates Final Report: Independent Environmental Review of NYPA's In-City Generation Natural Gas Small Power Plants "Emissions data during the first year of operation showed that the plants met the emissions limitations contained in the permit during steady-state conditions. However, during periods of start-up and shutdown, emissions levels of nitrogen oxides, carbon monoxide and ammonia often exceeded permit levels". The emissions released from these gas turbines have undoubtedly contributed to our poor air quality. These facilities were to be temporarily placed in the district for three years. We are at a loss that these electrical power plants, intended to provide a source of reliable power, could not minimize the risk of electrical loss, or return power quicker to our district during the blackout that occurred in the summer of 2003.

We declare to the city and the state that Bronx Community Board No. # 1 needs stronger enforcement of existing environmental regulations. Current use of DEC AIRS Air Quality monitoring sites in the district, does not reduce the need for additional environmental controls and the development of an effective and innovative pollution abatement program. There has been in the past undertaking and awarding of Environmental Benefit Projects by DEC in CB1B, as part of a civil settlement to the community for a violation of a public health standard by permit operators. It does not however, replace the obligation of the state to first prevent these incidents from occurring through vigorous environmental monitoring and enforcement. Additional efforts of DOS and DEP enforcement must be made to refocus on issues of odor control, reducing diesel emissions and congestion in the area to improve air quality. In light of these community concerns, we encourage the continuation of state and city sponsored, and private professional and independent consultant services study of the local air quality for possible pathogens, bacteria, and spores at local waste management and electrical generation facilities.

We commend the Mayor with respect to Bill 191A, requiring city contractors to use ultra low sulfur diesel fuel to curb particulate and smog-forming emissions and support the work by the US EPA in its Regional Clean Fuels Program to retrofit bus and truck fleets for cleaner burning fuels and compressed natural gas. CB1B believes the new process by the NYS Public Service Commission to ensure that in 10 years, at least 25% of the electricity purchased by retail customers in New York is generated from renewable sources is promising and will help reduce emissions.

### **Conclusion**

This Statement of Need is submitted as Bronx Community Board No.1 is on the verge of a new era. The increase of investment in the area's economy has spurred activity in the commercial and retail sectors. Our location, diversity of residents, improving family income, and infrastructure development is creating a climate for sustained growth. The support of the current administration at City Hall, coupled with the continued involvement of the district's elected officials are necessary to complete this very important agenda. The completion of this agenda will ensure that all inhabitants of Bronx Community Board No. 1 reside in a safe, stable, and improved environment of efficient municipal services delivery and a better quality of life. Bronx Community Board No. 1 is committed to working in partnership with our colleagues in the Federal, State, and City governments to advance this change.

*Cedric L. Loftin*

**District Manager**