



BROOKLYN COMMUNITY BOARD 13

1201 Surf Avenue – 3rd Fl., Brooklyn, NY 11224

(718) 266-3001

FAX (718) 266-3920

WWW.COMMUNITYBOARD13.ORG

MARTY MARKOWITZ

Borough President

MARION CLEAVER

Chairperson

CHUCK REICHENTHAL

District Manager

DISTRICT NEEDS STATEMENT – SUMMER 2008

Headlines! Headlines! Hey Look at the Headlines!

Historical News is Being Made!

‘GET YOUR PAPER!! READ ALL ABOUT IT’: For well over 100 years, we have lived with the image that those words project – a youthful figure waving a newspaper into the air, calling loudly to the passing throngs about the ‘hot news’ that has been printed by the tabloid he is hustling. The vision of the young fry calling out to the passersby has been a staple of countless movies over the decades, all reflecting a nostalgic look at the way a busy metropolitan street might have appeared throughout the 20th century. Whether he carried the mythic Daily Planet or the actual Herald-Tribune, the striking portrait of the tyke hawking the breaking news remains embedded in our cultural history. He heralded the headlines of political chicanery, of Murder Incorporated, of international conspiracies as well as of runaway heiresses and movie star peccadilloes.

That youthful ‘Paul Revere’ of the daily news headlines is no longer with us. His sidewalk salesmanship has been replaced by a multitude of impersonal media outlets. What still remains, though, is the public’s fascination with the sensational, the unusual, the behind-the-scenes look, and the impact of all of them on their daily lives. TV, Cable, and newspapers may still explode with tales, true or rumored, about the lifestyles of the rich and famous, the elected and the idolized. On the positive side, this wide range of outlets for news allows opportunity for people to explore a much wider horizon. The information highway may have expanded enormously, yet there’s a “constant”. The youngster calling out what was ‘hot off the presses’ stands in the historic shadows as the latest technologies battle for the latest ‘scoop’ and the ‘exclusive’! Nonetheless, this growth in opportunity to gain information, the media highway sometimes has led to a grab bag of data that can confuse the public and create potential misunderstandings. With this plethora of news-seeking possibilities on the scene, the ‘plus’ factor is the ability of many more people reading about their local issues as well as those incidents that scan and influence the world. While the papers have more than ample chances for voyeuristic visits to the private lives of celebrities, there are also ample openings to learn about potentials for their community and the impact of city, state, national, and international happenings on their own piece of land. All of this is a ‘positive’.

The neighborhoods of Community Board 13 have all been capturing newsprint and videotape in the last few years, and there has been much to report and, alas, sometimes to misread or misinter-

pret. This situation can result in the ‘negative’ side of media interpretation. On one hand, Brighton Beach has been capturing attention with stories about its changing streetscapes and its persistent, but delayed, cry for downzoning. On the other hand, Coney Island’s present and future have been studied and analyzed in depth, often resulting in a mish-mash of contradicting reporting. The gamut has run from predictions of its death to multitudes of pages about its glorious future. Gravesend and Sea Gate residents have read about their communities in terms of possible flood zones, of conflicts over environmental threats to its waterways, and of future traffic problems that would make their avenues no less a victim of bumper-to-bumper scenes than those in Downtown Brooklyn or Midtown Manhattan. All of these stories, whether real, invented, imagined, overblown, or predictable, have underscored the involvement and awareness of the intrepid populations of C.B. 13. The result has been a feverish struggle to determine what is real and what is conjecture in the media’s reports, and, as a further outcome, a seemingly unending amount of civic meetings and town halls to cull out the ‘truth’ from all of the often misleading materials appearing on TV and in the press.

For many years, the neighborhoods of C.B. 13 appeared to have been off-the-radar regarding their potential for growth and change. Was this due to the ongoing ‘Manhattanization’ of the city with the four ‘outer boroughs’ playing supporting roles to the island that had usurped the term ‘New York, New York’? Had C.B. 13’s neighborhoods actually ‘deserved’ the infamous term, heard once at City Hall, of being ‘the outer part of the outer boroughs’? Had the world-famous City of Brooklyn lost its luster, its verve, its vitality with the demise of Ebbets Field, the loss of the Brooklyn Dodgers, the destruction of the Paramount and Fox Theaters as well as from the post-WW II movement to the suburbs? Whatever the past reason, Brooklyn, today, has once again taken a giant step back into its rightful place in the city’s mainstream. This upward movement has been bolstered by its internationally known history of vim and vigor; and by its discovery by multitudes of new residents hurtled out of Manhattan by that borough’s rising rents. Then, too, the famed southern shoreline once again looms with enormous possibility for bringing further glory to its borough and to its city. All of these positive movements into the 21st century, however, carry with them a need to correct those years of unmet, critical needs. While the future C.B. 13 is on the city radar, the areas’ needs must be met in order to welcome the resurgence. It must be determined, however, which of the discussed plans for C.B. 13 are to the benefit of its citizens, businesses and tourists. Can its aged infrastructure deal with all of the proposals that are floating in with the tides?

True, the entire peninsula has gone through many changes since it was ‘discovered’ by those early merchants, residing in Manhattan, who found the southern portion of the city-across-the-river as a perfect vacation spot. Soon after, public access became more visible, and the shoreline emerged as the perfect spot for people to escape from the summer heat. Hotels rose – the Brighton Beach Hotel, the odd and oft discussed Elephant Hotel, among them. There were pools and bathhouses, theaters of all varieties, and catering to all ethnicities. Add to that tapestry the large restaurants as well as small eateries. Amusement rides of all kinds ran the entire length from the newly-created Ocean Parkway westward to the gates of Sea Gate. There were games and penny arcades; salt water taffy and cotton candy, skee ball and poker roll. And, of course, there were those delicious additions to the menus that became known worldwide as ‘hot dogs’. Bungalows, for summer use, sprung up on the streets of Coney Island and throughout Brighton Beach. There was even a ‘Tweed’-ish boss named John McKane whose rule over the island eventually led to the kind of skullduggery that ends behind prison bars...and he did indeed wind up in jail after many years of an imperial reign. Over the years, the sounds and scenes redefined the neighborhoods over and over. Apartment houses rose in Brighton Beach, and its year-round population expanded. Coney Island’s Dreamland burned down to the ground as did the original Steeplechase. The latter rose

again, with a large indoor amusement structure complementing the outdoor fun including the still-missed Steeplechase Horses. The Parachute Jump was moved from the '39 World's Fair in Queens to its Brooklyn home. Giant restaurants and theaters welcomed the biggest stars as warm weather attractions, and newcomers to the United States worked along these streets e.g. a budding Lothario named Valentino and a stilt walker named Archie Leach (later himself a Love God as Cary Grant). Tin Pan Alley tried out its new songs throughout the peninsula's hotels, dining halls, and theaters. Luna Park disappeared, in the 1940's, consumed by the last of several fires. Its Coney land next became the site for a housing development. It was a sad loss to the world of amusement. Steeplechase's glass pavilion toppled to the demolition cranes in the 60's. The Parachute Jump, though still standing, shut down as a bungee jump ride that once caused crowds in the thousands to scream with excitement. The end of World War II and the era that followed saw still further changes, all the more dramatic. Rooming houses, bungalows, and other dwellings were razed for high-rise housing units in Coney Island. Brighton Beach, which had become the home for a large Jewish population, saw its main street go through many alterations. Brighton Beach Avenue, one of the busiest in the city, grew quieter with many empty storefronts. The Gravesend area remained the area for middle-income one and two family homes, soon to be added to by new apartment homes. Sea Gate, a private domain, ran its own businesses at the western tip of the onetime island. As the entire city moved through the 20th century, changes were constant everywhere. New technology changed the way of life. Air conditioning in homes and theaters cut back on the subway rides to the beaches of southern Brooklyn. Veterans, returning from the war, opted to move their families to hitherto unsettled new frontiers in Long Island and New Jersey. And television sadly meant the abandonment of evening street activities in favor of indoor video watching 'fun'. A fog grew in Brooklyn.

But, eventually, nothing halts progress, and, in recent years, much has enlivened the lives of residents in C.B. 13. Energetic new populations crowded the Brighton Beach's streets. At the same time, rumors ran rampant concerning the 'future' of Coney Island. Would Coney Island become synonymous with gambling? Or a new amusement empire? Maybe a Disney? Few of these rumors warranted serious thought – until recent years! As this article is written, proposals for change are everywhere throughout C.B. 13. Zoning changes are proposed, or sought, in the historic area. Regardless of the ideas that float away with the tides, things are happening at a tidal wave pitch unmatched since the days those early city residents had set foot on the sands washed by the ocean. The Brooklyn version of the Hampton's of yesteryear is long gone, but the future promises a vital 21st century 'feel' with all of its positives --- and perhaps some of its negatives. C.B. 13 must cope with all of it. Here, the present, the past, and the future all converge with a dramatic force.



Community Board 13 comprises the peninsula areas of Brighton Beach, Coney Island, and Sea Gate, along with locales north of Coney Island Creek and the Belt Parkway i.e. Gravesend, Bath Beach, and portions of Bensonhurst and Homecrest. Among the factors that unite these locations are the sights and sounds of water – the Ocean, Gravesend Bay, and Coney Island Creek. The boundaries of C.B. 13 encompass the Ocean on the south, on the west by Gravesend Bay, and on the north and east largely by Corbin Place, 26th Avenue, 86th Street, Avenue Y, Coney Island Avenue, and Cass Place. With the proximity of the sea all around it, C.B. 13 has worked closely with the Office of Emergency Management on the preparation for such possibilities as those involving floods and the resultant potential storm-involved evacuation. C.B. 13 thus has created a CERT Team (Community Emergency Resource Team) that has already aided in emergencies involving

potentially dangerous storms, electrical blackouts and brown outs, and on-site tests of the methodologies needed to evacuate people from nursing homes and other domiciles. It has also linked itself with Coney Island Hospital so that everything can be united in the event of any catastrophic situation. With the eyes and ears of the world on the possible results of global warming, the areas of C.B. 13 must be ever ready for flooding and outages. Councilman Domenic M. Recchia Jr. and Assemblyman Alec Brook-Krasny have been enormously supportive of CERT, and the Team has equipment to serve the area. At present, it is awaiting its own bus/vehicle to assist in any power problem, evacuation or on-site need. Funds are also on tap for purchase of walkie-talkie type radios that can operate when all of the power is down and even cell phones cannot be depended upon.

Many issues are being debated at the present time, and some have reached the media quickly and with numerous quotes from people on all sides of the involved questions. One concerns the plan for a Waste Transfer Station (WTS) just a couple of blocks north of the Board's 26th Ave. terminus. There is discussion about the environmental impacts that may – or may not – be of concern to the people and the livelihood of C.B. 13. What is the potential of any toxins being released into the waters when dredging must be done for this WTS? How is monitoring to be done to prevent spills of raw garbage into the waterways? Is there any potential threat to the beaches and the shorelines from materials at the WTS? Will there be any harmful effects for the migratory bird and fish populations? What impact, if any, will there be on the beaches and the waters of the Bay and Ocean so vital to the healthy lifestyle of the neighborhoods and for its visitors?

One of the most promising actions taken in C.B. 13 is the cleansing of Coney Island Creek, mandated by the State and accomplished by National Grid nee Brooklyn Union(Gas). The work is nearing completion, and the Creek, once toxic and dangerous, is destined to be clear and ecologically friendly. The land around it, as well as the Creek itself, had been polluted by years of harmful materials being absorbed from the businesses that fed into it. Today, the final phase of cleansing is nearing. At least one portion of the cleansed land will be used by the Department of Sanitation for a new garage that will serve C.B. 13 as well as C.B. 15 trucks and personnel. This new facility has been awaited for decades; DOS had planned for it years ago, but the toxicity of the land made the work an impossibility...until now. The cleanup has been done on the Creek from Shell Road to Stillwell Ave., because that was the site used by BUG over the years. Now, people seek the cleaning of the remainder of the Creek from Stillwell Ave. until it terminates into the waters of Gravesend Bay. It takes no crystal ball to think of the future waterway and land as backdrops for fishermen, kayakers, environmentalists, and visitors. The waterway washes against two important parks – Kaiser Park and Bayview Park. The former is well on its way to a complete make over, thanks, in part, to the diligence of Councilman Recchia. Fields and running tracks are in tip-top condition, but the park house still awaits completion. When that structure is completed, it will house bathrooms, sports storage areas, space for parks' workers as well as for civic meetings. The tennis courts are in constant use, and the basketball courts will also be redone. The Friends of Kaiser Park, made up of many local residents, keep the park busy with activity and work towards raising funds for added features. Its members are examples of the civic sense of responsibility for its own neighborhood. Bayview Park is just west of Kaiser along the Gravesend Bay frontage, and it, too, has been planned as another greenway. Here, too, local residents maintain a strong watch over the landscape.

Across from Bayview and Kaiser Parks, another large terrain stands, and its area has been projected for major parks projects in the future. Funds have been secured for this park, once called Large Dreier-Offerman Park and redubbed Calvert Vaux Park only recently. Regardless of the name, the

land has been of great service to soccer and baseball teams, but its larger acreage has stood dry and unused. That is about to start changing as the park has gained city attention, and plans have been presented to develop its potential with soccer, baseball, a small children's amphitheater for entertainment, environmental areas, nature trails, park houses and bathrooms, and green lawns. The park is home to migratory birds, and the waters and marshlands around it offer a stunning offering of wildlife and natural wonder.

C.B. maintains an uniquely placed office at 1201 Surf Ave., directly across from the headlined amusement area and within only minutes of all parts of the District. It is in this office that complaints and comments are regularly monitored. And many problems are recorded on a daily basis – trip hazards on the Boardwalk, backups of sewer lines, dangerous street potholes, illegal construction, businesses operating sans proper permits, an overabundance of street vendors hampering the lifeblood of street businesses, trash-dumping areas, seemingly-abandoned homes that provide hiding places for drug users and homeless. There continue to be concerns over the ill-funded youth programs throughout C.B. 13. There is a great deal of confusion over the reformed school system. Add to these problems, ill-lit streets and byways, ocean bathing bays that are non-usable due to an increasing shortage of lifeguards. Still more - endless parking problems on main streets as well as side streets. (In an effort to help begin the training and eventual recruitment of lifeguards, Councilman Recchia has been sponsoring free swimming classes at the large Abraham Lincoln High School for two years, with the classes led by teachers from the American Red Cross, and with the assistance of the DOE.)

While the City professes a 'great day' coming, it baffles local residents when there appear to be personnel shortages in the otherwise hard-working crews in the Police, Fire, Sanitation, Buildings, Parks, Consumer Affairs, and other agencies that attempt to keep C.B. 13 clean and safe. The community is vigilant in its 'watchdog' attitude. There is general malaise over the decisions of the Dept. of Youth & Community Development, with little, or no, aid to important youth programs. What once had been a very democratic method of funding distribution has deteriorated into seeming arbitrary actions by the Department that force the existing youth involved programs to operate at minimal levels – if they are able to function at all!! In an area of a large young population, this is no small matter, and it is believed that the last Census released figures that were far below the actual population in C.B. 13. A miscount means less funding for programming.

Arts and athletic programs are important to the young citizenry. And they lead to greater acceptance and interest in their studies. The loss of extracurricular activities that prove stimulating have a decidedly negative result. Math classes simply being boring math classes, and English courses simply being boring English classes. An impetus to see the connections has vanished, and young people seek other, less productive, means to pass the time. While adults may be able to understand and live with the loss of services, it cannot be expected that young minds can see anything but city indifference and ennui leading to a no-hope for the future!! How can all of this assist in the City's calling itself the center of the world as the younger population grows older and far less prepared and/or interested in a city that has shown itself to be a disappointment? Where once theaters and music were part of daily life, the absence develops a sense of despair and hate. In the 1960's, film and stage star Geraldine Fitzgerald, with the Brooklyn Arts & Culture Assn. (BACA) and a few volunteer professionals, involved the community youth and others – of all ethnicities and economic classes – to create the breakthrough Everyman Company of Brooklyn. All those who wanted to be part of this activity were accepted. The eventual street theater show played throughout the city- in every kind of venue. Fascinated young people found a new world opening to them – and

quite a few went on to Juilliard!! This Coney Island stage show would even play off-off Broadway. A video was made and shown often on Channel 13. And Coney Island's Everyman Co. became the FIRST outdoor event at the Fountain of Lincoln Center – providing that institution's idea for the now-annual Lincoln Center Out-of-Doors Festival. But what now?? The time-honored Rob Shanta Dancers have attempted a return to the Coney lifestyle, and others are following. There are garage bands, pop and rap singers as well as church choirs. But space is limited for their rehearsal and performing needs. No space or funds are readily available. The nearest live theater two blocks out of the C.B. 13 district at the Harry Warren Theater of Ryan Repertory. No home been found for the Brighton Ballet (now working in Manhattan Beach's Kingsborough College!!!) or for the Paper Moon Players who want to find a home in C.B. 13. It's all quite a comedown for that wonderland southern shore where music, theater, dance, comedy, and special events abounded. Today, audiences thankfully have a few outlets – the zany antics from Coney Island U.S.A. including the Mermaid Parade; the annual visit of the Village Voice's Siren Festival rock music day; music and karaoke on the Boardwalk. But it is all quite short of what was – and can be – on the island.

GRAVESEND/HOMECREST/BATH BEACH

A wide diversity of people live in these communities that make up part of C.B. 13—all ages, economic and ethnic groups, all religions, all ages. These areas are home to many one and two family houses, some of them now being overpowered by high-rise condos and coops that cast air-blocking and light-limiting shadows. Of course, there are existing high rise buildings that have proven to be PART OF and not separate from the entire area e.g. Contello Towers, Waterview Towers, Harway Houses. These neighborhoods are separated from the peninsula by the Coney Island Creek and the Belt Parkway. Unlike their southern brethren, the residents of these areas enjoy a good deal of open space. However, there is fear of what may occur with the nearby Waste Transfer Station development. Gas stations, unique restaurants, and diners are fading into history as their land is grabbed up by developers hoping to build, build, and build. A call has already been made by residents for City Planning downzoning studies to keep the heights and density within reason in the future. Little Dreier-Offerman Park, located between Cropsey and Shore at the Contello structures offers a wonderful breath of fresh air, and, to make it even more pleasant for residents, Councilman Recchia has worked with the Parks Department on additional work for the outdoor area, including a fence that would keep malcontents, vandals, and noisy youth out of the park during late hours. A bocce court is a boon to the residents, as are clean and safe playground facilities, together with a manned parkhouse. A bridge over the parkway links the area to the Large Dreier park, and this under-development park will make life even more pleasant. Churches, synagogues, and, now, mosques dot the landscape, all underscoring a healthy community use. Problems? Yes – and there are quite a few. More and more construction seems to be on the table, and the impact is still unknown.

Close by the Contello-Waterview area stand the Marlboro Houses, a Housing Authority facility. Here, there are problems. The playgrounds remain in semi-shoddy shape, and a large sun-baked concrete area, once used for roller skating, simply bakes and bakes without plans for a better use. Across from the northmost part of the Housing is the Ty Cobb Field, which is vitally needed but there remains debate as to which agency is responsible for its maintenance. Is it the TA or the Parks Dept. or private owners? There is little movement to solve the problem, and the field, in need of work, is nonetheless used often. BUT the field is also filled with debris that the Dept. of Sanitation tries almost valiantly to control. Still, who is the ultimate owner of the land? Who must keep it clean and in use?

When the Board of Education morphed into the Dept. of Education, there was civic confusion that still remains. There are two major and famed schools in the Stillwell Ave. area – Lafayette and John Dewey. The former, a striking building with a beautiful field, had been fighting back from a negative reputation, but decisions were made to cancel out its historic position and use its building for individual smaller schools sharing the space. There, however, is concern about the correct amount of these ‘smaller’ schools in the building and whether or not the students are being adequately served. To add to the public’s dissatisfaction, the field, once promised as a site that could be used by the community, is now off-limits to all outside of the school population. (A similar promise has been scuttled at Grady High School in Brighton despite firm commitments to the Parks Department and to the C.B. 13 District Manager).

John Dewey High School, with its beautiful campus, has also been the scene of some student and internal problems, but there have been intrepid teachers and students who have enjoyed projects in the community, including nature work at Coney Island Creek (now improbable until work is completed on that waterway’s cleansing). But there should be more. Is it possible that all of the changes in the DOE have meant that students have no opportunity for after-school on-campus activities? Must they immediately hop onto homebound trains and buses leaving any chance for post-class clubs a thing of the past?

This area also has one library – the Ulmer Park Branch on Bath Avenue. It had been involved in a long dispute with the landlords of the property on which it had been built. The C.B. 13 Education & Library Committee had worked with the library, in the past, on issues to help it serve its public even better. Now, a major problem for the facility seems solved as a landlord matter appears to be settled. The building can now be bought by the city. One hopes for expansion, because Ulmer Park is used by students and community alike, and is the only one within this district. It serves Lafayette, John Dewey, Most Precious Blood, other schools, as well as the public. The Bath Beach-Gravesend area is also home to many senior developments. (Other C.B. 13 libraries include the busy Coney Island branch on Mermaid Ave.; and the Brighton Beach library. Both attract all ages and offer many programs, including English as a Second Language).

Further east in the Board is a similar area, separated from the Marlboro-Ulmer vicinity by the city’s railroad yards and the Parkway. There, one finds the Beach Haven Houses and blocks of single and two-family homes, well-maintained and quiet, although the elevated trains along Shell Road, to some, can be a distraction. Oddly, a new group of condos/coops are suddenly being built along Shell Road, an unlikely position. Here, overhead rail noises are links with the needs of the railroad yard and the sanitation trucks that will be entering and leaving the new Sanitation Garage in the not-too-distant future. Traffic additions include cars entering and leaving the Parkway along this strip. The Gil Hodges Ballfield has its home just north of the parkway, and this field is an athletic oasis, important to the work of the very busy Grace-Gravesend teams. There had been a loss of a pro-sized field when KeySpan was forced to shut it down when land-cleansing was mandated by the State DEP. Thus, the field is even more important NOW and must be preserved. Crime is slight in this area, as it is throughout C.B. 13, thanks to the unified workings of the 60th Police Precinct, Transit District 34, and Housing PSA1.

One key problem, however, exists in the areas of Neptune-Cropsey-Stillwell Avenues where many auto body shops, car wash operations, and other have long been in service. Nonetheless, their busy work means that the involved streets are often clogged with double- and even triple-parked vehicles. Auto passage can be slow, and residents of the west end of the peninsula, in particular,

are dismayed by oft-delaying movement re the few blocks from Parkway exits to their homes. In recent history, the problems have been worsened by trailer trucks actually parking on the Stillwell and Cropsey Bridges, as well as vehicles blocking the rightmost lane that is allocated to motorists trying to turn right to go westward. For years, there has been a plea for a left turn signal at the Neptune-Cropsey intersection where streets do not line up and, as a result, where southbound cars attempting eastbound left turns find great difficulty and long waits for safe passage. To add to the quandary, the busy roadways are now home to a giant Home Depot, Linens 'n' Things, a drive-through Starbucks, and still others on the horizon. The venerable Retro Diner, at Cropsey and the Belt entrance, has closed, and rumors abound as to the future use of this important site. Across from the onetime diner is a Burger King that is operating now without official regulations since its BSA permit expired! What is more, a giant Pathmark draws considerable business in an area that abuts the diner area and the Creek. Growing traffic along Cropsey Ave. must be examined as soon as possible to see what can be done to alleviate the increasing problems with development. One suggestion has long been raised – the potential plan for a Stillwell southbound exit from the Belt that would lessen the problems on Cropsey. Some say it CAN be done; others dismiss the idea. What is the situation's reality?

Abraham Lincoln High School, one of the south Brooklyn's most famed educational facilities, stands on Ocean Parkway near the Belt, and is a busy educational facility. It has a pool, and, recently, classes for outsider swimming hopefuls have begun. The Dept. of Transportation has attempted to alleviate some of the street-crossing problems in this area (used by exuberant students and equally by slow-moving seniors). Mid-Parkway 'islands' have been created, but the verdict of the effectiveness has not yet been analyzed.

BRIGHTON BEACH

Always a busy neighborhood, Brighton Beach did have a downslide two decades ago, but it was quickly reversed with a large incoming population of people from the former USSR. Soon, much of the area was called 'Little Odessa' or 'Little Russia', and its bustling Brighton Beach Avenue, with an elevated line above it, became one of the most used shopping streets in the city. Russian cuisine meant the arrival of many restaurants, some with live performing spaces. But parking is perhaps one of the biggest problems throughout the vicinity, and valet parking must serve for these restaurateurs. But this parking situation worsens with every year for a multitude of reasons. One that is now causing anxiety involves plans for the one city-operated parking lot on Brightwater Court, where half of the space is rented by residents, and the other half is used by the public. People who have paid for spots, though, often find that interlopers have taken their spaces, and the result is friction. Corrective action is difficult. But the future is even more anxiety-provoking with the impending sale of the lot to private developers who would build housing on the site. Adequate parking spaces must be included! All of this is still in the planning stages.

To add to the insecurities of the residents of Brighton Beach has been the groundswell of insistent developers who have been buying up the small homes and bungalows and constructing condos, some of which have not attracted buyers. But still developers come...in spite of a five-year plea from the Community Board, and legislators, for City Planning to create an imperative downzoning action for the neighborhood. At present, a plan has finally come down from the agency, but it is one that will take at least one year for implementation and only after the ULURP is scanned and

passed by all of the involved units (Board, Borough President, City). Sensing the future, perhaps, the developers are zipping through the area seeking more properties to buy, and it has been reported that some of these developers have offered 'sales pitches' designed to frighten the remaining residents. Within the community, there has been a mixed reaction to the initial downzoning plan. The bungalow area has been partially destroyed by construction upon construction, and some of these bungalows have long been turned into year-round quaint and comfortable homes. Some residents have seen massive buildings erected within yards of their homes, and the architecture has been ugly and the buildings considered too high for what had been a low-rise area. Among the odd elements in the package is a plan that would allow housing construction on Brighton Beach Ave. Such a move seems impossible to contemplate for a street that is always so crowded!

Brighton Beach, of course, is not only home to a Russian population; there are residents from South America, from the Mid-East, from Mexico, and other areas. While Brighton Beach Ave.'s stores may well carry Russian signs and cater to a largely-Russian population, one finds a multitude of uses on Neptune Ave. with Mid-East restaurants and other internationally-oriented shops. It is also true that people, of all ethnicities, stream into Brighton for the foods, for the stores, and for the nearby beach. And so the parking issue becomes even more important. The overhead trains provide convenient means for visitors to reach this shore area. Produce delivery double parking forces a tricky movement for vehicles, and a dangerous one, on occasion, for pedestrians who step off the curb to get passed the blockages. Then, too, the Brighton Business Improvement District has been doing a strong job in dealing with the businesses on the street, but there are always some that flaunt the regulations by ignoring rules, dumping refuse and rotted fruits into the sewers, and which have produce extending too far into the walking area. The results have forced Task Force visits to the street to issue summonses and warn the owners. An additional matter involves street vendors who pull business away from the stores. In addition, the placement of these vendors on a street already blocked by overlarge fruit stands and double parkers forces pedestrians to step into the street to pass – and that is not a safe thing to do. The area also benefits from the work of the Brighton Neighborhood Assn., an institution in the neighborhood, best known, perhaps, for its work with housing issues, but the BNA work also includes aid for youth programs, and here, too, the budget cuts prove a harsh reality to the large young population. The huge Oceana housing development occupies the site of the former Brighton Beach Baths, and it has proven to be a world unto itself. The last remaining movie theater in C.B. 13, the Oceana closed and is now used a multi-purpose structure with a catering facility on the ground floor, and a theater use unit on the second (balcony).

The internationally-known Boardwalk connects Brighton Beach and Coney Island, providing a salt-water breeze from Corbin Place to the gates of Sea Gate. But there have been problems with the trip hazards created by rotted wood and protruding nails. This situation, in turn, was made worse when the Federal Corps of Engineers replaced sand on the beaches and brought the sand up to the base of the Boardwalk. The wet sand rotted the wood underneath the walkway. The results have been loose boards and holes. A strong but limited Parks' workforce, trying desperately to keep up with the worst areas. One cannot sing 'Under the Boardwalk' anymore, because there is no 'under' except for the homeless people who dig their way beneath it to create sleeping areas. This issue has been a problem for years, and fires created by the homeless have damaged the walkway and abutting businesses and houses. The issue of the homeless means a strong workload for the Police, the Parks Department – working with the 'Street To Home' project. Here, too, problems continue because the 'Street To Home' workforce must deal with Brooklyn and Queens, making a difficult job even more difficult.

CONEY ISLAND/SEA GATE

That little tyke hawking newspapers would have been filled with glee at the amount he could have been selling on the streets of Coney Island during the last year. Every day, another headline blared the latest information – a lot of it misinformation – about the ‘future’ of Coney Island, and it would take a volume longer than Doctor Zhivago to outline at this point. One must say that, at this time, a stalemate is still in place in the plans for the area as the City plans compete with the plans of Thor Equities, owner of a lot of the amusement area sites. The Coney Island Development Corp., with the City’s Economic Development Corp., had worked for several years on coming up with a strategic plan for revitalizing the wonderful but somewhat faded amusement section. During that time, Thor Equities bought a good deal of the extant sites for rides and games, with the hopes for extensive hotel-condo-time share-amusement combinations. Thor bought the land on which Astroland sits, and that operation continues in a year-by-year lease with an undecided length of time. But there are now four designated landmarks in the affected zone—the Cyclone roller coaster (operated by Astroland and, of course, destined to stay regardless of the zoning outcome), the Wonder Wheel operated by Denos’ Wonder Wheel Park, the Parachute Jump (still the beacon for those arriving at the shorefront), and the Child’s Restaurant Building, the eventual plans for which are undecided. It is now used, for limited time spans, for a roller skating rink.

The Boardwalk corrective work will strongly focus on this area because of its wide use. The Parks Department did a yeoman job in fixing trip hazards in time for the summer ’08 season. But the Steeplechase Pier does remain a trip hazard for half its length; the Boardwalk end is in shoddy shape while the outer end was replaced following the powerful Nor’easter’s devastation of more than a decade ago. There remain concerns over the yearly lack of sufficient lifeguards along the entire beach (including Brighton) forcing some of the bays to be closed. This situation is particularly irksome to the infirmed or the elderly as they try to trek down to the shore. Monies had been in place for a bike path in the rear of the beach (to remove them from the Boardwalk) and for concrete pathways to the water line. The Parks Department, forced by Federal regulations, has not been able to install them. Another major problem for the beachgoers, the Boardwalk strollers, and the amusement operators in general is the lack of adequate bathrooms and the early-closing hours of the ones currently standing on the Boardwalk. Lategoers at the area have a lack of facilities to face, and the result can lead to a health problem for the area. Beach bathrooms, which had been plentiful in years gone by, have been buried by the sands placed there by the Federal Corps’ replenishment program. To add to the problem, the Boardwalk is in use year-round, and complaints arise about the fact that only one or two bathrooms are open at all during the ‘off’ months. What will happen when Coney Island becomes more of a year-round operation?

The Cyclones’, minor league team of the Mets, have been a major success at KeySpan Stadium, built on the site of the onetime Steeplechase structure. Its large parking lot (once seen as a site for a Sportsplex) is widely used, and its future is as up in the air as the adjacent Parachute. Will the new zoning plans mean construction of housing on the site? No one knows at this point. A Wall Of Remembrance is an addition on the western side of the Stadium facing the parking area, and it attracts thousands across the year who recall the fate of family and friends at the 9/11 catastrophe.

Residents throughout the Coney Island area are apprehensive now about the future of the peninsula. The area is home to a cross section of ethnic and religious groups, with people whose heritage comes from diverse areas – Puerto Rico, the Caribbean, South America, Mexico, Russia, Italy, African Americans. Many residents of this neighborhood had taken part in scores of meetings held through-

out the district by CIDC, and many thought that the initial strategic plan was on the right track. Meetings had been held by CIDC with EDC and the Community Board at civic meetings, housing meetings, churches, centers of all kind, amusement area sites, and at the full Board meeting and its Committees. People were particularly happy with the plans for a west-end Community Center, which is set to begin construction in the near future. However, more recently, a multiplying amount of news and feature items have appeared, and, alas, some writers confused all of the elements until it reached a point where the entire process became a muddle of real and imagined data, with rumors running amok. Meetings between the principle players are ongoing in the hopes that a reasonable resolution is reached. The attempt, at the onset, was to ensure the people of the community that they would be PART OF not APART from the development of the peninsula. It is hoped that such an outlook remains as the drama moves from Act 1 to 2 to 3 ad infinitum. In the meantime, sparkling new restaurants and smaller eateries have opened on busy Surf Ave., and others hopefully will follow. Plans are also afoot to make certain that job training programs will gain momentum so that residents of Coney Island can be prepared to gain employment in the upcoming enterprises. Affordable houses are also on the agenda, but the definition of 'affordable' seems to vary, adding extra confusion to the mix. And how high will they go? And how many hotels are needed?

There are also plans to correct the headlined Parachute Jump lighting, which has not operated with the colorful beams that had been expected. A shovel will soon be placed in the land near the Parachute to begin creation of Steeplechase Plaza/Park, where amusements and other pleasures can be found. This site will house the famed B&B Carousell (sic), once on Surf Avenue and now undergoing an overhaul preparatory to its new placement. Gargiulo's Restaurant, now in its 100th year, has its own dynamic plans for its surroundings, but there is some conflict already with its own architectural renderings and those alterations sought by City Planning. Such is just part of the current saga of Coney Island.

Global warming and shoreline changes hit the headlines every day, but the private community of Sea Gate, located at the westernmost tip of the peninsula, has substantial concern. When the Federal Corps. of Engineers recreated a T-Groin between the beach end of Coney Island and the private beach of Sea Gate, the result was a swift change in surf movement. Within a few years, sands of Sea Gate had been pulled away from its shore and plopped onto the northern Bayview side of the peninsula. As a result, sand from high, view-blocking dunes blew into nearby homes whenever a breeze was felt. The Corps has admitted a mistake and now plans to create four more groins along the Sea Gate shore that would slow down any movement of sands from Coney's south side and Sea Gate to the north shore jutting into Gravesend Bay. At this time, there may be funds for two of groins as the initial stage, with the others to follow. But Sea Gate has had its share of damaging storms, and hurricanes and nor'easters can play havoc with its homes and its elderly infrastructure. Sea Gate officials, its private police force, the City's OEM, and the local CERT team are all in constant contact should treacherous conditions arise. Recent drownings in the Coney waters have caused concern due to a seeming increase in undertows and rip-tide action, created, perhaps, by storm action from the Atlantic.

No discussion of Coney Island and its future can omit the crowd-pleasing and heralded New York Aquarium, based at the foot of West 8th Street and the Boardwalk. It is one of the city's foremost tourist attractions, and, as part of the future look of the island, it had even attempted to come up with a plan that would alter its exterior as well as interior. The Aquarium is one of the mainstays of the peninsula, and it stands on the site of the onetime famed Dreamland Park. Two of that park's piers stood at the site, and the pilings have been found. Therefore, hopes are high that a new pier

can be constructed to allow ferry service to and from the Island. Cleaning of the beaches occurs at night, and the crews do a fine job, but the downside is ongoing complaints from seniors in nearby nursing facilities about the late hour machine noises. The Boardwalk Pavilions serve as shade and sitting stops for the many Boardwalk strollers, but, at night, they can become magnets for the homeless. Fortunately, the agencies have done much to alleviate this problem, as well as the issue of people sleeping on the beach. In spite of the questions concerning its future, the peninsula draws hundreds of thousands of people throughout the warm weather and into the year with such popular attractions as the Mermaid Parade, the Village Voice Siren Festival, the Nathan's Hot Dog Eating Contest, special events at Deno's and Astroland, the Cyclones' baseball season, concerts at KeySpan Stadium as well as at Asser Levy Park's Bandshell and at Kaiser Park. Borough President Markowitz has advanced a plan for the construction of an Amphitheater at Asser Levy Park, and discussions are ongoing at this point involving civic input as to needs and concerns including traffic and proposed park uses.

Slow, but filled with hope, the plans for the peninsula go on... and on. There is nothing that can be definitely promised for the immediate future, although it is certain that the beach, the Boardwalk, the amusements, the special events and concerts will continue to draw crowds year after year even if construction is underway. Thor Equities, owner of much of the amusement area land between Stillwell Ave. and West 10th Street, had removed quite a few attractions including a miniature golf course, a batting range, and popular go-car attractions. In the meantime, Thor has filled some of the area with temporary rides and a circus visit. But it is also noted that at least one of the prized lot areas is now used by school buses, a sad use of this valuable section of Brooklyn.

The redone Stillwell Avenue Terminal remains the doorway to the world of fun, but things have moved slowly on getting the shops in the indoor mall occupied. Roof leaks may have delayed work, but, as of this time, Dunkin' Donuts is expected to open shortly, and will eventually be followed by Subway, by an ATM, and newsstands. There is a problem, however, with the future of the Surf Avenue-West 8th Street Overpass that connects the West 8th Street station to the Boardwalk, the area of the Aquarium, the southside of Surf Avenue, and the beach. It is now in deplorable condition, and must be razed. Although the spalling has been obvious for years, paint now peels off the structure and lands on cars and the street. The Aquarium sees no use for its replacement, and the northside of Surf Avenue can enjoy a renaissance if people leave the West 8 St. station and walk along this strip.

Furniture stores, a violation of the C-7 zone, still stand on the northside of Surf despite summonses and court appearances. It is not uncommon to see these stores place mattresses on the sidewalk, definitely not an appropriate 'welcome' for crowds coming to swim, take in the rides, or walk along the Boardwalk. The amusement/beach issues are part of a huge tapestry that also includes the tens of thousands of people living in this area, including those in the high-rise units as Trump Village, War-basse Houses, and Brightwater. Seniors in the area, for example, remain deeply concerned about the timing of traffic lights on busy intersections e.g. Neptune-West 5th Street, and cross streets on Ocean Parkway. DOT has been working on plans to find ways to make these crossways safer.

All of the Coney Island development indicates the NEED for a critical item that had been in the works for many years – the Neptune Avenue Pumping Station. This issue had been the #1 capital priority item from C.B. 13 for well over a decade and had even reach Design and Construction before it somehow entered the 'iffy' stage. Water lines recently have been cleaned, but promised linings have not been put into them as yet. DEP has insisted that the cleansed lines will serve the area well for a long time, and that constant flooding and back-ups would not occur. BUT if new

high-rise housing does occur, and additional homes are added to the streetscape, it is obvious that the aged infrastructure will be strained. Astella Development has led the movement in one family houses' development. But any new bulky buildings will put a strain on the overworked infrastructure. The pumping station should be restored – and built. With the lines still bound to fill with sand and silt, flooding and back-ups may well start again, and the additional huge amounts from high-rise newcomers to the area will create even more problems.

Coney Island Hospital, which serves the peninsula and other neighborhoods, continues to expand and to grow with the rising populations it must serve. Additional responsibilities have been added since the close of Victory Memorial in Bay Ridge. A new structure has been added to the CIH facility, but still more is required. The community is in support of the important new plans for the Hospital.

There is also an outreach post on Neptune Ave. called the Ida Israel Center. Nonetheless, the area's health problems need even more attention. The AIDS and HIV problem, though often 'hidden', is a formidable one. This southern Brooklyn neighborhood is also facing issues concerning poor pre-natal and post-natal care. Spousal abuse is still another problem, and several groups attempt to deal with it, including the Amethyst Women organization.

There are few places that are as resident-tourist important as Coney Island, and its future is one that impacts the entire borough and the entire City. People from all over the world use the Internet to learn more about this famed district, and the issue, now, is the methods to keep it people-friendly in a changing world.

CITY SERVICES – POLICE

The disparate elements that comprise C.B. 13 may seem overbearing to planners, but the work of the 60th Police Precinct handles it all with aplomb and with seeming immediate and effective ease. Its men and women are known throughout the communities and its Community Relations and Crime Prevention Teams have earned respect. Deputy Inspector Johnsen and the other members of the precinct's able units constantly are in the field. Complaints are handled as quickly as possible, and there is unified work with Brooklyn South and the Transit District 34, and Housing PSA 1. All attend the monthly Cabinet meetings held by the C.B. 13 District Manager. Although the warm weather is the busiest due to the tens of thousands of people pouring through the neighborhoods of the Board, the Precinct is equally active in problem-solving throughout the year. The Summer Detail is invaluable, and it should be increased. The huge events, running the gamut from the parades and the block parties, to the large-scale Mermaid Parade, Hot-Dog Contest, Brighton Jubilee, et al. can put the personnel into an over-busy schedule. There should never be a cutback at this Precinct, and the future will make such an issue even stronger! Drug and prostitution remain scrutinized; Brighton's Oceanview Avenue, for example, was an unlikely but nevertheless prominent meeting place for prostitutes and their 'Johns'. Thanks to ongoing and strong follow-through, the street is now cleared of much of this activity, and the neighborhood is thus safer. The Police work closely with C.B. 13's CERT Team, and communication between the Board office and the Precinct is a constant. There are needs that will make the Precinct and the neighborhoods even safer i.e. additional patrol vehicles, updated computer/communication systems, and unmarked vehicles for strategic watch portions of the communities.

The FIRE DEPARTMENT serving C.B. 13 likewise is of enormous ability and importance. Here, too, the communication is strong, and the Fire Department works closely with the Precinct, the

Community Board, and the CERT Team, et al in maintaining safety in the neighborhoods. The men have worked with the CERT Team, for example, on such actual incidents as a major storm that threatened the Sea Gate community to black-outs at Warbasse Houses, to drills at Coney Island Hospital, Shorefront Jewish Geriatric Center, and more!! But time has taken its toll on some of the firehouse facilities, and the dedicated personnel deserve updating of their home away from home. Then, too, one of the key factors is the EMS TEAM, operating with the unit. In this busy summer of 2008, the EMS Team had NO ACCESS to incredibly important gators or small vehicles to handle emergencies on the Boardwalk and/or beach. These vehicles may mean the difference between life and death as the EMS personnel dash to a call from any area along the elongated beach and Boardwalk. Such a cut in this budget is unfathomable. As of this writing, it is all the more urgent considering the rip tide incidents that have caused great concern, and, at least in one case, with a drowning of a six-year-old girl. EMS must be supported.

CITY SERVICES – ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The communities that comprise C.B. 13 are all involved, as has been noted in material above, with unique and unparalleled twists in the roadway to the future. Throughout the decades of success and even slowdowns in the economy of the area, there have been strong forces that have worked together to see that life in the involved areas moved along as comfortably as possible. Such associations have included the Brighton Neighborhood Assn., Astella Development Corp., the Coney Island Chamber of Commerce, Neighborhood Improvement Assn., among others. Today, with so many headlines ballyhooing the peninsula's potentials... and its debits... more and more civic and mercantile groups are apt to start developing. One must look at the formidable work done by the Brighton Business Improvement District (BID) for having reached out to a network of busy storeowners and restaurants along Brighton Beach Ave. BID must be supported strongly; its work has been, and will continue to be, critical to the mercantile health of the neighborhood. There also has been growth along Mermaid Avenue with stores, of all kinds, flourishing. This shopping strip must not be forgotten in the work of the EDC in planning the future landscape of Coney Island. Ditto Surf Avenue where there are many possibilities for growth. As has been noted, new restaurants have opened along this famed roadway. Surf Avenue's beautification is also planned. Growth is evident with the appearances of such sites as Home Depot, Linens 'n' Things, and the drive-through Starbucks on Cropsey Ave. There is also great opportunity for economic development along the Boardwalk itself where, in years past, one could walk from W. 37 St. to Corbin Place and enjoy everything from food of all kinds to penny arcades to auction houses! The role of developing employment opportunities through the plans of CIDC, as well as by Thor Equities and Taconic, are manifold. What seems to be missing, now, is a strong communication network. Too many potential economic issues are tossed around by different groups and agencies without the conference table bringing all of the possible entrepreneurs present at the same time.

CITY SERVICES – PARKS & RECREATION

Whatever the future holds for the C.B. 13 peninsula and the land north of it, there is little doubt that the responsibilities of the men and women of the NYC Dept. of Parks & Recreation will increase, adding to an already intense amount of work. The Parks' needs are vast in areas of sand and ocean, playgrounds and larger parks, a Boardwalk and landmarked facilities that surround it. In addition, the Aquarium and KeySpan Stadium are on Parks' land and are involved in numerous expanded agendas for the next decade. With all of these important elements within their scope of activities,

the men and women of the local Parks' zone have acquitted themselves more than admirably, occasionally against the foremost of odds. BUT there simply is not enough personnel to keep a 24/7 watch on all of those parcels that are required of them. Prior to any additions to the roster of job needs, the men and women have to deal with, among others: the Beach, the Boardwalk, Asser Levy Park and its Bandshell, Dreier-Offerman Park, the West Street Playground (adjacent to the aforementioned Beach Haven structures and one that is slated for an artificial turf on a now-concrete, large ballfield), Nautilus Playground (adjacent to Coney Island Houses), Babar Yar Park, Grady Park, Little Dreier-Offerman on Cropsey Ave., Six Diamonds ballfields, a park walkway alongside the Creek and Home Depot, the renovation-in-progress of Kaiser Park and the nearby Bayview Park – and more!! And the perpetual search for capable lifeguards. It is sad enough that, although the warm weather may hit the shoreline early, it is well nigh impossible to have a contingent of lifeguards at each bay until the July 4th weekends when college swimmers are able to take over some of the posts.

The state of the Boardwalk, infamous over the last few years for numerous holes and trip hazards, remains the Number One Capital project on the minds of the Community Board. Work will begin, in a step-by-step pattern, beginning in the fall '08 to replace rotted wood areas with combination units of concrete and artificial wood (thus saving the expense of wood taken from natural rainforest vicinities). The full work on the Boardwalk will take time, but the Parks' crews have done more than yeoman work in '08 to assure that the most difficult-to-traverse areas have been made safe for pedestrians. Handball courts on Surf Ave. at West 5th Street, across from the Bandshell, are among the most famous in the City and attract hundreds of the best handball players. Work must be done to maintain this Mecca for sports enthusiasts. The Ocean Parkway Malls, part of the Ocean Parkway Special District, also demand time and work by the Parks' personnel. Sections beneath the Boardwalk and in its Pavilions, prove to be welcoming sites for the homeless, and monitoring by Parks and Police must remain a constant. Fishing has been a major pastime on the Steeplechase Pier, but the walkway on the Boardwalk side of the Pier, is in sad shape; and the Parachute Jump lighting, still faulty after a semi-failed installation, must be maintained. There is still more for these men and women in the plans for future development throughout Brighton Beach, Coney Island, Gravesend, and other portions of the district. The success of all of the soon-due work relies upon a full comportment of Parks' workers.

CITY SERVICES – FIRE DEPARTMENT

With a large amount of aging high-rise housing units, frame housing, abandoned or dilapidated buildings that may house homeless or drug addicts, the Fire Department has a massive responsibility. The images of 9-11 remain vividly terrifying to a populace constantly warned or threats of headlined terrorists' threats and/or rumors of fire threats in the district. With all of the demands upon this Department, it is imperative that these diligent always-on-call men deserve updating of their firehouses and the latest in communication equipment. Then, too, city budget cuts should not involve any cuts in personnel. Men from one firehouse may be called to another district, while still another firehouse is put on standby to assist if the emptied one has a call for assistance. Furthermore, all of the equipment MUST be kept in the best of shape, and the EMS units must be given more aid at least in the use of gators so that they may be able to quickly serve emergency status on the Boardwalk and beach.

DEPT. OF HOMELESS SERVICES

C.B. 13 has found that the issue of homeless in the neighborhoods remains a 'negative' that needs to be addressed. For years, agencies assigned by the City to deal with homeless issues attended the

District Manager's Cabinet meetings in order for him to link them with the work of the Police, the Parks' employees, and others who know where and when homeless may be found. Things have been altered in recent years, and the current 'server' is 'Street to Home', but its limited staff must deal with the problem in both Brooklyn AND Queens, not an easy task at all. Fortunately, at least, there is communication between the 60th Pct. and the 'Street to Home' unit, but there is little opportunity, at cabinet meetings as an example, for the workers on the homeless issue to learn more from other agencies who have spotted new homeless habitats. It may take a helicopter visit to spot partially hidden encampments in Dreier-Offerman. Homeless people are often terrified of the places they may have to spend at nights if they asked to go to a shelter. They fear that their few possessions will be stolen while they sleep. New plans involving placement of homeless people in apartments – no matter whether they are on or off alcohol or drugs – may well be a positive step, but this plan needs time to be effective, and the current 'recession' may mean more and more homeless in the area. Some churches and the famed Salt and Sea Mission do their best to assist in helping the unfortunate, but more must be done for the safety of people forced out of their homes/apartments due to escalating rents or development displacement or by those sent into the cold as a result of their funds being swept into a whirlwind of drugs and booze. Then, too, those released from hospitals sans a place to live find their way to those places that seem like refuges from the storm. But one cannot forget the fires on the Boardwalk created by homeless who, in need of warmth, start fires beneath the Boardwalk. The whole attitude towards the homeless must involve a more comprehensive look as this century moves towards its second decade.

CITY SERVICES – CULTURAL AFFAIRS

For a section of New York City that gave birth to show business excitement for over a century, the dearth of an arts world nowadays is a particular shocker. At one time, the amusement district and its restaurants were the places where new songs were tried out. Fresh tunes were heard at carousels and beer halls, from large and small dining centers, to such beloved jazz centers as the Boardwalk's Atlantis where some of the finest pop and jazz performers tried out their latest works. Then, too, there were numerous live theaters and movie palaces. Today, it is all sparse. Fortunately, Dick Zigun and Coney Island USA, produce zany outrageous live entertainment in the amusement area, and his building is undergoing a large renovation. In Brighton, the Millennium Theater (once the site of the Oceana movie theater) brings music and even ice skating shows to the area attracting a largely Russian audience. BUT the Brighton Ballet is forced to work out of the Manhattan Beach area, and such Coney Island groups as the Rob Shanta Dancers rehearse wherever possible. MOST IMPORTANT, however, is the impetus of the arts on the growth of young members of society; it is a great stimulus in promoting educational pursuits as was proven again and again, as with the Everyman Company and its work in the community during the 60's. Some of those neophyte performers – from the community – went on to Juilliard. Others pursued other spheres of education, sparked by the involvement in an arts venture. And, then too, these performers became the audiences of today. The dearth of arts involvement in the area permeates the streets. One walks past the shuttered Loews Coney Island Theater (Shore Theater) building at Surf-Stillwell, and bemoans the lack of a movie screen anyway near the peninsula and its neighbors. Certainly, the plans created the CIDC, EDC and the City must include a greater opportunity for the rebirth of the arts, in all of its forms, within a sizeable and widely populated part of the city. Not all of the people can rely upon the expense of seeking cinema triplexes in other neighborhoods. During the summers, the Borough President and the Councilmember have offered live entertainment at Asser Levy Park. Plans are afoot for an amphitheater at Asser Levy Park (described as a Brooklyn version of West-

bury's performing center). But there must be more – new movie centers (an IMAX?), live theater, art galleries (a recent outdoor art show at KeySpan Stadium, run by localites, was a success and omens well for the kind of potential that once heralded the Brooklyn Heights Promenade Art Show and the Washington Square Art Show). The Department of Cultural Affairs seems to have been greatly remiss in offering any kind of advice or aid in this part of the borough. The promising future of southern Brooklyn deserves more for its students, for its audiences, for its resident musicians and performers.

CITY SERVICES – HEALTH

As has been noted, the role of Coney Island Hospital and its satellite at Neptune Avenue is critical, but growth is equally important as new health methods are developed, and as current health problems must be faced in a growing group of neighborhoods. A new building has meant renewed spirit for the hospital's users – sparkling clean and offering effective and quicker assistance to those in need. But the Emergency Room expansion must be addressed quickly. The HIV-AIDS crisis, still in the shadows, is a community threat, and outreach and programming is needed, along with aid in many other ailments --- physical and mental. The Ida Israel Center, on Neptune Ave., is widely used for many programs that are linked with hospital personnel. The communities are well aware of threats of lurking ailments – the flu epidemics, West Nile, and the issues involving drugs, alcohol, and obesity. Health fears are also powered by the abundance of rats, many of those reported as being larger than cats. The sitings have been varied – from the Beach to the Creek area, from Shell Road to Brighton Beach Avenue. Rats mean not only anxiety, but also actual health problems, and greater thought and action must be given to this problem.

CITY SERVICES – SANITATION

The men working at the Garage servicing C.B. 13 manage to get high ratings for local clean street surveys despite the fact that most space within the Board boundaries offers extensive invitation for trash dumping. During the warm weather months, the amusement district may be the most pronounced vicinity for trash remains in the street or curbside. Of course it is because of the tens of thousands of people who use it and the amounts of fast food and drink prevalent. In recent years, though, thanks to the CIDC, The Doe Fund has offered great help to the DOS by assisting in cleaning up this district, especially after hectic, hot weekends. Brighton Beach offers its own trash issues, on the busy Brighton Beach thoroughfare; trash complaints are called into the CB 13 office at regular intervals, and some of the merchants – though, by far, not the majority, violate dumping regulations. After midnight, mounds of trash can be found throughout the district along street corners and beneath the Parkway. Complaints are common about trash dumping in areas controlled by the Transit Authority e.g. beneath the el and along the unmapped extension of West 6th Street from Sheepshead Bay Rd. to its terminus near Surf Avenue. This TA stretch, though not on city maps as a 'street', is used by motorists leaving nearby Trump housing along with those going to and from the Motor Vehicles Building's parking lot. Trashy areas exist behind Marlboro Houses and the Ty Cobb Field. Ditto the many privately-owned lots, some of them fenced. Areas near the Calvert Vaux/Large Dreier-Offerman Park had been used for trash dumping for decades, but those days are gone considering the development of the park area and the marshlands around it. It may be the province of Parks to clean such an area, but DOS is asked to assist on occasion when manpower is lessened and the needs are increased. Thus, it is obvious that the personnel at CB 13's Sanitation Garage may well be needed, and there must be greater watch over the state of the equipment and the trucks. At present, the garage is still housed adjacent to private homes where owners had been promised, many years ago, that the Garage would soon be moved. But

that promise was dropped when the selected site for the new garage, on the former Brooklyn Union site, was found to be contaminated. Now that the work is near completion at the remediated land, plans can move forward, one hopes, for the start of work on the new facility that will house trucks and personnel from both CB 13 and CB 15.

CITY SERVICES – YOUTH

A decade ago, members of the Community Board were allowed to assist in the selection of groups to receive funding, and it worked well. The members would visit sites, discuss issues, and, in essence, knowledge about the effectiveness of the programs. This practice, of course, was dropped, and, now, youth groups find themselves frantically searching for funds to keep going. Some groups, with the ability to hire proposal writers who know the language of the businesses and agencies, may be able to find monies. But, sometimes, these groups may not even be as capable of services as those struggling associations that operate without a paid fund writer. A feeling of hopelessness, concerning youth programs, as was described last year, may still be a cloud over the area. People eagerly await the start of work on a Surf Avenue community center that is rising out of the CIDC plans; it is needed especially in the light of the fact that other once-busy centers may have slowed down operations or disappeared due to lack of funds e.g. the plight of the Carey Gardens Center which lost funds when the Madison Square Boys and Girls Club operation abandoned it. It was later taken over by NYCHA, which also operates other centers that may well be used – including renovated ones. The JCC of Greater Coney Island is one of the most active in terms of youth assistance.

The younger citizens of the area, as others are throughout the city, have not yet settled into the new DOE, created by the Mayor with the dissolution of the Board of Education. Confusion about schools – neighborhood and special – remains. The turnabout is evident at Lafayette High School, which seemed on the rebound after some nasty media attention. The situation, though seemingly bettered, was altered when the facility was changed to accommodate four smaller schools sharing the space. Is this the answer? The result is still awaited. Reaction has been mixed by students, teachers, and community. In the meantime, the Lafayette Field, a spacious and good one, had been used by various athletic groups, but it is now closed to all but students. The same situation exists at Grady High School in Brighton Beach where promises had been made by the school to allow ‘outsider’ youth groups to play on its field. The practice has not been implemented, and the field fence is locked. And so there are fewer outdoor sites that can be used – the aforementioned Ty Cobb Field, the Gil Hodges Field, and others that are concrete (the potential exists for grassing over the large concrete field at West Street Park). There are other options as well. The branches of the Brooklyn Public Library (Ulmer, Brighton Beach, and Coney Island) have provided a formidable outpost for all ages, and young people find the programs enormously beneficial and entertaining at the same time. One hopes that budget cuts do not do further damage to the libraries in terms of open hours and replacement of antique books on the shelves.

The Abe Stark Skating Rink should be a major part of activities, because it is located on park land adjacent to the Stadium. Many feel that it has not reached out to the community and that it is used only for tournaments involving outside-the-area teams. Recently, however, with the support of Councilman Recchia, the Rink has been open for longer periods to those who would like to skim along the large rink. Still, the machinery used is reportedly outdated and in danger of failing. If so, it should be replaced. Rumors, however, indicate that the Rink might be moved to another site when, and if, the land around it begins to be utilized for other purposes. This Rink is the only one of its kind and must be saved and used! A small ballfield nearby was created at the time of the

Stadium construction; it exists between the Stadium and the Boardwalk. It, too, is used by young athletes. Here, too, changes may be on the horizon with the plans of the City to use that site as part of the anticipated Steeplechase Plaza. When that occurs, the community strongly feels that this ballfield must be moved to a nearby place. Dreier-Offerman Park had been suggested, but the general feeling is that Drier... is too far away. One suggestion involves an anticipated new park just west of the Stadium. Perhaps, the field can be moved there. Without a doubt, though, there is little enough space for young people's activities in the District, and every bit of available land must be used...and maintained. The changes along the peninsula and its surrounding neighborhoods will happen, although any kind of timetable for action cannot be guessed. Whenever it happens, and whatever occurs, it is certain that the lure of Coney Island, Brighton Beach, and Gravesend will remain in the forefront. The unique quality of life supplied in these areas, and their one-of-a-kind attractions in the City, must be thoughtfully and carefully maintained. Where else in the city is there a beach as long and wonderful as that which frames the District? Where else can individuals engage in the free-wheeling spirit that has defined the southern shore of the city? Much work has to be done to save the gifts of the past, the fun of the present, and the glitter of the future. Its residents are a strong and resilient group of people whose backgrounds encompass the entire globe, but their needs have long been at least semi-ignored. These pages can only offer a glimpse at the story of this group of shoreline neighborhoods. The work ahead to keep it pulsating with its famed energy must be accomplished. This is the world of CB 13 – Brooklyn!!!

Marion Cleaver

Marion Cleaver
Community Board Chair

Chuck Reichenthal

Chuck Reichenthal
Community Board District Manager