



COMMUNITY BOARD NO. 8 BRONX

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DISTRICT MANAGER

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Statement of Community District Needs Community Board 8, The Bronx

Introduction

Our district is located in the extreme northwest corner of New York City, bounded by the Hudson River on the west, Westchester County on the north and extending to Van Cortlandt Park and the Jerome Park reservoir on the east. To the south we are bordered by the Harlem River, West 225th Street and Kingsbridge Road. This area of 3.4 square miles encompasses the neighborhoods of Spuyten Duyvil, Kingsbridge, Riverdale, Van Cortlandt Village and Norwood. Our edge-of-the-city location does not reflect our attitudes. We are greatly concerned about the long-term health of the city as a place for citizens of diverse socio-economic backgrounds to live productive lives, and we vote.

As is true for the city as a whole, our population has risen (4.4% in the last census) and continues to rise due to the desirability of our neighborhoods and the concomitant development occurring here. Some of this development was out of character with our pre-existing buildings and the Community Board presented a rezoning plan as part of its 197a plan, which allows for development that is in keeping with the current building heights in our neighborhoods. This rezoning plan became law in the fall of 2004 and will help to retain the special nature of our district.

Aging

Our population of seniors 65 and over is the second highest (17.6%) in the Bronx and obliges us to consider the needs of the aging in our district. For many years we have requested the building of an EMS facility in our district to decrease response times for medical emergencies. At our specific request, plans submitted by developers for the commercial development of city-owned property at 230th Street and Broadway included space allotted for an EMS station. We hope the 2007 budget will contain funding for this facility. Furthermore, we hope that our senior centers and services for home care and social services for the frail elderly will be properly funded, and adjusted for inflation.

Education

Twenty-five percent of our residents are school-aged children. Moreover, many children are bussed in from other neighborhoods. Consequently, we suffer from chronic overcrowding. Kennedy High School has the largest enrollment of any school in the city. Rather than jury rig spaces not intended for education, we need funding both for the acquisition of sites to construct additional schools to relieve the serious overcrowding and for repair to our existing facilities. No teacher can teach well nor can any student learn well when class sizes are routinely 30+. Our children deserve the same learning environment as the rest of New York State. To properly educate our school children in a global economy we need funding for programs for the gifted and talented, for computer instruction, for arts, for remediation, for fulltime librarians, nurses and counselors in every school.

DEP

The catch basin at Johnson Avenue and 235th Street, a major intersection, forms a small lake after each storm. This and other basins need more personnel for maintenance and repair.

Health, Hospitals & Social Services

The Riverdale Mental Health Association requires funding to continue providing mental health services to our children. Given our high percentage of seniors, greater availability of defibrillators in our community could save many lives. CB8 has purchased one such unit, but more are needed for community organizations and schools. We need funds for more units and for training in their use.

Housing Preservation & Development

Almost three-quarters of the housing units in our district are renter occupied and 16% of the population receives some form of public financial assistance. Once again we ask for continued funding for the preservation and renovation of low and moderate-income housing.

Libraries

Our libraries continue to operate in old, overcrowded and poorly maintained buildings. The Kingsbridge and Van Cortlandt branches are especially in need of new and larger buildings. Consequently, we are requesting \$4.649 million for a new Kingsbridge branch and \$5.538 million for a new Van Cortlandt branch. Both the Riverdale and Spuyten Duyvil branches require a full renovation for \$2.419 million each.

Parks and Recreation

Overall our parks are in dire need of reconstruction. Van Cortlandt Park is one of the most heavily used in the city. As a result, the stadium interior needs renovation and we need a new comfort station for the parade grounds. Soccer matches are a daily occurrence in the park; consequently, the fields need to be reconstructed with proper irrigation and drainage, as do Indian Field and Caryl Field. The perimeter sidewalks are in poor condition and should be repaired before an injured pedestrian sues the city.

The drainage for the Fort Four playground needs to be corrected along with proper drainage for Phase II of Fort Four Park, which needs new benches, footpaths and landscaping. In Spuyten Duyvil Park the pond, which has provided much-needed habitat for wading birds is currently leaking onto the roadway, requiring reconstruction of the pond wall. The Seton Park ball fields need new drainage and both the Ewen Park and the Henry Hudson Park Upper Level basketball courts need reconstruction. These parks help keep our children off the streets and engaged in physical activity, which often is lacking in their lives. These parks need proper maintenance, yet last year not one of our requests was approved. We hope this year it will be different.

We have previously requested funding to test the anchorage of the Henry Hudson Monument, the only one of its kind in the city. We hope that funding will be approved before the monument begins resembling the leaning tower of Pisa.

Both the governor and the mayor have been strong advocates of the Greenway Plan, yet we still have not seen the money for acquiring the Putnam Line to extend the Greenway to the city line where it could meet with the Westchester County portion.

“Paul’s Park” has become a mecca for pre-schoolers to play and socialize. But the orderliness of the park has deteriorated since Paul Cymerman’s death. The park needs a fulltime associate to continue its special use.

The “Borough of Parks” should have sufficient personnel for proper maintenance of all parks and green streets. That is currently not the case.

Public Safety

We congratulate the 50th Police Precinct for its ongoing efforts to reduce crime in our district. They are doing fine job, but need added tools to help them. Many of our residents are upwardly mobile, tax paying citizens, who would leave the city if crime rates begin rising again. Hand held ID check computers for police officers would aid their efforts as would cell phones for ranking officers and specialized units in the 50th precinct. The 50th precinct is routinely undermanned and lacks the equipment it needs for maximum efficiency. Understaffing becomes especially critical when officers are assigned to Orchard Beach, Yankee Stadium and the Bronx Zoo.

Each school day the streets surrounding our schools are filled with buses, cars and young pedestrians. We need more school crossing guards to properly control the situation.

We hope our requests will not be short shrifted when manpower and equipment are allocated

We believe the time is right to move forward on the funding for the EMS station requested above.

Much of our community consists of high rises. Given the failure of rescuers’ communicators at the World Trade center collapse, we hope all our firemen and police will be equipped with the most effective radios.

Many of our streets are rural in nature with street numbers hard to find. Rescuers trying to locate a house can lose valuable minutes. Funding for a GPS On-Star device could save lives in these instances.

Sanitation

Many of our litter baskets in commercial areas are often overflowing on the weekends. We need to workers for Sunday basket pickups. We also need two workers (MLP) for drop-outs and better enforcement of the canine waste law by providing two agents for Bronx County.

Traffic and Transportation

We are pleased to see that repair of the retaining wall and sidewalk between Johnson Avenue and Irwin Avenue from Kappock Street to West 230th Street is proceeding and heartened to know that the rehabilitation of the Step Street at 230th Street between Heath Avenue and Kingsbridge Terracc will be completed by the fall of 2005.

We hope that the study the DOT is now conducting on the merge of traffic at the Mosholu Parkway Extension and the southbound Henry Hudson Parkway will come up with a remedy and funding before anyone is seriously injured or killed.

The West 230th Street northbound exit ramp of the Major Deegan Expressway is experiencing even more overcrowding now that the shopping mall at 225th Street and Broadway has been completed. Traffic often backs up onto the expressway and we have no solution from DOT.

Youth

The allocations for our area continue to be insufficient. We request that funding for Out of School Time and other youth services not be less than the \$217,608 requested in prior budgets.

Respectfully submitted on behalf of the members of Community Board 8 by:

Saul Scheinbach
Chairman, Budget Committee
Community Board 8