



# CB9M

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## COMMUNITY BOARD #9, MANHATTAN STATEMENT OF NEEDS FISCAL YEAR 2012

### INTRODUCTION

The "West Harlem" neighborhoods' of Morningside Heights, Manhattanville and Hamilton Heights comprise Community Board No. 9 Manhattan (CB9M). Our boundaries are Cathedral Parkway (110th Street) on the South; 155th Street on the North; Manhattan/Morningside Ave/St. Nicholas/ Bradhurst/Edgecombe Avenues on the East; and the Hudson River on the West.

Each neighborhood is a district community; Morningside Heights in the southern portion of the Board contains many of the area's numerous institutions: Cathedral Church of St. John the Divine. Bank Street College of Education, Columbia University, Barnard College, Teacher's College, Manhattan School of Music, Union Theological Seminary, Jewish Theological Seminary, The National Council of Churches, Riverside Church, Grotto of Notre Dame, and the St. Luke's-Roosevelt Hospital Center. At the northern end of Morningside Heights are two large housing complexes: the General Grant Public Housing Development and the limited equity cooperative Morningside Gardens.

Manhattanville begins at roughly 123rd Street and extends northward to 135th Street. This area includes the City College south campus of City University of New York, the Manhattanville Housing Development, Riverview Towers/Riverside Community Housing at 3333 Broadway, (a former Mitchell-Lama cooperative), a number of small commercial establishments. Manhattanville is also the site of Columbia University's planned new Campus.

The northern most section of Community Board No. 9 is comprised of Hamilton Heights (part of this area is designated the "Hamilton Heights/Sugar Hill Historic District"). Hamilton Heights is home to a substantial number of owner-occupied brownstones and, also includes the city-owned Audubon houses and, a large number of Housing Development Fund Cooperatives. There are very few vacant structures. The majority of the small businesses in this area are operated by a diverse group, including Hispanic/Latino, Middle Eastern, Caribbean and Asian. Hamilton Heights is also home to the North River Pollution Control Plant with the Riverbank State Park on its Roof.

These three neighborhoods form the Board area, each reflecting the potential and promise of the community, as well as its corresponding problems.

**SERVING HAMILTON HEIGHTS/MANHATTANVILLE & MORNINGSIDE HEIGHTS**

## HOUSING

### Existing Housing Stock Not Adequate

We assume that existing housing stock in Community Board 9 continues to be inadequate to meet the needs of its current recorded population. Until the results from the ongoing Census will be available we continue to look at the available data from the US Census 2000 report that states that there were just over 43,000 units of housing in CD9, a drop from 1990 in contrast to Manhattan's and New York City's overall gains. Over the last decade (1991-2001) CD9 was one of the community districts with the smallest number of new housing units built during this period at 195 out of a total of 94,000 new unit (measured by final certificates of occupancy) in New York City.

There are less than 40 city controlled buildings in the District in addition to vacant lots. Many are in various stages of disrepair but are either being rehabilitated or in preparation for major rehabilitation. We are deeply concerned about the need for timely rehabilitation of deteriorating and often over occupied housing stock. As such, the Board supports the continuation of initiatives to coordinate the necessary repairs, rehabilitation and contract monitoring. The Neighborhood Entrepreneur Program (NEP), Neighborhood Revitalization Program (NRP), and Anti-Abandonment Program have potential to remedy these matters; however CB9M has reservations about the effectiveness of these programs. The track record of the entity chosen to oversee a site is of greatest importance, as many current residents fear displacement in the name of renovation.

### Need for the Creation of New, and Preservation of Existing, Affordable Housing

The need for affordable housing has become a major problem for low, medium and middle income families. A significant portion of CD9 renter households are under financial burden to pay rent. Technically, this includes households who have to use 30% or more of their income towards rent. There are concentrations of such households where almost half the households are "rent-burdened." CD9 also has 23% of its residents paying more than 50% of their income in rent.

As a result of the expiration of public subsidy contracts for affordable housing, and of rapid private development, long-term residents of public and rent-regulated and subsidized housing face the threat of displacement. River View Towers and Riverside Park Community is a recent example of a lost Mitchell Lama property with over 2,000 apartments. We encourage

the City to take all steps necessary to protect NYCHA, HPD and Mitchell-Lama properties from privatization.

We support the completion of the Tenant Interim Lease (TIL) Program, as well as expansion of programs to create more HDFC's with more stringent guidelines to guarantee major repairs for tenants associations before the sale of such designated buildings, along with built-in requirements for more thorough tenant education around purchasing and maintaining these tenant controlled cooperatives. We continue to encourage the early identification of HDFC's in jeopardy due to lack of performance and the establishment of specific remedies to cure problems that these HDFC's are suffering.

As CB9 is undergoing a rezoning of the northern section of the District we appreciate City Planning's efforts of including areas of Inclusionary Zoning, however it is imperative that further creation of new affordable housing units are explored through additional opportunities for more Inclusionary Zoning and any other City initiatives. These units must be affordable within the context of the incomes of the residents of our District. We plan to continue discussions with all pertinent city agencies and developers seeking support for our efforts to facilitate the creation of new affordable housing units.

## **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

### **Overview**

West Harlem has been hard hit like many other communities during these tough economic times. Unemployment is high and new jobs are scarce. The only employment data we have available was collected by City Planning in 2008. We know that the unemployment figures must be higher now. In 2008, only 59.1% of our eligible working population (104,719) was employed while the remaining 40% of residents were without jobs. Incomes seem to average between \$15,000 and \$24,000 per year. Most of our residents still commute outside of the area for jobs. And we still have a high illiteracy rate in English and Spanish that limits employment opportunities for residents.

In the past year, there have been a number of store closings. The southern portion of our district has been more fortunate with only a few closings and a number of those vacant spots have new tenants building out those spaces. Our northern district has seen an increase of fast food establishments and communication stores like Metro PCS that can pay higher commercial rents limiting space for small "mom and pop" stores. We still believe that it is in everyone's best interest to support more retail business and professional office spaces where appropriate in our community.

Our community has certain advantages that could be attractive to new business owners. We have large sidewalks and boulevards. This distinct feature can lend itself for future street fairs, promotional events and art installations that could attract residents, tourists and fellow New Yorkers to our community. Steps towards re-zoning our manufacturing district, is moving forward with City Planning. Our M1 District also known as our proposed New Amsterdam Special Mixed Use District is one of the last remaining areas we have to realize new economic growth. This district is between Amsterdam and Convent Avenue from 126<sup>th</sup> Street to 130<sup>th</sup> Street. There's an assemblage of old manufacturing buildings which could be transformed into a hub for creative professionals, museum, artists, high tech manufacturing and digital communications. This would be very similar to other neighborhoods like the Meatpacking district in Manhattan and other communities around the country where diversification is the new "future" for urban cities.

Streetscaping for West 125<sup>th</sup> Street from Old Broadway to Marginal Street has been approved by the local Community Board and the Public Design Commission. Work is scheduled to begin in March, 2011. There will be larger pedestrian sidewalks, new lighting, bicycle racks, an intermodal area for bus and ferry riders, trees and historical interpretations. Again, this will make West Harlem more attractive and viable. With Dinosaur BBQ moving on the western side of 12<sup>th</sup> Avenue, all of our restaurants in Manhattanville will be on the same side of the street which we hope will generate more foot traffic from our new waterfront park. A plan to further stretch streetscaping to Morningside Avenue on West 125<sup>th</sup> Street would complete the transformation beginning with the refurbished triangle that is home to a Richard Hunt sculpture.

Our most challenging area economically is Upper Broadway, Amsterdam Avenue, St. Nicholas Avenue and West 145<sup>th</sup> Street. Though Upper Broadway has many small businesses, open spaces and good transportation, the range of retail and business services are limited. Many of these businesses are locked into agreements with suppliers that make it difficult to expand offerings and improve facades. It would be better if the City would support existing businesses and not just new businesses to offer a balance in service and offerings to our residents. We still believe that Amsterdam Avenue, which has less foot traffic, should support more professionals – creative professionals and lawyers needing office space or meeting spaces. Mixed with City College, some park spaces, elementary schools and residential apartments on the street level, this could help enliven the strip that is also very dark at night. The proposed re-zoning on 145<sup>th</sup> Street could also help with needed foot traffic by bulking up the corners on Broadway with mixed use towers with up to three to four floors of commercial and income targeted housing.

### **Small Business Retention**

New business models are needed for our district north of 120<sup>th</sup> Street. Many of these businesses are small, family-owned operations. There is very little hiring from local residents. The only exception is the mega Duane Reade located on 125<sup>th</sup> Street and Broadway. The management of the store reached out to the local housing projects nearby and tenant associations to hire local residents. Funding that is available through the City is for new businesses and not existing businesses. Therefore, we need to encourage some of our local businesses to consider new models in order to qualify for training support and loans. Helping some of our immigrant businesses become more “Americanized” could possibly expand their audience and generate more income.

### **Adult Education & Literacy**

Much has not changed in the year regarding adult education. Though much deserved attention is paid to elementary and secondary education, the Community Board understands that adult education and literacy needs to be a part of the conversation for our district. Community Board 9 has a large population of residents who were born in a foreign country. Many travelled to the United States so that their children would be able to get a good education. Nonetheless, the family suffers if the parents are not able to navigate life in the United States and offer the support that is necessary to help their children. Unfortunately, for many of these individuals, they did not receive a quality education in their native homeland and so it’s important that we push for more literacy programs in West Harlem. ESL programs are great for those persons who just need to learn English, but it’s not helpful for someone that cannot read. This is directly tied to economic survival, development and sustainability. Job preparedness demands a basic skill level. Our Community Board has many people who are willing to work but lack the necessary skills. Therefore we need this situation addressed.

### **Access to Capital**

Businesses and cultural institutions in Community Board 9 need access to more capital. For decades we have sought investments for equipment, inventory and employee training. Our community desires an integrative, economic mix. Therefore, we need subsidies from the City to off-set the cost for a local incubator that can help develop more jobs or offer opportunities to expand.

### **Waterfront development**

The Community Board has been in negotiations for three years with the City of New York over the re-development of the old Marine Transfer Station at 135<sup>th</sup>



Street. Delays have pushed community engagement back but in late 2009 and spring 2010, there have been two meetings drawing community residents to re-vision the site as a potential “green” site for jobs in aqua farming, hydroponics, and other sustainable jobs for local residents. The Community Board wants to push the City towards conducting a feasibility study that would help realize that goal. Also, the Board would like the City to move the Public Design Commission to approve a pedestrian bridge improving access to the waterfront at 150<sup>th</sup> Street and Riverside Park along with Phase One of a new re-landscaping plan for the inland portion of Riverside Park North.

### **Arts and Culture**

Arts and cultural programming and organizations are hit hardest and hit first during times of economic uncertainty. The growing crisis in the decline of the stability of many of our institutions that sponsor creative endeavor and preserve cultural heritage is of particular and primary concern for the arts and culture community of West Harlem.

Most recently in our community, Harlem School of the Arts was temporarily closed and Riverbank State Park had to cutback hours, depriving students, senior citizens, young adults and children the creative outlets crucial to artistic pursuit and expression. Funding has been restored to both the school and the park but only for the short term. As soon as one school or park is rescued we learn of another in jeopardy. The loss of arts and cultural institutions and programming destroys neighborhoods and radically deteriorates the quality of life for all residents.

Preserving and expanding cultural opportunity in our community ranked highest on our needs list, as we discussed the issues most important to the arts and cultural community of Manhattan Community Board Nine (MCB9). Developing a strategy of systemic sustainability to fuel the economic engine that cultural and creative enterprise provides is our top priority. We have created a Task Force specifically to address the challenges of revitalizing cultural opportunity in our community.

Local arts and cultural organizations need tools to collectively respond to economic challenges as they arise; technical support to integrate and improve fund raising and marketing initiatives; leadership and advocacy training are needed to educate the next generation of arts support and service delivery entrepreneurs. We need to identify ways to increase capacity, improve outreach and implement structural change in such a way that we are prepared to meet the fiscal challenges that force closings &

curtailments rather than react to each situation on a one-trouble spot-at-a-time basis.

To heighten artistic and cultural opportunity in our West Harlem community, the Arts and Culture Committee has identified the following needs:

1. Technical support, as described above, particularly for arts and cultural organizations that have a history of service to the community;
2. Continued funding for *Percent for the Arts*;
3. Tax abatement legislation that allows small theaters to stay in business (Economic Development; all community boards in Manhattan)\*;
4. Development of government-supported work space for artists (Housing, Land Use and Zoning);
5. Signage – allow free advertisement that highlights arts and culture activity in the community (Transportation);
6. The systemic inclusion of arts and education programming in school curriculums (Youth and Education);
7. An Arts and Culture Charter School, especially since Music and Art High is no longer in our district;
8. The formation of an advocacy group that works to ensure that a fair share of arts funding is allocated to smaller, minority-owned arts organizations whose primary mission is to support and to serve communities of color;
9. Development of job opportunities via cultural programming and the creation of a ‘Teaching Artist Program’ to ensure economic advancement for artists;
10. Preparation for future arts and culture entrepreneurs by assuring summer jobs for youth in arts festivals and special event planning industries, i.e., providing opportunity and fostering understanding of arts as a business.

## **HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES**

CB9M is greatly concerned that the City has a complacent attitude about Health Services in our area. For almost a decade, despite the availability of funds, Manhattanville Health Station has not been rehabilitated. Programs originally on site have dispersed with no guarantee of their return leaving a major gap in services for this area. Threatened cut backs in space and services at the Sydenham Clinic and local school sites have been prevented and are maintained only through the efforts of Community and local council members.

CB9M believes that the high incidence of rats in this community is directly related to many illnesses, the elimination of 3 inspectors and 2 exterminators in the latter part of 2001, as well as massive private construction of late without monitoring by the Dept. of Buildings as to mandated baiting account for the very visible rodent population explosion. Even with added Personnel the Department of Health will not be able to keep up. We urge that staffing for upper Manhattan be tripled. In addition agencies with their own Pest Control units such as HPD and Parks staffing should be increased so they can be more responsive to complaints.

CB9M will strive to assure that the City adheres to the Fair Share guidelines in the Charter as to the placement of Social Service Facilities. More importantly the Board needs the assistance of our State elected officials as well as local elected officials due to the fact that the majority of programs sited north of 125<sup>th</sup> Street are funded through New York State with no local oversight or comments mandated. The Department of Homeless Services has put in writing that all new facilities must come before the board and we would ask that the State do the same.

We are requesting that the City continue to lobby and demand from the federal and state government funds that will sponsor permanent low and moderate-income housing. That will include day/child care, job training and placement, and permanent housing assistance while families work to “pull themselves up”. Currently the majority of day/child care facilities in our area are too expensive for Community Board 9 residents to afford. There are over 400 children on waiting lists. This produces a needed mandate that the city generate funding for free/affordable day/child care programs for pre-school age children increasing the availability to address the need.

The continued soaring of rents in CB9 has resulted in an increase in homeless families and a decrease in subsidies and services to prevent eviction when families fall victim to the lack of available employment which is a critical issue for Community Board 9. In order to help these families break the vicious cycle of poverty, it is imperative that the appropriate agencies establish better collaboration coordinating their services to meet the multitude of problems confronting their clients.

The increase in ambulatory care services for prenatal care, for addicted mothers and teenagers continues to be a pressing need in the CB9M District. It is imperative that this need be addressed as the continued lack of service for this population promotes the development of children with major personality and emotional dysfunctions. Which burdens our educational services and creates additional issues for our community.



WestSide Harlem has been ranked among the highest in the incidence of lead poisoning cases in the City. Health officials are not examining Forty percent of our children. Mandatory screening for lead poisoning should be done at all day care centers and elementary schools in order to correct situations.

## **SENIORS**

The elderly population in CB9M is increasing. During this time of budget constraints we must not lose sight of the special needs of our seniors, it is imperative that long range comprehensive planning includes housing, health and mental care, home care and senior centers. Only in this way can we ensure continued quality of life and prevent the isolation, which places many of our elderly at risk of poor health, unacceptable living conditions, poor nutrition and inaccessible services.

The astronomical cost of health care today takes an especially heavy toll on seniors, many of whom, while above the Medicaid eligibility level, cannot afford large out-of-pocket medical expenses. The Seniors Issues Committee of CB9M strongly urges support of a National Health Bill, that unlike the current prescription bill actually works, which would guarantee access to community based, affordable, quality, and health care.

A priority need of the seniors of CB9M was an additional van for the Hamilton Grange Senior Center, which was delivered. So that it can be effectively utilized, funding to cover the salary of a driver must be included in the package, which DFTA is unable to fund. Board 9 needs the assistance of City and State Legislators to secure the funding for vital personnel. In order to encourage the independence of our seniors and facilitate their ability to maintain their social networks, it is imperative that accessible safe reliable means of transportation is made available. The escalators at the 125th Street and Broadway IRT line and the 145th Street 8th Avenue line subway station are all too often not operational, making it impossible for the frail, elderly, mother with young children, and physically handicapped adults to use these stations. While both escalators were allegedly reconstructed they continue to break down on almost daily basis. It is completely unacceptable that CB9M residents around 125th Street should have to walk twelve blocks down to Broadway and 116th Street to access the subway. Reliable access to the subway is an essential needed Senior service. The job must be done right this time and then the experience must be replicated at 145th Street.

In response to the increasing number of seniors and disabled persons in our community it is imperative that immediate attention be given to

facilitating access to public places, affordable housing and other needed senior services.

## **POLICE**

We had until recently been pleased to a point with efforts of the Department with the Upper Manhattan Initiative which includes the 30<sup>th</sup> Precinct. However recently that coverage had dropped and while crime numbers are down, by comparison to ten years ago Drugs remains a major problem. Many of the dealers have moved inside and taken over multiple apartments making under cover arrests more difficult. Increasingly Gang activity has flourished. In a briefing by the Harlem Drug Task Force in 2001 Board 9 learned that 60% of the identified Gang members lived in the Manhattanville and Grant Houses. The problem is still present although more localized in various focal points in the community.

As the only local employers are these criminals, CB9M urges full utilization of the Trespass Affidavit Program on every block to combat this situation.

The Board urges an increase in both Precinct Uniformed personnel with concerns that the Initiative in the adjoining Precincts will drive Drug Dealing into the 26<sup>th</sup> Precinct especially at our borders.

More manpower is needed for the Housing Police to facilitate sweeps so that Officers from the 26<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> Precinct can remain on the street as a visible presence. Civilian Personnel have returned due to CB 9's efforts to bring staffing to pre-1994 levels we urge the Department to maintain these levels.

## **SANITATION**

While the drastic Sanitation cutbacks of the mid 1990's have been somewhat restored, problems with trash collection can negatively impact the quality of life in our community. This is especially true north of West 125<sup>th</sup> Street. .

This is in part due to the population being 20% higher (including undocumented) than reflected in the 2000 Census. We hope that the 2010 results will remedy this under-count. The staffing does not reflect the actual tonnage of garbage handled by Community Board 9's Sanitation Crews. Pick-ups along the Commercial Strips of Broadway, Amsterdam Avenue (W 135<sup>th</sup> – W 155<sup>th</sup> Streets), and 125<sup>th</sup> Street cannot keep up with

utilization. We urge the City to increase staffing to facilitate three pick-ups in these locations a day.

For lots and trouble locations we need the Clean Team Restored. Recycling figures have greatly improved since 1997 however the Public Schools and City owned buildings or agencies are the greatest violators. The Office of the Mayor must reach out to local agencies to follow the rules.

We need, if not increased then, consistent Sanitation Enforcement in our Area. Board 9 has recommended Flex Shifts to reflect or findings that the majority of violations occur in the afternoon when Enforcement Officers are finished their Tour. Super block structures require special attention for health reasons. The health and integrity of our community MUST be a top priority.

## **FIRE**

CB9M strongly requests that Fire Marshals be located in Manhattan to respond effectively and quickly to arson inspections. Community Board 9 requests that all the ambulances covering our area be upgraded or replaced.

Emission controls should be upgraded on all such vehicles. CB9M requests the restoration of the five-man team to the engine companies. The deficiencies in our area are not limited to manpower alone. Community Board 9 requests the timely restoration of our Engine Company 69 and Ladder 28, which burned down in 2007. Also, that Ladder 23 and 30 must receive a hurst tool, air bags and chain saw: and Ladder 28 must receive air bags. There is also a need for the Red Cap Program in upper Manhattan. A long-term goal is to have resident sprinklers for all multiple dwellings. CB9M also requests the timely restoration of our much needed Fire House

Although our request for a Juvenile Fire Setters Intervention Unit has not been funded, we strongly recommend the creation of such a Unit in Manhattan. Because of the constantly growing population in the area there will be many children that need and would benefit from the resource that this unit can provide.

## **PARKS**

Community District 9 is fortunate to encompass over 175 acres of city parkland. This includes two NYC scenic landmarks (Morningside Park

and a portion of Riverside Park) historic St. Nicholas Park and many smaller parks, triangles, a significant stretch of the Broadway Malls, half a dozen playgrounds outside of those within parks, and community gardens. CD9 is proud of the new West Harlem Piers Park which the community worked long and hard to see realized. Unfortunately our north-south greenway is still marred by a section bounded to the west by North River Sewage Treatment Plant and to the east by the Amtrak rail lines with southern and northern boundaries at approximately 138<sup>th</sup> Street and 146<sup>th</sup> Street respectively. This area is largely given over to uses such as salt storage and industrial sheds that are an eyesore and potential health hazard to our residents. Community Board 9 has overwhelmingly supported a resolution calling for this zone to be designated as parkland.

The need for safe, well maintained parks and open spaces has consistently been and remains a high priority for this community. It is imperative that our residents be provided with recreational havens for our youngsters (29% of our population) and our seniors (12% and ever increasing).

#### **Expense Needs:**

1. Park maintenance is the overriding priority in our district. Park usage in our district is exceptionally high especially in the warm weather and such heavy usage takes a tremendous toll on our parks and open space. In addition, much of the district's parkland is located on the rugged and steeply sloping terrain which lies on the east and west flanks of our district making routine maintenance a challenge. Park staffing and equipment are often seen as inadequate to meet these needs. Our parks are sorely in need of additional maintenance workers in all our parks. We need trash pickup to be doubled over the peak summer season from Memorial Day through Labor Day. Similarly the level of horticultural staffing is inadequate during periods of peak plant growth and heavy usage, leaving large portions of our beautiful parks often looking overgrown and neglected during this time of year.
2. Our district's need for safe and usable parks requires that park regulations are enforced. We have an acute need for additional Parks Enforcement Patrol (PEP) Officers to carry out this task. Dedicated PEP officers have been provided for the West Harlem Piers Park but our other parks including Upper Riverside, Morningside, St. Nicholas and Montefiore Parks are woefully understaffed in this regard.
3. Recreation programs, supervisors and more park rangers are needed to engage children in team sports and teach them environmental values, urban gardening and training in horticulture. Since there are so few day

care centers and many of our schools are poorly equipped, our parks must be programmed to provide alternatives, which can stimulate career opportunities for our older youth.

4. While many street trees have been planted in our district the board has identified a number of areas that still have an inadequate number of trees.

### **Capital Needs:**

1. Pedestrian access through our parks and to our waterfront is a critical need in our district. While a number of park stairways have been rebuilt or repaired over the last five years, many park stairs remain in treacherous or unusable condition. These include the stairs leading down to St. Clair Place in Riverside Park, stairs at 114<sup>th</sup> and 121<sup>st</sup> Streets in the upper level of Morningside Park and Stairs at 133<sup>rd</sup> and 139<sup>th</sup> Streets in St. Nicholas Park. Access too much of Upper Riverside Park from points east is also severely limited. New pedestrian access routes over the railroad tracks are required as well as the completion of the renovation of the existing crossing at 148th Street. A section of asphalt sidewalk in Riverside Park along the eastern edge of northbound Riverside Drive between the north end of Sakura Park and the southern end of the Riverside Drive viaduct also needs to be replaced with a concrete sidewalk.
2. Recreational facilities are in great demand in our district and a number of DPR facilities need to be renovated or rebuilt including the playground at the north end of Morningside Park and the Morningside basketball courts at 118<sup>th</sup> Street. There are also a number of UN or underutilized DPR properties in the district that could become real community assets but they are in need of capital improvement. These include the park house in Annunciation Park at 135<sup>th</sup> Street and Amsterdam Ave. and the Croton Aqueduct Gatehouse at 119<sup>th</sup> Street and Amsterdam Ave.
3. Adequate lighting is critical to park safety. Lighting for bicyclists along Cherry Walk in Riverside Park between 110<sup>th</sup> Street and St. Clair place is critically important to the safety of riders who have to contend with the glare of oncoming headlights from the West Side Highway and a complete lack of park lighting for the bike path. The perimeter of St. Nicholas Park would be considerably enhanced by providing historic lamp posts with pedestrian side arms as has been done at Morningside Park. Inadequate lighting on the 135<sup>th</sup> Street Stairs in Riverside Park leading down to 12<sup>th</sup> Avenue is detrimental to the new business which are struggling and need safe and well lit pedestrian access in order to survive.



## EDUCATION/LIBRARIES

As civic institutions anchoring our community, neighborhood schools ought to be encouraged to aggressively pursue after-school, weekend, and summer enrichment programs designed to encourage healthy activities that sharpen their charges physical, social, and cognitive skills. Neighborhoods with high poverty rates have higher rates of obesity, with corresponding increases in the rates of diabetes, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, cancer, heart disease, and, ultimately, morality rates. In 2007, nearly half of NYC's public high schools, students reported having engaged in sexual activities, of those, nearly two-thirds (63%) remained sexually active—approximately one-third of the *entire* high school population.<sup>1</sup> Though it's difficult to track, gang activity among our youth is rising with corresponding increases in truancy, vandalism, violence, and criminal activity. With so much at risk, to protect our youth and the institutions that service them, Community Board 9's Youth, Education and Library Committee has identified four broad categories of district needs for the coming year:

- (1) preserve and protect programs that enrich our youth's academic and employment opportunities,
  - (2) encourage the development and expansion of genuine parent support programs,
  - (3) monitor and offer constructive assessments of school quality and after-school programming, and
  - (4) Foster opportunities for productive community collaborations between residents and public offices, community-based organizations, philanthropic and advocacy organizations.
- To facilitate us in these endeavors, we will need an efficient partnership of government agencies, community-based organizations and motivated residents in order to:
- a. design, create and utilize a tool-box of media resources (word-of-mouth networks, flyers, public service announcements, on-line digital resources, etc.) to accommodate luddites and technophiles, allowing community leaders to conduct outreach, assess feedback, and implement follow-through measures; and

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<sup>1</sup> "Teen Sexual Activity and Birth Control Use in New York City" NYC Vital Signs, A report from the New York City Youth Risk Behavior Survey, New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, August 2007, Volume 6, No. 3

- b. expand youth and parent leadership development opportunities, interconnecting the work of existing community-based organizations and programs; and
- c. organize a series of neighborhood meetings inviting influential advocates, leaders and community based organizations from within the community to get an accurate, multicultural snapshot of our community concerns and recommendations pertaining to our youth, culminating with a public forum to explain and disperse solutions and, most importantly, create follow-up mechanisms.

There is little doubt that the \$9 billion gap in New York State's two-months-late is going to wreak havoc on Community Board 9. West Harlem's \$30,000 median income makes it disproportionately reliant upon the community based organizations such as the Harlem Commonwealth Council, "Our Children's Foundation," The M. L. Wilson Boys and Girls Club and the Boys Scouts etc. and government agencies that depend upon government funding. As the community attempts to adapt to unpredictable budget cuts, years of accumulating declines in public funding have already begun eroding public services in schools, libraries, parks, transit and government subsidized summer jobs. For example, NY State budget negotiations in recent months have threatened to drastically cut the hours of service of Riverbank State Park (from 16 to 7), eviscerating its invaluable public programs and services to youth and senior citizens; to close ten branches of New York Public Library (laying off one-third of library staff); to force public school budgets to absorb \$800 million in cuts, by firing thousands of teachers, cutting educational programs, and increasing class sizes.

Such cuts to public and private sector services in our community economy threaten recent gains in closing achievement gaps, including student performance on tests, admission to gifted and talented program, and rates of unemployment, increase in obesity and diabetes cases, school-aged sexual activity, incarceration, and premature mortality rates. Of course we should expect these remissions to have a disproportionately negative impact on our communities of Black and Latino population.

The Youth, Education and Library Committee bases these recommendations on assessments and actions undertaken during the 2009-10 term. CB9's Youth, Education and Library Committee passed three resolutions supporting changes to public school policies:

- supporting the Parent Commission on School Governance and Mayoral Control recommendation to rescind Mayoral Control and replace it with a

more collaborative and transparent accountability mechanisms of governance with checks and balances;

- supporting bills by Senator Kevin Parker and Assemblymen Daniel O'Donnell and Keith L.T. Wright enacting a public/charter school ULURP process for all school sittings; and
- supporting Planned Parenthood's "Take Me to the Principal's Office" campaign to enhance the public school sex education curriculum.

After assessing two new school proposals the Committee also wrote letters of support recommending the approval of the

- Teachers College Demonstration School (K-8) and
- Fortune Society-affiliated school modeled on Central Park East 1 (PreK-8).

Because the Teachers College demonstration school is proposed as a likely venue for actuating many of the education provisions in the West Harlem Community Benefits Agreement between the West Harlem Local Development Corp (WHLDC) and Columbia University, we have been working with Teachers College to establish baselines and benchmarks of its existing program.

Perhaps our most ambitious achievement this year was working with a dynamic group of teenagers from the CB9 area and beyond to form the CB9 Harlem Youth Council (HYC). For six months HYC has been meeting several times a month at the National Service Organization Operation HOPE's Harlem Center to organize and promote advancement opportunities for youth, parents, and other community members. Their self-determined mission is to bring awareness and bridge the gap between generations by working to find tangible solutions for the economic, social, and environmental issues in our community. August 21<sup>st</sup> they will be assisting in coordinating two workshops for teens and young adults 1) Dress for Success 2) Creating a Great Resume as a part of Operation Hope's "Day of Hope" street fair and indoor/outdoor expo.

In our continuous effort to evaluate the quality and effectiveness of schools in CB9 and the practice of implementing education policy, we facilitated meetings with State Senator Bill Perkins, Councilman Robert Jackson, and parent leaders to evaluate DOE's co-location plan for PS 153 and the Hamilton Heights School. We continue to monitor the precipitous growth of the KIPP Infinity Charter School with PS 192 and the Columbia Secondary School with PS 125. This year during our public meetings we provided public exposure to a the full spectrum of public and private organizations that provide or facilitate youth-and family-oriented

programs and services, including: The City College of New York, Columbia University, The Harlem School of the Arts, Harlem Hospital, Harlem Textile Works, The M. L. Wilson Boys and Girls Club, Harlem-based branches of the New York Public Library, Riverbank State Park, and Teachers College.

Of course many of the problems our children face can be traced back to challenges in the home, consequences of unemployment, low-income, incarceration, drug addiction, and debilitating illness. Other more benign causes include parents or guardians who are non-English speaking immigrants, participating in foster care, and single and working. Overcoming these difficulties often requires access to educational resources and support services like classes for English Language Learners, budget management, employment counseling, anger/stress management, homework coaching, healthy cooking options. While most of our schools are receiving Federal Title I grants, financial assistance for the education of children in low-income families, is not enough. To the extent that these programs exist, our community lacks sufficient outreach mechanisms to inform parents. Even our most stable and engaged parents have difficulties ensuring that their children's schools are providing them with a safe and effective learning environment.

To illustrate the complexity of the school system, consider the 17 public and charter schools under the auspices of Manhattan Community Board 9, whose borders overlap with three of northern Manhattan's Community School Districts: 3, 5 and 6. These three districts in turn overlap with four other Community Boards: CB7 (the Upper West Side), CB10 (Central Harlem), CB11 (East Harlem), and CB12 (Washington Heights/ Inwood). The schools themselves are subject to up to five chaotically interconnected levels of governance, regulation, and oversight (charter schools are exempt from most):

- i. **School level:** school Principals, Parent Coordinators, Parent Associations, and School Leadership Teams
- ii. **District level:** District Superintendents, Community Education Councils, Presidents Councils, District Leadership Teams, Community School District offices
- iii. **City-wide:** offices of the Department of Education, Department of Youth and Community Development, School Construction Authority, Citywide Education Councils representing high schools, English Language Learners (ELL), and special education parents (District 75 Council and the Citywide Council on Special Education, United Federation of Teachers (teachers union), Council of School Supervisors and Administrators (principals union)

- iv. **City officials:** The Mayor's Office, NYC Comptroller and Public Advocate, City Council-members, School Construction Authority,
- v. **State officials:** NY State Assembly and Senate, NY State Education Department, NY State Board of Regents, SUNY Charter School Institute

Of course there are dozens of city agencies and thousands of non-for-profit and corporate organizations providing vital health, legal, social, logistical and educational services. Providing all parents with comprehensive understanding of how the school system and the city's social service agencies work would help to alleviate many problems and ultimately benefit of the entire community.

In the past decade the number of schools serving high school students in our community has grown exponentially: A. Philip Randolph High School (9-12) has been joined by the City College High School for Math, Science and Engineering (9-12); Columbia Secondary School for Math, Math and Engineering (9-12); KIPP Infinity Charter School (5-12); KIPP Star College Prep Charter School; New Heights Academy Charter Schools (5-12). Because of the achievement gap – Asian and White students consistently out-performing their Black and Latino classmates by as much as 22%<sup>2</sup> – our community needs to pay particular attention to trends in graduation rates and curriculum quality. Perhaps the ultimate indicator of the quality of public schools is the preponderance of NYC school graduates who apply to CUNY schools and fail the placement exam (83% in 2008)—which tests basic math and reading comprehension, requiring remedial education coursework to gain admission (nation-wide the trend is 60%-70%).<sup>3</sup>

To put these figures into context, it is important to understand a few fundamentals of school governance. In 2002, the tumultuous but mostly buoyant system of community-oriented school governance was replaced by a corporate mayoral control regime. This drastic transformation was undertaken after decades of Byzantine administrative control under a decentralized Board of Education—which allowed marginal but conspicuous political cronyism and petty corruption— was presumed to have resulted in decades of lackluster student performance and abysmal graduation rates. This has led to three paradigmatic shifts in educational trends

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<sup>2</sup> "The Racial Achievement Gap", Jennifer L. Jennings and Aaron M. Pallas pp 31-37, NYC Schools Under Bloomberg Klein, Lulu, New York, 2009

<sup>3</sup> "Many entering CUNY students failed placement exams last year," NY Daily News, September 1, 2008



- reliance upon high-stakes math and reading tests to provide as the primary basis of scholastic assessment and a critical component of student placement;
- high-stakes teacher and school evaluations (using aggregated student tests scores as a decisive component) to determine hiring/firing decisions and ultimately school closures; and
- closing large schools charged with poor performance and replacing them with charter schools and “small schools” campuses

Mayor Bloomberg and Chancellor Klein have earned applause for their efforts to increase the level of funding for public education from \$11 to \$18 billion during their stewardship. (Though the Campaign for Fiscal Equity also deserves credit for indemnifying NYC’s unfair funding disparity and education quality relative to the rest of New York State.) Indeed, under their stewardship four-year graduation rates are approaching 60% after hovering below 50% for decades. Corresponding dropout rates for the class of 2009 are 11.8% (down from 22% in 2005).<sup>4</sup> Given the high rate of college applicants who require remediation, alarms about the nature and quality of public education persist.

Given certain rules and regulations, school principals are given a certain amount of autonomy in developing their curriculum. But as a matter of city-wide policy the most significant metrics of success are the annual standardized tests of English language and math skills. Placing so much emphasis on readiness for high-stakes reading and math exams too often comes at the expense of a robust curriculum— sacrificing “enrichment programs” like art, history, music and science— and support services. A pattern is emerging: to accommodate school mergers and high stakes testing enrichment programs are considered increasingly superfluous and their dedicated science labs, art and music studios are dismantled and converted into classrooms. Ironically, this trend is squandering meaningful opportunities to provide a sound education by dulling our children’s rational and creative abilities— to debate, to rationalize, to synthesize, to analyze, to create, to innovate, etc. Failing to develop these abilities puts the attainment of a sound education at risk, tacitly encouraging our youth to underachieve.

The results of the high-stakes reading and math tests are considered dubious for a number of other reasons. While the student body has continuously makes impressive gains on the annually standardized tests

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<sup>4</sup> NYC Graduation Rates Class of 2009 (2005 Cohort), NYC Department of Education, March 2010

administered New York State Education Department (NYSED) on these subjects, overlapping local performance on the biennial National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP) — the so-called nation's report card, has been consistently inert.

Why the discrepancy? Critics claim a host of causes, including: (1) some principals and teachers are finagling the system (coaching students, allocating additional time, encouraging absence for student likely to perform poorly), and (2) for the sake of expedience state tests are dumbed-down (or minimum passing scores are lowered). A constant stream of press accounts buttresses these claims.<sup>5</sup> For students, teachers and school administrators, high-stakes state tests increasingly determine rewards (student placement, and teacher advancement, bonuses, and promotion) and punishments (teacher and principal termination, school staffing and funding levels, and school closure). Beyond its value as a metric, the only high-stakes reward for high scores on the NAEP tests are bragging rights. Such divergence between state and NAEP scores allows troubling conclusions to be inferred about state tests: their academic value is at best ambivalent and at worst, given influential their political and economic worth, fraudulent. Rather than emphasizing the development critical cognitive skills, the Chancellors' primary metric of success encourages schools to instruct children in how to take the state's tests.

After several cycles of this divergence, in March 2010, when NAEP results were released, NY State Education Commissioner David Steiner issued a press release remarking upon this troubling discrepancy at the state-wide level:

The NAEP scores in Reading released today show New York's performance remains essentially flat, with no significant gains between 2007 and 2009. The Board of Regents and I are concerned by these results. We remain troubled by our overall results, and we especially note the gaps that separate the achievement of too many of our African-American students, Hispanic students, low-income students, English Language Learners, and students with disabilities from the results from other students.<sup>6</sup>

An earlier report by a commission of educational authorities impaneled by then Public Advocate Betsy Gotbaum to study the effects of mayoral control expressed many misgivings about correlating "improved" test scores with an improved school system,

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<sup>5</sup> "Test Score Inflation: Campbell's Law at Work," Steve Koss, NYC Schools Under Bloomberg and Klein

<sup>6</sup> "State's reading scores show no improvement on national exam," GothamSchools.org, Anna Phillips March 24, 2010

As the Commission deliberated, it was cheered by the news that reading and math scores on state tests are up in New York City. Here again, however, we need to be cautious in using such data as a measure to evaluate governance. There were similar improvements recorded in cities and school districts throughout the state that do not have mayoral control. Some analysts have interpreted the general upswing as an indication that the tests themselves may have become easier. Scores for New York City from the nationally administered NAEP test remain flat.<sup>7</sup>

A similar report issued by a city-wide commission of parent leaders characterized the regime of mayoral control as

... more and more layers of test preparation, data analysis, and high-stakes standardized testing— with principals, teachers and even students being paid to produce good scores. It has become a commonplace that our schools have become testing factories rather than places where our children can be provided with a well-rounded education and critical thinking skills.

Rather than supplying our schools with additional classroom teachers to reduce class size, the administration has added new data coaches, school achievement facilitators, school support officers, and a growing cadre of educrats—all of them tasked with wringing good test scores out of teachers and students in under-resourced, overcrowded classrooms.<sup>8</sup>

As stewards of City Hall and the school system, Mayor Bloomberg and Chancellor Klein control vast financial and human resources as well as the means of analyzing and disseminating critical data. They use these as armaments to routinely, disparagingly encourage critics (whether benign or hostile) to seek remedies through lawsuits or the ballot box. On July 1<sup>st</sup> the teachers union and NAACP won two rounds of such a lawsuit when a five judge appellate court panel unanimously affirmed a lower court ruling rejecting the DOE's proposed closure of 19 public schools on the basis that legally required hearings and educational impact statements provided too little due process and due diligence.<sup>9</sup> Typically, rather than accept the decision and rectify the systemic flaws, Mayor Bloomberg again vowed to appeal on the expectation of getting more appeasing judges.<sup>10</sup> For many parents actively engaged with the school system, mayoral accountability has become an Orwellian slogan invoked— with media-savvy and

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<sup>7</sup> Commission on School Governance, Final Report, September 2009

<sup>8</sup> Parent Commission on School Governance and Mayoral Control, Recommendations on School Governance, March 2009

<sup>9</sup> *Mulgrew v Board of Educ. of the City School Dist. of the City of N.Y.*, NY Supreme Court Appellate Division, First Department, (2010 NY Slip Op 05863)

<sup>10</sup> "Bloomberg vs. The Judicial Branch," Eliot Brown, The New York Observer, July 2, 2010

bureaucratic chicanery— to control public outrage: promoting high-stakes student tests, teacher and school evaluations and charter schools; trivializing alternatives priorities like smaller class sizes, authentic community collaboration and transparent accountability.

Besides, high-stakes testing and evaluation another problem is real estate. One of the persistent sources of strife between new and established schools is over real estate. In its five-year capital plan DOE and the School Construction Authority refuses to acknowledge or provide for the need for new school construction to provide new seats. As a consequence new schools approved by DOE are often “co-located” with an existing school in a building without sufficient space to accommodate classroom, enrichment programming and administrative space. This problem is exacerbated by a reliance on a notoriously inaccurate utilization formula in which

“[o]vercrowding is even worse than indicated above because the enrollment, capacity and utilization formulas actually overstate schools’ capacity. This inflation occurs because the formulas adjust for overcrowding by adding to schools capacity non-classroom spaces if such space is in fact used for classrooms. For example if a crowded school is forced to convert its gymnasiums or auditoriums into classroom space, the capacity formula indicates increased capacity.”<sup>11</sup>

Some of the consequences of the resulting overcrowding are larger class-sizes, lunch periods which begin at 10 AM and end at 2 PM, and a narrowing of the curriculum because art and music studios, gymnasiums and laboratories are converted into classrooms. In CB9, these combustible experiments are playing out between PS 153 and the Hamilton Heights School, PS 125 and the Columbia Secondary School, and PS 192 and KIPP Infinity Charter School.

Since the charter school cap has been raised, when proposing new schools or re-siting established ones (charter school or otherwise), DOE officials should be required to have a more open and authentic exchange with the effected community. Much of the criticism against charter schools has little to do with innate flaws in charters schools per se, but rather how forcefully they executed and supported, often at the expense of existing, struggling community schools. Rather than merely conducting hearings in which impact statements are read and public testimony merely recorded, school officials ought to consult with community agents who are

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<sup>11</sup> State Supreme Court Decisions 719NYS 2d 475 Index 111070/93/ CFE et al versus The State of New York, 1/10/2001

knowledgeable about relevant historical details, underutilized resources and potential collaborators for constructive community partnerships.

In 2009 the state legislature reauthorized mayoral control with modest changes for an additional seven years. Since then, many of the Mayor and Chancellor's most ardent priorities coalesce with those of the Obama Administration. In pursuit of the Obama Administration's millions of dollars in Race to the Top financial inducements, competitive state legislatures are required to enact policies

- to implement high stakes standardized student testing, teacher and school evaluation
- to close failing schools, and
- to remove caps on charter school deployments.

These policies are being implemented at a dizzying pace, many argue without sufficient due process to include the full range of stakeholders or due diligence to anticipate consequences. In her testimony reluctantly supporting the extension mayoral control, Katherine Eckstein, the Children's Aid Society Director of Public Policy, identified two vital components missing from the Bloomberg and Obama Administration's campaigns to revive schools:

Ensuring that there are multiple opportunities for authentic parent and community engagement at all levels – from budget and space School Leadership Teams to effectively transforming education policy. When we say parents, we mean families. When we say community, we mean community members, community-based organizations, businesses, higher education and health providers.

One promise of mayoral control and the Obama administrations have yet to genuinely act upon: harnessing the power of government agencies to respond in an integrated and coordinated way to the real and multiple needs that children and families have, using schools as the vehicle.<sup>12</sup>

Since schools are woven into the fabric of our communities, revitalizing them requires authentic inclusiveness in the decision-making process at all levels, for all stakeholders.

In 1929 when the stock market crashed the worst effects of the resulting catastrophic fiscal crisis were not felt immediately, but rather from the devastating shockwaves of prolonged and demoralizing recessions that

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<sup>12</sup> Testimony of Katherine Eckstein, Director of Public Policy, The Children's Aid Society Prepared for the Assembly Standing Committee on Education: Governance of the New York City School District March 13, 2009



lagged behind it from 1933 through 1940. During this seven-year span of the Great Depression, the American economy was characterized by widespread, perpetual unemployment and ruinous cost of living increases. Leading economists currently speculate that the 2008 economic collapse may have triggered a similar wave of economic shockwaves. In the first report to provide relatively current unemployment rates at a neighborhood level for New York City on the basis of race/ethnicity and gender, the Fiscal Policy Institute characterized it this way:

[December 2009] marks the second anniversary of the start of the “Great Recession”—the steepest and longest downturn in the United States since the 1930s. While the recession started later in New York City, unemployment has skyrocketed over the past year-and-a-half, reaching 10.1 percent during the third quarter of 2009. This has been the sharpest rise in unemployment in the 34-year history of monthly unemployment data for New York City and there are now over 400,000 unemployed persons in New York City—the highest number on record.<sup>13</sup>

While city-wide unemployment hovers around 10.1% (for Manhattan it’s slightly lower at 9.1%), according to the report Harlem and Washington Heights’ Black and Latino households unemployment is 17.0% and 16.9% respectively.

Neighborhood		White non-Hispanics	Black non-Hispanics	Hispanics	Asian and other	Total for nbhd	Labor force estimate
M1	Downtown	8.5%	21.8%	15.9%	6.4%	9.1%	189,000
M2	Midtown	7.1%	29.5%	10.5%	4.5%	7.6%	208,000
M3	East & West Sides	4.8%	12.4%	4.3%	3.9%	5.1%	261,000
M4	Harlem/Wash. Hts	4.6%	17.0%	16.9%	3.7%	13.6%	301,000
Manhattan total		6.3%	17.5%	15.0%	5.0%	9.1%	960,000

The same data disaggregated by race and gender reveals that unemployment for Black and Latino males in our community is 22% and 20% respectively and 12% and 14% for Black women and Latinas respectively.

Neighborhood		Males				Females				Total for nbhd	Labor force estimate
		White	Black	Hispanic	Other	White	Black	Hispanic	Other		
M1	Downtown	10%	8%	17%	8%	6%	n.d.	15%	5%	9.1%	189,000
M2	Midtown	8%	n.d.	12%	8%	6%	n.d.	8%	n.d.	7.6%	208,000
M3	East & West Sides	5%	n.d.	5%	4%	5%	20%	4%	4%	5.1%	261,000
M4	Harlem/Wash. Hts	7%	22%	20%	4%	2%	12%	14%	4%	13.6%	301,000
Manhattan total		7%	21%	17%	6%	5%	15%	12%	3%	9.1%	960,000

The report also revealed that many in our community continue to live at subsistence levels, with a median income of \$30,000.

Neighborhood	Median Income	Number of households	Income group
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<sup>13</sup>“New York City in the Great Recession: Divergent Fates by Neighborhood and Race and Ethnicity,” Fiscal Policy Institute, December 2009

<b>M1</b>	<b>Downtown</b>	<b>\$60,000</b>	<b>162,500</b>	<b>High-middle</b>
<b>M2</b>	<b>Midtown</b>	<b>\$100,000</b>	<b>193,500</b>	<b>Highest</b>
<b>M3</b>	<b>East &amp; West Sides</b>	<b>\$100,000</b>	<b>260,200</b>	<b>Highest</b>
<b>M4</b>	<b>Harlem/Wash. Hts</b>	<b>\$30,000</b>	<b>234,700</b>	<b>Lowest</b>
<b>Manhattan total</b>		<b>\$70,000</b>	<b>850,900</b>	

If this economic trend continues to worsen we must expect a cyclical return of the deplorable social conditions of the 1970's and 1990's (or worse) when social and economic factors that erode quality of life (unemployment, homelessness, vandalism, gang activity) caused increases in the rates of crime, malaise, and drug abuse ravaged West Harlem. Faced with such economic, social and moral peril, to protect our families we must work together to restore our community's safety net. It is imperative that we proactively, strategically work together to create and exploit opportunities to avoid such a regression. To accomplish this, we need three things: (1) efficient tools and resources to enable us to stay better connected to one another, (2) more opportunities to effectively cultivate our youth and parents' leadership abilities, and (3) vibrant public forums.

## **ENVIRONMENT**

The need an increase of inspector personnel to assure good quality drinking water is a vital need in our community. We are pleased that the Department of Environmental Protection has shared our concern and hope that it will continue its demonstrated support when additional funds become available.

The staffing has to be maintained at the mandated levels at the Sewage Treatment Plant. Board 9 strongly requests the assistance of our elected officials to prevent DEP's plans for the removal of air quality monitors. The failure of the backup generators during the August 2003 Northeast Blackout almost led to disaster. Board 9 calls for an expedited delivery of the new equipment as well as coordinated training of the staff during emergencies.

Complaint about air pollution and noise are handled by DEP with a staff of nine Inspectors citywide in the evenings and weekends that is entirely too small. Because they are expected to respond also to calls from 311 about late night or illegal construction it is urgent that they increase the number of inspectors currently available in CB9. It often takes months to arrange an inspection for noise or fume complaints that can entirely disrupt a neighborhood. DEP must have its inspection forces increased

significantly, especially in light of our North River Pollution Control Plant.

Flooding of catch basins in CB9M is a constant problem along, St. Nicholas and Morningside Drive; it is commonplace to see "mini lakes". This has become an intolerable situation that must be addressed immediately as in light of West Nile Virus concerns it creates a health hazard and makes it especially difficult our senior citizens to "navigate" the cross walk.

## **TRANSPORTATION**

The City has recognized the fact that deferred maintenance often results in higher costs than yearly upkeep with so much roadway improvement scheduled and deferred, it is necessary the Mayor's Traffic Construction Coordinating Council (MTCCC) to monitor this activity closely to ensure a minimum amount of traffic congestion negative impact on the small businesses and residents in our area. For our community, the availability of convenient and reliable mass transportation is a requirement. Most of our workers have low paying jobs and cannot afford alternative forms of commutation; they need subways and buses that deliver them to their place of employment on time. The failure of the MTA to increase services that correspond with the 15% growth in mass transit utilization causes delays that make our residents travel more difficult.

CB9M has been able to maintain (M18, M4, M5 & M104 or extend (M60) service, however the lack of additional buses on a regular basis is causing buses to bypass bus stops southbound to expedite schedule adjustments for lower Manhattan leaving our community stranded. CB9M is also in the need for bus pads along the route of Amsterdam Avenue and 153<sup>rd</sup> Street as well as a Bus Shelter. Reconstruction efforts both within and without our Board area has placed undue strain on other of our arteries. For instance, the work on Columbus Avenue for the Frederick Douglass Circle to our south has resulted increased heavy truck traffic on Broadway; and the rebuilding of the 155<sup>th</sup> Street entrance/exits to the Miller Highway [Westside Highway] has significantly increased usage of Amsterdam Avenue and the 125<sup>th</sup> Street Corridor. Additionally, the junction of Broadway and 125<sup>th</sup> Street has become heavily congested; given the many differing objects of the drivers entering the intersection, it has become increasingly hazardous. During peak period, traffic enforcement is required for this area.

There is a desperate need for adequate need for parking facilities. Board 9 successfully coordinated with Sanitation to change street sweeping signage reducing lost parking time. One branch of the Department of Transportation removed over 90 spaces for HPD of which to this date only 50 are used without the knowledge or input of either CB9 or the Manhattan Borough Commissioner.

Board 9 recommends that a method" of coordination be "created so that all changes are routed through the Manhattan Borough Commissioners Office, with subsequent input from the Board before implementation.

The conditions of our road surfaces north of West 135<sup>th</sup> Street require reconstruction, NOT RESURFACING, on Amsterdam Avenue, St. Nicholas Avenue, as well as Broadway.

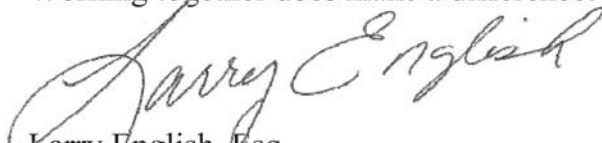
### **197A PLAN**

As early as the 1980's, this Board recognized the need to identify comprehensive and integrative approaches to improve the quality of life in CB9M.

After modifications to the original Plan, City Council adopted CB9's 197A Plan in December 2007. In 2009, the Department of City Planning undertook the West Harlem Rezoning Project. This Project is key to the implementation of goals and objectives articulated in the 197-A Plan, specifically the creation and maintenance of affordable housing, support of Economic Development, and the preservation of neighborhood character. Notwithstanding, there are many other goals and objectives to be met.

We are aware of the budgetary restrictions affecting all phases of government funding. We want to do our part in conserving these resources and utilizing them in a way that will be beneficial to all in the community.

Working together does make a difference!



Larry English, Esq.  
Chair