



BRONX COMMUNITY BOARD No. 10

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STATEMENT OF COMMUNITY DISTRICT NEEDS BRONX COMMUNITY BOARD #10

July 21, 2010

Opening Statement

Bronx Community Board #10 is one of the largest Board service areas in the Borough of the Bronx. It is primarily characterized by 1-3 family homes, situated on tree shaded streets. There are a few multiple dwellings concentrated in the Pelham Bay, Zerega and Westchester Square portions of the Board. However, the Board is the host community to Co-op City, one of the largest cooperative housing developments in the United States. One of the most interesting communities within the Board's service area is City Island. This nautically themed community is home to several America's Cup Yacht Race winners, and resembles a quaint New England fishing village. The Board is also home to the City's largest park, Pelham Bay, in which Orchard Beach, the Bartow Pell Mansion and the Thomas Pell Wildlife Preserve are situated.

History

The areas that comprise Bronx Community Board #10 were once part of the Village of Westchester and before that, the private estates of several families, most notably the Bartow and Pell families. A significant battle was fought during the American Revolution between British and Colonial forces, in the vicinity of Orchard Beach. The Battle of Pell's Point delayed the British advance, allowing Washington's troops to regroup in White Plains. The Westchester Square area is home to St. Peter's Episcopal Church, one of the oldest churches in New York City, and one that received its charter from George III, the last ruling British monarch over America. Westchester Square is also home to the Ferris Family Cemetery, with graves dating back to the 16th Century, and the historic Collis P. Huntington Free Library.

Boundaries

North-New England Thruway, Eastern Prolongation of Park Drive, Park Drive, Long Island Sound, City Line; East-Western boundary of Pelham Bay Park, Eastchester Bay Long Island Sound (including City and Hart Islands); South-East River; West –Westchester Creek, Northern Prolongation of Westchester Creek to Waterbury Avenue, Waterbury Avenue, Westchester Avenue, Castle Hill Avenue, East Tremont Avenue, Silver Street, Eastchester Road, Blondell Avenue, East Tremont Avenue, Hutchinson River Parkway, New England Thruway.

Public Safety

Bronx Community Board #10 is serviced by the 45th Precinct. The 45th Precinct has one of the largest patrol areas in the Borough ranging from the Zerega community to Co-op City. Yet, the 45th Precinct has one of the smallest contingent of officers. Additionally, the 45th Precinct is respon-

sible for police services within Co-op City, home to 50,000 residents and while Co-op City does have its own public safety force that works well with the 45th Precinct, both the 45th Precinct and Co-op City could benefit from a satellite sub-station within the housing complex and shared patrol resources.

Due to increases in criminal activities, especially burglary and drug sales, the 45th Precinct needs additional officers and patrol vehicles. The drug trade within our Board's service areas is sophisticated, in that it is not related to simple street sales, instead, the drugs are sold via a complicated network of cell phone operations and hand-offs of illegal substances between vehicles. The Board is at the confluence of several major highway networks, and the drug dealers use this to their advantage. Therefore, it is imperative that anti-drug unit be assigned to the 45th Precinct on a permanent basis.

The Board service areas have also seen an increase in burglaries. Additional patrol officers and cars are needed to patrol the residential blocks.

The Board has also seen a rise in quality of life offenses such as excessive noise and graffiti. The officers should receive training in the use of sound meters, and the equipment should be assigned to the Precinct. Additional resources in the form of equipment and personnel should be reviewed for anti-graffiti efforts. Greater coordination should exist between the Department of Sanitation and Economic Development Corporation, agencies offering free graffiti removal and the Precinct.

Transportation

Bronx Community Board #10 is serviced by the IRT #6 Train, as well as several bus lines. Earlier in 2010, the MTA announced a series of severe cuts to bus and subway service. Most important to Bronx Community Board #10 was the elimination of the BX# 14 Bus and changes to the BX #30, BX #28 and BX #26 serving the geographically isolated communities of Country Club and Co-op City. With the assistance of our elected officials, the Board advocated for the restoration of BX #14 bus and worked with all the stakeholders to ensure that this bus was replaced with enhanced BX #8 service. In the case of the Co-op City buses, the Board met with New York City Transit and the agency indicated that it would assess these changes, after implementation. The Board expects that it will have an open dialogue with the agency on these changes. The Board also worked MTA Bus Company, another component of the MTA on bringing enhanced service on the former QBX #1 service. This bus which connects Co-op City the IRT #6 Train and the business center in Flushing, will be split into two sections, the Q30 providing limited service to Co-op City, allowing passengers speedier access to the IRT #6 Train and local bus connections to the West Bronx, and the QBX #23, which will pick up the local service within the cooperative.

The Board has also advocated for commuter ferry service to serve, Co-op City and other areas of the northeast Bronx. Additionally, the Board has long advocated for a Metro- North station to be built in Co-op City's Section #5. Both proposals would offer residents of the Board's service areas with quicker access to the City's central businessdistrict.

The Board is committed to providing a safe environment for pedestrians on the streets, as well as cars. It has advocated for a series of traffic calming methods on area streets, such as speed bumps, traffic lights and signage,

The Pelham Bay portion of Bronx Community Board #10 is situated between two major highways, the New England Thruway and the Hutchinson River Parkway. Both roads are notorious for congestion and pollution. Suburban drivers, seeking to avoid the congestion on either road, often traverse through Pelham Bay streets to reach one highway or the other. This practice causes massive problems for the residents of Pelham Bay and Bronx Community Board #10 has reached out to the

New York State and New York City Departments of Transportation to develop a comprehensive traffic study seeking creative solutions to the problems posed by the traffic in this community.

Road construction has not kept pace with the production of new cars and trucks. The number of vehicles using the roads has far outstripped the capacity of those roads to handle the traffic. Transportation planners must develop alternatives to car and truck transport. There is no reason why the residents of various Bronx community boards must be burdened with pollution belching truck traffic on the New England Thruway and the Cross Bronx Expressway, when a readily available alternative exists in the railroad. For over a century, railroads have served the Bronx, and served it well. With the presence of the Oak Point Rail Yard providing a linkage between New England and points south, serving both local and through freight needs, bulk cargo should be shifted to trains and away from trucks. The trains could deliver the goods to central locations and smaller trucks could deliver these commodities to retail locations and homes.

Health and Human Services

Bronx Community Board #10 is serviced by Bronx Municipal Hospital Center, the Jack D. Weiler Hospital of Montefiore Hospital and Medical Center and Westchester Square Medical Center. Surveys of the health of the Borough and Community Board #10 have revealed high rates of asthma; problems associated with childhood diseases; low birth weight babies; increases in HIV infection; geriatric; and mental health issues. Health planners should concentrate their efforts on preventive medicine. To their respective credit, the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, the Health and Hospitals Corporation and Montefiore Hospital and Medical Center have excellent outreach programs and the Board applauds their efforts. However, it is vitally important that these efforts be supported and the Board will work with these providers to improve the health of our neighbors through assisting them in outreach efforts, such as health fairs.

The Board is experiencing a disturbing trend in Westchester Square; this community has seen a marked increase in the number of facilities operated by mental health, drug treatment and behavioral modification agencies. The Board understands the needs of our neighbors, and has welcomed these agencies in the past, but health planners, particularly at the State level should understand that the Westchester Square community has been inundated by these agencies and suffers from over saturation. Such a high concentration of group homes and other treatment facilities in one geographic area is unhealthy, from a community perspective.

Recently, the New York City Department of Homeless Services (DHS) placed a 38 unit transitional shelter within the Westchester Square community. This was done without a fair share analysis or a true public hearing, where the community's opinions and input would be solicited. Additionally, the families were housed in a failed condominium and at the time of the placements, no contract existed between the sponsor of the shelter and the City.

In response to a series of issues surrounding community notification of facilities, the City Council drafted Int. No.79- A Local Law to amend the Administrative Code of the City of New York, in relation to requiring the Department of Homeless Services to notify the affected community prior to locating transitional housing for the homeless. The Board agreed with the spirit of the proposed legislation, but felt that other stakeholders in the community, beyond the Council member (s) and the Community Board be consulted, as well. Additionally, the Board suggested that DHS conduct fair and objective public hearings on these matters and the agency fund a robust outreach unit.

Education

Bronx Community Board #10 is home to fine grammar, intermediate schools. It is also home to three high schools, Herbert H. Lehman, the Renaissance High School and Harry S. Truman. The

schools in the Board service area are doing well and young people are entering college. This was not always the case, but the schools and test scores have improved. The Board will work with the community and its educators to see that adequate funds from the State budget are dedicated to area schools. The Board strongly believes in internships and encourages the Department of Education and the leadership of Herbert H. Lehman, Renaissance and Harry S. Truman high schools to explore to the fullest, opportunities with local businesses and government to give their students opportunities that will enable them to succeed in working world.

Parks and Recreation

Bronx Community Board #10 is the host Community Board for Pelham Bay Park, the largest park in the City's system. It is also home to many community parks, which provide a welcome respite from the rigors of urban life. These are resources that must be preserved and enhanced. The Board is grateful that the City's central administration has announced plans to build a golf course, children's playground and river walk for Ferry Point Park East. New pathways, fields and a comfort station are planned for Ferry Point Park West, and plans have been announced for the renovation of many athletic fields and local parks, such as Pearly Gates. The Board would like to see the establishment of private and public partnerships for parks. Parks such as Owen Dolen, with a recreation center and greensward, in the midst of a commercial area, are an oasis of calm and beauty. The Board is grateful that the Department of Parks and Recreation has developed sweeping plans for the renovation this Park, and has worked, and will continue to work with elected officials, the agency and stakeholders in the community on renovation plans. The Board is optimistic that Owen Dolen will be a showpiece in our Borough.

However, more resources must be brought to the parks for cultural enrichment, nature programs and support of the Urban Park Rangers. The Board through its Parks and Recreation Committee will continue its efforts to bring more services to our parks.

Housing and Zoning

Bronx Community Board #10 has experienced unprecedented growth in residential construction. Often this construction was not consistent with the existing housing in the area. This has led to a zoning resolution that downsized new construction. However, developers continue to propose new projects that either flout or come close to violating the zoning provisions. It therefore becomes incumbent upon the Board, to do its utmost to assess these projects and work to overcome the more onerous aspects of development. Community Boards are mandated to provide advisory opinions on land use and zoning matters. It is important that the City's central administration commit to supporting Community Boards, so that they are able to provide quality opinions on the many development projects that come before them.

Emergency Management

Much of Bronx Community Board #10 is shoreline property, and as such, is subject to the negative effects of storms. Central to the City's emergency response system in the Community Board, are Civilian Emergency Response Teams or (CERTs). Each CERT TEAM is made up of trained community residents, who have agreed to assist the NYPD, FDNY and EMS during emergencies. Currently, the Co-op City community has a CERT TEAM. The Board will work with the community organizations to facilitate the establishment of additional CERT TEAMS in the Board's service area.

Economic Development

The attraction and retention of business in the Board's service areas is of utmost importance. The Board established a specific committee, known the Economic Development Committee to as-

sist local businesses with information and ombudsman services. The Westchester Square business community is working very hard on establishing a Business Improvement District or BID. A BID will consist of property owners who have made a commitment to the community in transforming an older shopping district, into a revitalized economic entity. The Westchester Square experience should be replicated across the other Board's shopping areas along City Island Avenue, East Tremont Avenue, Crosby Avenue, Westchester Avenue and the Dreiser, Einstein and Bartow Avenue Shopping Centers in Co-op City. The Board believes that the City's economic future lies in the preservation and enhancement of its older shopping areas. To this end, the Board calls upon the City's Small Business Services to assist the older shopping areas of the Board.

Quality of Life

The Board receives inquiries from its constituents on a variety of issues. Most often they center on the cleanliness of public spaces, the need for increased parking, concerns over housing that was built, but never sold and many other issues. In response, the Board is working with its partners in government to try and address these matters. Air quality is of great importance to this Board. One way to improve the quality of the air that we breathe and ultimately the quality of our lives, is to plant trees and create greenstreets throughout the Board's service area. To this end Bronx Community Board #10 has forwarded dozens of locations to the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation, under the PlaNYC Program, which has as its goal the planting of over a million trees.

Conclusion

This statement of District Needs has been submitted by Bronx Community Board #10, in an effort to familiarize the appropriate government agencies with the needs of our communities. This Board represents vibrant communities that are the social and economic bedrock of the Bronx. The Board looks forward to working with its partners in government to ensure our quality of life, and the continued viability and growth of our neighborhoods.

Respectfully submitted,

Kenneth Kearns
Kenneth Kearns
District Manager