

# THE CITY OF NEW YORK COMMUNITY BOARD SIX

Marty Markowitz  
Borough President

Richard Bashner  
Chairperson

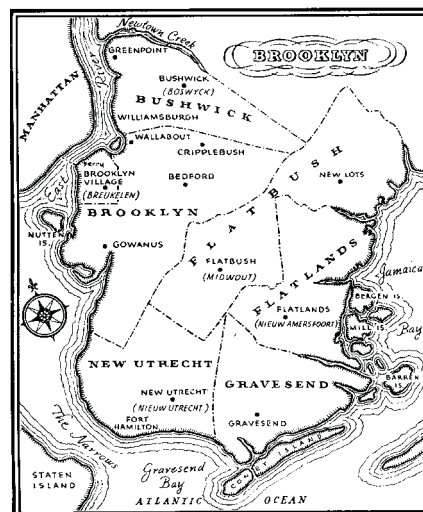
Craig Hammerman  
District Manager

## DISTRICT NEEDS STATEMENT

This annual statement of Community District Needs has been prepared and is hereby submitted by Brooklyn Community Board Six in accordance with § 2800-d(10) of the Charter of the City of New York.

### \*\*\* INTRODUCTION \*\*\*

With a population of 104,054 residents (2000 Census figure), Brooklyn Community Board 6 is comprised of the following neighborhoods: Carroll Gardens, Cobble Hill, Columbia Street District, Gowanus, Park Slope and Red Hook. The neighborhoods are delineated by a combination of natural, man-made and artificial boundaries. The construction of the Brooklyn Queens Expressway, the Gowanus Expressway, and the Brooklyn Battery Tunnel subdivided the geographic area once commonly known as South Brooklyn. The name South Brooklyn referred to the southern portion of the town of Brooklyn (or Breukelen), one of the six original towns that comprised Kings County when it was settled by the Dutch in the seventeenth century (see map inset). Each of our neighborhoods possesses distinctive characteristics; collectively they reflect our City's vibrant diversity.



Map showing the five Dutch towns and the one English town (Gravesend) which during the seventeenth century constituted Kings County. Note the original Dutch names in parentheses. [Source: *The First Hundred Years, 1851-1951*, By Edgerton G. North, 1951.]

This statement is arranged by neighborhood to more precisely depict the needs and challenges facing our communities. The information contained in this statement is compiled from a variety of sources including, but not limited to, prior statements, input from annual neighborhood budget hearings, monitoring of land use and infrastructure projects, Census socioeconomic data (not all 2000 data was available at time of submission), ongoing consultations and dialogue with municipal service providers, community-based organizations, and complaints/requests for services received from the public.

Please do not hesitate to contact the District Office of Brooklyn Community Board 6 for further clarification or additional information.

250 Baltic Street • Brooklyn, New York 11201 • [www.brooklyncb6.org](http://www.brooklyncb6.org)  
telephone: (718) 643-3027 • fax: (718) 624-8410 • email: [info@brooklyncb6.org](mailto:info@brooklyncb6.org)

### \*\*\* CARROLL GARDENS \*\*\*

Carroll Gardens is primarily a residential community steeped in traditional working class values. It derives a rich heritage from a wave of Italian immigration that occurred in the earlier part of the twentieth century. The Carroll Gardens Historic District so designated on September 25, 1973 is one of the smallest historic districts in the city; it is notable for its atypical setbacks that create deep front yards for the Neo-Grec and Italianite style brownstone rowhouses. The neighborhood is situated between Cobble Hill to the north and major regional transportation thoroughfares to the south and west, including Hamilton Avenue, the Brooklyn-Queens Expressway, the Gowanus Expressway, and the Brooklyn Battery Tunnel. Much to the chagrin of local residents, the major north-south local streets (viz: Smith, Court, Clinton, Henry and Hicks Streets) are heavily used corridors for commuter traffic traveling to and from Downtown Brooklyn and Manhattan. The ongoing repair work and much-needed reconstruction of the Gowanus Expressway, combined with other local street network projects underway and planned, are of primary concern to the neighborhoods of Carroll Gardens, Cobble Hill and Columbia Street District. Spillover traffic effects are anticipated and experienced as far to the east as Park Slope. Lane closures, traffic restrictions and other diversions are spilling more than the usual high volume of vehicles onto these local residential/commercial streets. Additional traffic congestion means attendant reductions in ambient air quality, increases in noise and vibrations particularly to our older housing stock, and negatively contributes to the neighborhood's perception of public safety and quality of life.

As with so many other neighborhoods in the city, publicly available open space is sparse and lightly sprinkled throughout the area. Carroll Park is a bustling oasis and center for civic life in the heart of the neighborhood. It is used for both active and passive recreation, and caters to adults and children of all ages. Organized softball and bocci leagues, community events and programs for children can be found there. The neighborhood hosts Brooklyn's first constructed and sanctioned dog run at an underutilized tract of land at Hamilton Avenue and Hicks Street. The city also recently completed construction of a new grassy ballfield at DiMattina Park at Hicks and Woodhull Streets. For the past few years the community has been planning the construction of a community garden to be located on New York City Transit property at the southwest corner of Smith Street and Second Place, funding for which has been provided by the Office of the Brooklyn Borough President.

The completed reconstruction of Smith Street has had a tremendously positive impact on the local economy. This commercial strip is heavily trafficked by local residents, the majority of whom travel by foot. Occupancy rates are up and private property owners are reinvesting in their properties, as evidenced by enhancements to storefronts and building facades. It is widely hoped that the same amenities included on Smith Street can now be applied to a similar sought-after reconstruction of Court Street project as the deteriorating street, sidewalks and curbs would seem to justify. Smith and Court Streets possess both the traditional smaller "Mom and Pop" stores and more specialized businesses that reflect a combination of the old flavor of European tastes with the newly settled elements of young urban professionals that continue to flock to the neighborhood. Smith Street especially has developed a reputation as "restaurant row" hosting an eclectic mix of international gourmet cuisine. Nightlife on Smith Street continues to grow with more bars, clubs, performance and social gathering spaces opening up attracting even more people to the area.

Issues that need to be addressed include but are not limited to:

- Identify potential resources for expanded youth programming needs currently unmet, particularly aimed at young teenagers.
- Pursue a comprehensive reevaluation of the existing on-street Truck Route network, with an eye toward reducing impacts of traffic on residential communities. Expanded enforcement targeted to truck traffic.
- Continued planning and implementation of various traffic calming strategies as discussed in the Downtown Brooklyn Traffic Calming project undertaken by the Department of Transportation designed to enhance public safety and facilitate the safe movement of traffic.
- Study the problems (i.e., noise, air emissions, vibrations, aesthetic quality, etc.) inherent in Brooklyn-Queens Expressway Trench that divides the Carroll Gardens, Cobble Hill and Columbia Street District neighborhoods along Hicks Street, with an eye toward designing a solution that could become a Capital project.
- Construction of new community garden at the New York City Transit's open lot adjacent to the substation at the southwest corner of Smith Street and Second Place.
- Installation of lighting at DiMattina Ballfield to increase utility of open space by providing for expanded hours of use for local recreational needs.
- Development of a comprehensive commercial revitalization plan for Court Street between Luquer Street and Hamilton Avenue.
- Planning, design and reconstruction of Court Street between Atlantic and Hamilton Avenues to upgrade utilities, improve riding surface, repair cracked and spalled bus pads, cure existing sidewalk defects, replace missing curb sections and include amenities similar to those applied to Smith Street (i.e., historic street lighting, tinted concrete sidewalks, granite curbs, etc.).
- Preservation and stabilization of affordable housing stock and development of additional affordable senior housing options to reduce economic displacement of indigenous residents.
- Ongoing monitoring and coordination of highway, street reconstruction and infrastructure projects (such as Hamilton Avenue Bridge Reconstruction, Reconstruction of Gowanus Expressway, etc.) to minimize impacts on local residents and merchants.

### \*\*\* COBBLE HILL \*\*\*

Since its inception Cobble Hill has been a residential enclave for professionals. Initial development during the mid-nineteenth century was spurred by its proximity to the South Ferry service to Lower Manhattan that opened in 1836. Because virtually the entire neighborhood is included in the Cobble Hill Historic District, so designated December 30, 1969, the architectural integrity of its brownstone rowhouses has been well preserved. Continuous efforts are underway to preserve and maintain the historic bluestone sidewalks that line the residential streets, an essential characteristic of the area. In fact, the Cobble

Hill Association continues to lobby the City for area-wide installation of bluestone sidewalks and historic replica street lighting for the whole neighborhood. Cobble Hill has the lowest unemployment levels (*at 3.1% per 1990 Census*) relative to any other neighborhood in the district. The neighborhood also has the highest proportion of seniors in the district (*16.3% of Cobble Hill is over 65 per 1990 Census*), many of whom reside in the Cobble Hill Health Center. Cobble Hill Park is heavily utilized predominantly for passive recreation, and the three vest-pocket parks on Henry Street created by the Long Island College Hospital (LICH) provide open space for active recreation for small children and additional passive recreation space. LICH's other land holdings and potential reconfiguration of medical and health service spaces are typically among the neighborhood's ongoing concerns.

Cobble Hill is abuzz with pedestrian activity on its Court Street commercial strip as evidenced by an explosion of unenclosed sidewalk cafes that have popped up over the past few years. Cobble Hill shares the same north-south local streets as Carroll Gardens to the south and Brooklyn Heights to the north; as such they endure a heavy volume of commuter traffic flowing through the neighborhood. A recent grassroots movement has begun a concerted effort to revisit the problems suffered by Carroll Gardens, Cobble Hill and the Columbia Street District resulting from the Brooklyn-Queens Expressway Trench that divides these communities along Hicks Street. Traffic encroachments from Downtown Brooklyn, particularly agency vehicles bearing City permits used for personal commuting, have a history of usurping precious few metered parking spaces on Atlantic Avenue and Court Street. This has had a negative impact on lost revenue for the merchants and the City alike, and has worsened constrained on-street parking conditions. Atlantic Avenue has become the subject of its own master design planning effort. The goal of the effort is to capitalize and harmonize the multiplicity of uses (i.e., regional shopping destination, local commercial strip, traffic corridor, etc.) particularly in relation to two other major regional planning efforts underway, specifically, the Brooklyn Bridge Park project at the waterfront and the BAM cultural district in the Atlantic/Flatbush Avenues vicinity.

Issues that need to be addressed include but are not limited to:

- Continued planning and implementation of various traffic calming strategies as discussed in the Downtown Brooklyn Traffic Calming project undertaken by the Department of Transportation designed to improve public safety and facilitate the safe movement of traffic.
- Continued support for the Atlantic Avenue Master Design planning effort, particularly follow-up support services that will promote Atlantic Avenue as a shopping destination, and provide for improved security, cleanliness and beautification of the area.
- Planning, design and reconstruction of Court Street between Atlantic and Hamilton Avenues to upgrade utilities, improve riding surface, repair cracked and spalled bus pads, cure existing sidewalk defects, replace missing curb sections and include amenities similar to those applied to Smith Street (i.e., historic street lighting, tinted concrete sidewalks, granite curbs, etc.).
- Install additional streetscape amenities, specifically historic replica street lighting and bluestone sidewalks, to enhance the historic integrity of the neighborhood.
- Study the problems (i.e., noise, air emissions, vibrations, aesthetic quality, etc.)

inherent in Brooklyn-Queens Expressway Trench that divides the Carroll Gardens, Cobble Hill and Columbia Street District neighborhoods along Hicks Street, with an eye toward designing a solution that could become a Capital project.

- Expand inspection personnel and administrative support necessary for Landmarks Preservation Commission violations monitoring and enforcement.
- Identify potential resources for expanded senior recreational, transportation and educational programming needs.

### **\*\*\* COLUMBIA STREET DISTRICT \*\*\***

The Columbia Street District is a landlocked community in an area due south of the Brooklyn Heights Promenade sharing perhaps the most spectacular vistas of the Manhattan skyline in the entire city. The waterfront is exclusively occupied by the Red Hook Container Port a busy off-loading cargo facility that imports raw materials to the region and a source of local employment. This Port Authority-leased facility has seen a tremendous increase in business over the last decade, with the potential to grow even further, and handles both containerized and break-bulk cargo. It boasts the highest amount of cocoa imports from overseas in the United States. The future of these piers, however, has been called into question as the Port Authority and the current operator are approaching the end of their existing lease for the space. Other uses, notably the possibility of converting a portion of the site over to a cruise ship terminal, have been proposed and presumably are under some form of consideration. Discussions over the potential reuse of the piers have not included the community to the extent desired. Continuous efforts are underway by local residents lobbying for greater access to the waterfront; the Port Authority is attempting to accommodate its residential neighbors in this regard and initiated a perimeter improvement project to beautify the edge of the facility where it abuts local streets. New signage, ornamental lighting, entrance gateways and landscaping have been constructed to the delight of the community. The neighborhood is effectively delineated by the waterfront to the west; the Brooklyn-Queens Expressway (BQE) trench to the east; Atlantic Avenue to the north; and, to the south, Hamilton Avenue, the Brooklyn Battery Tunnel plaza, and the Gowanus Expressway.

This neighborhood is a mixed-use community, zoned for both heavy manufacturing (working waterfront maritime area), and a mix of light manufacturing and residential uses. A resurgence of low- to moderate-income housing development in the past decade, largely flowing from the city's Columbia Street Urban Renewal Plan, has resulted in a tremendous influx of residents. The Columbia Street merchant sector could benefit from organizational support in order to promote the area and leverage additional private market goods and services that are lacking; commercial growth has not kept pace with the residential growth. The neighborhood could substantially benefit from targeted commercial revitalization and economic development efforts. Further compounding matters is the use of Columbia Street as a common detour route for excessive volumes of traffic diverted from the BQE, for traffic seeking to avoid construction on the Gowanus Expressway, and some Red Hook-bound truck traffic. The general condition of this main corridor and side streets is deplorable with exposed patches of cobblestones, trolley tracks and uneven street grades with pronounced crowns from years of strip paving. Under the leadership of the Community Board, a task force was convened to work on the final design for the Reconstruction of Columbia Street that included numerous stakeholder agency representatives and



representatives of the local residential and merchant communities. It is expected that this project will not only improve the roadway surface, but will provide opportunities for much-needed recreation, open/green space and enhanced waterfront access, and improved roadway geometry. Proper truck route street widths, adequate signage, and smooth riding surfaces should discourage the chronic illegal and unsafe movement of traffic, particularly the current lack of adherence to the city's designated truck routes.

Interestingly, one of the first Puerto Rican enclaves in the United States formed on Columbia Street in the 1950's and to this day the neighborhood has the highest proportion of foreign born residents (*22.8% of the neighborhood is foreign born per 1990 Census*) relative to any other neighborhood in the district. Language barriers and cultural differences have led to distinct growth patterns for the diverse ethnic groups residing in the area. Future development efforts include the now underway final stages of the Columbia Street Urban Renewal Plan, the Atlantic Avenue Master Design planning efforts, the Brooklyn Bridge Park project, the Reconstruction of Columbia Street and the continued organizing of the residents and businesses into active groups that help to refocus efforts toward balanced community development designed to address currently unmet needs. It is widely hoped that all of the communities to the south of Atlantic Avenue will have a fair and proportionate amount of input into the planning process for the Brooklyn Bridge Park. What is clear to these communities is that the impact of this world-class regional waterfront park will be felt by all neighborhoods abutting this stretch of Brooklyn's waterfront, particularly at the Atlantic Avenue approach. Residents have shown widespread interest in preserving and enhancing the local streetscape and open spaces, particularly among artists and active community gardeners living in the area; local artists have taken to using some of the open space as public art display sites. Some of the long-time residents of the neighborhood attribute Robert Moses' dictatorial style of urban planning, coupled with the post-World War II decline in the maritime industry and a disastrous interceptor sewer line installation along Columbia Street in the 1970's, for the deterioration of the community. Ample evidence exists throughout the Columbia Street District that the neighborhood is in the midst of a true twenty-first century renaissance.

Issues that need to be addressed include but are not limited to:

- Perform a Zoning Study of the neighborhood with an eye toward reconciling existing conflicts between mixed-use residential and manufacturing areas making it easier for existing uses to coexist and encouraging appropriate growth areas.
- Pursue long-awaited and much overdue Reconstruction of Columbia Street capital project, including water main work related to the City's Third Water Tunnel and provisions for a continuous off-street recreation path/network connecting the Brooklyn Bridge to Red Hook.
- Study the problems (i.e., noise, air emissions, vibrations, aesthetic quality, etc.) inherent in Brooklyn-Queens Expressway Trench that divides the Carroll Gardens, Cobble Hill and Columbia Street District neighborhoods along Hicks Street, with an eye toward designing a solution that could become a Capital project.
- Identify and target a Day Care facility to serve the area, particularly in light of the increased neighborhood population resulting from the construction of new housing units.

- Pursue a comprehensive evaluation of the existing on-street Truck Routes, with an eye toward reducing impacts of traffic on residential communities.
- Continued support for the Atlantic Avenue Master Design planning effort, particularly follow-up support services that will promote Atlantic Avenue as a shopping destination, and provide for improved security, cleanliness and beautification of the area.
- Provide resources to assist in the formation of an organized merchant sector to provide commercial revitalization services and local economic development.
- Identify appropriate physical facility to offer permanent performance, gallery and community meeting space.
- Pursue completion of the Columbia Street Urban Renewal Plan.

### \*\*\* GOWANUS \*\*\*

Soon after the Gowanus Canal was constructed in 1848 to rid South Brooklyn of marshlands, the corridor surrounding the canal developed as a thriving manufacturing area primarily reliant on barge service. The canal effectively bisects the community district, and has five east-west crossings at Union Street, Carroll Street, Third Street, 9th Street and Hamilton Avenue. The Carroll Street Bridge (constructed in 1888 and reconstructed in the late 1980's) is the oldest known retractile or horizontally sliding bridge in the nation and is an individually designated national and city landmark structure that is still in operation. With the advent of increased reliance on trucking coupled with the construction of the Gowanus Expressway after World War II, the canal began a long and slow period of decline. The Gowanus Flushing Tunnel, constructed in 1947, was designed to impel and pump fresh water from the Buttermilk Channel into the head of the canal creating a flow to displace stagnant water out of the canal and into the Gowanus Bay. Since the reactivation of the Gowanus Flushing Tunnel and Pump Station in 1999, new life has literally been breathed into the canal. Putrid odors that were once commonplace are virtually non-detectable; aquatic and avian life forms are settling in with each passing day. Increasing visits to the canal, by land and water, are enhancing the area's profile and potential.

Years of neglect and abandonment have taken their toll on the properties and streets abutting the canal. Many of the roadway surfaces are in poor condition, bulkheads at the canal are deteriorating or have failed, the area serves as a magnet for illegal dumping, and the remoteness of the dead end streets has been an invitation for unwelcome and illegal activities. It is widely hoped that by attracting people and business back to the canal, that the possibilities for compatible recreational uses will take a stronghold in recapturing this otherwise forlorn waterway. Street end beautification projects begun by various community groups, and the launching of small hand-held watercraft such as kayaks and canoes, are becoming most popular among nearby residents. While the water quality of the canal has measurably improved with the reactivation of the pump station, the bottom of the canal is still lined with decades worth of sediment containing heavy metals, PCB's and other toxic elements. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, in partnership with the City's Department of Environmental Protection, began an Ecosystem Restoration Feasibility Study to investigate what additional remediation work would be required to further improve the ambient environmental quality of the canal and bay areas.

Despite competing visions for how the canal corridor should be redeveloped, one thing the communities around the canal are in universal agreement on is that dredging and bulkhead repair are critical next steps and will lay a foundation for additional redevelopment of the area. The need for additional environmental remediation work in the area is self-evident. There is a 6 acre city-owned brownfield site at the southeast corner of Smith and 5th Streets, designated “Public Place” by the Board of Estimate in 1974, which previously hosted a coal gassification plant. The property was declared an Inactive Hazardous Waste Site by the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) in 1990 due to the buried and partially buried presence of solvents, coal tar residues, and phthalate wastes left from former industrial tenants. It was hoped that the Public Place site would be an appropriate candidate site for remediation through the DEC’s voluntary clean-up program so that the city and the community could pursue a beneficial reuse of the property. A complete investigation into the site’s current condition, led by the city and Keyspan, is underway and has provided hope for the community that remediation plans will follow. Additional public investment is needed to study the economic development potential of the Gowanus Canal corridor to pursue a regional strategy for revitalizing the industrial properties on the canal in a manner compatible with the existing businesses and surrounding residential communities. Under- and unutilized manufacturing-zoned properties, coupled with a great need for jobs by neighborhood residents, support the notion that the Gowanus Canal corridor is an area that could grow into a productive, jobs-generating light-to-medium industrial center of economic activity, preferably maritime-based industries that could take advantage of the waterfront as an alternative to truck-based transportation. Private market pressures to convert these manufacturing spaces over to residential uses have been strenuously fought and fended off by the community to date.

The majority of the neighborhood residents live in two public housing projects to the north of the canal, Gowanus and Wyckoff Gardens Houses. The Gowanus corridor has the second highest unemployment rate in the district (*at 12.5% per 1990 Census*), a low median household income, and a low average education achievement level (*59.8% of the population graduated high school per 1990 Census*). The southeastern portion of the Gowanus corridor supports an active and organized pocket of residents who live in this mixed-use area. On the westside of Second Avenue from 10th to 12th Streets, the site of an abandoned Federal U.S. Postal facility, construction of a major retail store is underway. Since this property was under Federal control, and plans were negotiated directly with private developers, there were no corresponding public review requirements concurrent with this project; therefore, the local community did not have an opportunity to participate formally at the land use decision-making process. Plans for the new store have not been shared with the local Community Board. The effects of this project (i.e., neighborhood’s character, traffic patterns, economic development, etc.) are yet to be seen.

Issues that need to be addressed include but are not limited to:

- Targeted Department of Sanitation enforcement presence and additional surveillance to enforce against illegal dumping in the area, especially at the dead end canal streets.
- Pursue the abatement, containment, safe removal and disposal of environmental contaminants at the “Public Place” site at the southeast corner of Smith and 5th Streets to clear the way for beneficial reuse of the parcel.



- Conduct an economic development study of the Gowanus Canal corridor to create an inventory of existing properties by type and use and promote economic development strategies for encouraging the growth of light manufacturing businesses, preferably maritime-based, that would be compatible with the surrounding businesses.
- Identify potential resources for expanded youth programming needs, especially development of Jobs Creation, Jobs Readiness, Job Training and Mentoring programs for youth. Job development efforts must focus on promoting stronger local linkages between residents and businesses.
- Pursue the development of expansion plans for the Gowanus Community Center, including interior structural renovations, window replacements, new HVAC system, and additional recreation equipment.
- Perform a community-wide health assessment of the neighborhood, followed up with targeted health care services and programs.
- Relocate the Sanitation BK2 Garage facility out of the Community Board 6 district into the Community District 2 area.

### \*\*\* PARK SLOPE \*\*\*

The Park Slope neighborhood is the largest in the district and contains more than half of its residential population. It contains the borough's largest historic district with some of the nation's best examples of late nineteenth century Romanesque Revival, Queen Anne, and Renaissance Revival style brownstone rowhouses, mansions and institutions. Grassroots efforts are underway to apply for a significant expansion of the historic district in an effort to further preserve the historic integrity of the area. The impetus for the development of Park Slope, then referred to as Prospect Hill, was the opening of the Brooklyn Bridge in 1883 that provided access to Lower Manhattan. Park Slope has seen a lively resurgence over the past few decades with an influx of residents who have restored much of the historic character and original charm of the neighborhood. Commercial development along Flatbush Avenue, 5th Avenue and 7th Avenue south of 9th Street has been on the rise as evidenced by the increased storefront occupancies and additional restaurants and shops serving the greater community. Like Smith Street, Park Slope's 5th Avenue has similarly become host to a growing number of gourmet restaurants and nightlife. Numerous antique shops have also found a home on 5th Avenue and 7th Avenue in the South Slope. The completion of the New York Methodist Hospital's Pavilion building on 7th Avenue between 5th and 6th Streets not only helped to reconnect the north and the south sections of 7th Avenue but also brought the first working escalator to the neighborhood (inside Barnes & Nobles bookstore). The recent completion of the Park Slope Rezoning effort, the culmination of an effort began over a decade ago with the northern portion of the neighborhood, has now provided new opportunities for expanded housing production along the 4th Avenue corridor, traditionally an underdeveloped portion of the neighborhood. The impetus for the rezoning was to create a set of contextual zoning controls that would limit building heights, maintain uniform setbacks and prohibit curb cuts.

One of the largest institutional structures in Park Slope is the 14th Regiment Armory located at 8th Avenue between 14th and 15th Streets. In 1996 control of the facility reverted from the state to the city when the NYS Division of Military

and Naval Affairs withdrew its military presence. Nearby residents saw this as an opportunity to utilize the spacious facility for some beneficial community use. The Community Board, together with representatives for many local interest groups, the affected elected officials, and respective city agencies, were convened under the Office of the Brooklyn Borough President on a Park Slope Armory Reuse Task Force to undertake responsible community-based planning to explore potential reuse options for the facility. An Armory Reuse Study, commissioned by the Borough President and conducted by the Pratt Institute and CUNY Graduate Center, recommended a possible array of reuse options that favored some sort of educational/recreational uses, all of which required a sizeable capital investment in the facility. Currently, the Department of Homeless Services (DHS) has a 70-bed women's shelter at the Armory that is operated under contract by the Church Avenue Merchants Block Association (CAMBA). DHS has reconfigured the dormitories, programming space and bathrooms and concentrated the shelter activities to the second floor. Furthermore, DHS had included a rehabilitation of the first floor and has created new office and meeting space for a group of veteran's organizations once housed there. Ongoing activities at the site include renovation of the remaining section of the first floor for community meeting space, replacing windows, roof and parapet work, and other much-needed investments to stabilize the neglected structure. The Landmarks Preservation Commission did declare the exterior of the building a landmark in 1998. Unfortunately, the ultimate fate of the Park Slope Armory has yet to be decided and this has many residents in the neighborhood guarded.

Park Slope has quite a reputation for being an activist community. As in Cobble Hill, much effort has been expended in the preservation of the historic integrity of the neighborhood including lobbying the city to preserve and restore its characteristic bluestone sidewalks. Environmental concerns are vociferously expressed in any number of areas, from the potential impact of additional traffic spilling over into the streets from the looming Gowanus Expressway work, to the protection of street trees during infrastructure work on the streets. Park Slope has consistently led the way in demonstrating how a community can support aggressive solid waste management methods designed to reduce, reuse and recycle municipal solid waste; voluntary recycling programs had been ongoing in the neighborhood since the 1970's. Park Slope also hosted such innovative waste management programs as the first Citywide Household Hazardous Waste Collection Day, an Intensive Recycling Pilot Program (that diverted 35% of the municipal solid waste into recycling waste streams), a Battery Recycling project and annual voluntary Christmas Tree Recycling drop-off points (which spread to every neighborhood of the district and, eventually, grew into a Citywide collection program). Similarly, the first voluntary Adopt-A-Litter Basket example where a local merchant began using plastic garbage bags to line and contain overflowing trash from a public litter basket receptacle began on 7th Avenue and 1st Street, being heralded as the model by which the city created its successful program. Two years ago the Park 13 Slope Civic Council and Park Slope Chamber of Commerce teamed up to launch "Project Clean Streets" which has taken a comprehensive look at 7th Avenue street conditions. Problems include the proliferation of newspaper boxes, illegal postering, overflowing litter baskets and graffiti. Project Clean Streets has already made a tremendous difference on the avenue by engaging maintenance services that have been regularly removing posters and repainting street furniture. Further progress has been made with the initiation of additional litter basket service provided with discretionary funding by two of the areas Council Members. Social concerns, likewise, hold a high place on

the neighborhood's agenda as the area is home to numerous civic, merchant, special interest and social organizations and has many coffee houses, bookstores, lounges and sidewalk cafes that feature poetry readings, performances by local artists, readings by local authors, and other forums for social discourse. The area prides itself on its diversity and spans the spectrum of socioeconomic, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds; it boasts the second highest gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender (GLBT) population in the city, the highest lesbian population in the city (perhaps country), and has played host to Brooklyn's annual GLBT Pride parade and celebration each year since June 1997.

Issues that need to be addressed include but are not limited to:

- Promote the formation of an organized business community along 4th Avenue, as the follow-up to a Fourth Avenue Business Improvement District assessment study completed years ago.
- Pursue implementation of reuse plans for the Park Slope Armory at 1402 Eighth Avenue for beneficial use by the community.
- Implement expanded auto-free hours for Prospect Park, starting with a three month trial test ban on vehicles in the park with publicly-discussed and agreed upon criteria for evaluating such a test, enforcing a zero tolerance policy targeting speeders, unsafe vehicles of all kinds, intruder vehicles found in the park during vehicle-free hours, and installing red light cameras.
- Identify and develop suitable space in the area proximate to the 78th Precinct for use as an off-street parking facility to accommodate department vehicles.
- Concentrate additional dedicated police forces to combat the recurring problems with prostitution in the Gowanus Canal corridor and nearby lower Park Slope residences.
- Provide technical assistance to community in their efforts to expand the Park Slope Historic District.
- Continue efforts toward developing a long-term plan for the preservation and maintenance of bluestone sidewalks.
- Identify funding for the retrofitting of the Grand Army Plaza subway station (2,3-lines) for handicapped access, as a public transportation access point to the cultural hub of the borough.
- Reengineer the lengthy and awkward transfer between the elevated 4th Avenue subway station (F-line) and the subterranean 9th Street subway station (N,R-lines) with possible conversion of the 9th Street station into an express stop.
- Explore higher and better uses of New York City Transit properties in the community (e.g., commercial storefront improvements along 4th Avenue between 9th/10th Streets, landscaping at Garfield Place/4th Avenue substation frontage, mezzanine commercial development at 7th Avenue (F-line) subway station, etc.)
- Permanently reconfigure sanitation services to provide for single day mechanical broom servicing on residential blocks throughout the district and additional cleaning of commercial strips.

### \*\*\* RED HOOK \*\*\*

Red Hook, a mixed-use neighborhood combining light-to-heavy density residential uses with light-to-heavy manufacturing zones, is a peninsula that is surrounded by the Gowanus Bay, Erie Basin and the Buttermilk Channel. Red Hook was the original Dutch name given to the area as it was a descriptive nautical reference point for sailors navigating Brooklyn's coastline. European settlements can be traced back to the 1600's, when the Dutch began charting the eastern seaboard. Historically, Red Hook has been known as a bustling waterfront community and to this day retains much of its working class values. The overwhelming majority of residents live in the Red Hook Houses (East and West clusters). The construction of the Red Hook East Houses was completed in 1938 as a Federal Works Program initiative under then-President Franklin Delano Roosevelt. Together with the Columbia Street District, the area's Columbia Street was host to the first Puerto Rican enclave in the United States in the 1950's and rich African-American and Latin cultures continue to thrive in the community. The construction of the Gowanus Expressway in the late 1940's and the opening of the Brooklyn Battery Tunnel in 1950 served to geographically sever Red Hook from the rest of the district and led to divergent paths of neighborhood development. Growing interest in revisiting the possibility of increasing water-dependent uses at the waterfront, notably in the form of transportation services, may provide new opportunities for linking Red Hook to the rest of the city and alternate systems that will decrease reliance on traditional automobile and truck-based transportation systems.

The community faces on-going daily challenges illustrated by a socioeconomic profile that includes an unemployment rate of 21.6% (per 1990 Census), low average levels of educational achievement (43.6% of the population graduated high school per 1990 Census), the highest poverty levels and the highest population of youth (35.2% of the population is under age 18 per 1990 Census) relative to the other neighborhoods in the district. On September 11, 1996, the City Council adopted Brooklyn's first plan, entitled "Red Hook: A Plan for Community Regeneration," prepared and submitted by Brooklyn Community Board 6 pursuant to Section 197-a of the City Charter. Many elements of the "197-a Plan" have been actively discussed, explored, if not implemented by a host of municipal entities, elected officials, and private interests that have an interest in the community. In winter 2000, the old "Sullivan Street Hotel" property at Sullivan and Richards Streets was reopened as a successful public-private affordable housing project under the former Brooklyn Borough President. Ongoing efforts are underway through the Fifth Avenue Committee's "Red Hook Homes" project to produce an even greater number of affordable housing units by strategically assembling private and city-owned properties for development in residentially-zoned areas. In addition to the need for the development of new and in-fill housing units, improvements in transportation, education, employment, commercial and health services are necessary to achieve the plan's overall objective of balanced social and economic growth.

Positive public and private attention and investment is beginning to show. Most of the park properties in the neighborhood have been recently reconstructed. The long-awaited Louis Valentino, Jr. Park and Pier at Coffey Street's Pier 39 culminated the community's uphill struggle to recapture some of its most prominent resource, its waterfront, for public access and enjoyment of the views of the New York Harbor. Another important milestone was recently achieved on December 18, 2001 with the formal designation of the Fire Brick and Clay Retort Building at 76-86 Van Dyke Street as the neighborhood's first designated



landmark building. The opening of the Red Hook Community Justice Center at the old Visitation Church School building, extending Manhattan's Midtown Community Court concept, provides decentralized direct dispensing of justice together with social services designed to help the non-offending local population as well. The introduction of an Independence Community Bank branch office in Red Hook represents the first and only banking services available in the neighborhood for residents and businesses alike. Red Hook has the third highest concentration of waste transfer stations in the City; neighboring residents and businesses can attest to the ill affects (including but not limited to putrid odors, vectors, excessive and often illegal truck traffic, etc.) of such facilities when they are poorly operated.

The industrial businesses that exist in Red Hook rely on trucking as the primary way to move goods and freight into and out of the area. Heavy truck traffic has had a serious impact on the residential population and reportedly contributed to infrastructure failures and the collapse of some of the older buildings in the area. The geological substrata of this coastal floodplain region contains a dense organic layer of red clay (hence the "red" in Red Hook) that exacerbates the longitudinal transmission of surface vibrations. For years efforts have been underway to reevaluate the existing truck route network with an eye toward minimizing its direct impact on the residential community while optimizing its intended industrial usage. The existence of truck-based solid waste transfer stations, that provide little by way of economic development of the community, has contributed to the problem of truck traffic in a major way. By virtue of its zoning, the availability of land in appropriately zoned heavy manufacturing areas have led to attempts by private and public agencies to site noxious industrial uses with no regard for the needs or welfare of the host community. As a result, the community has numerous sentinel organizations and individuals, an impressive communication network and developed a keen ability to organize itself around any perceived threats to their well being. If some of the area's oldest conflicts arose from illegal conversions of residentially-zoned properties for industrial-related uses, some of the newest ones are of the exact opposite nature. Industrial properties have been increasingly illegally converted to residential use with additional legal conversion attempts taking place that will ultimately escalate tensions inherent in this mixed-use community between local residents and businesses. It is hoped that the anticipated 2005 introduction of a Fairway Supermarket, with the promise of 200-300 jobs, will help provide local employment opportunities as well as expanded goods and services for the community.

Issues that need to be addressed include but are not limited to:

- Expanded regulation of Truck Traffic via aggressive enforcement and traffic calming measures. Further study of the Red Hook Truck Routes is required to formulate a plan to minimize the impact of truck traffic on the residents and optimize the flow of traffic for the businesses.
- Pursue the development of affordable housing, new and in-fill housing units, to stabilize residential population, provide additional homeownership opportunities to current residents and utilize existing residentially-zoned properties for residential development.
- Identify potential resources for expanded senior transportation, recreation and educational programming needs.
- Target Sanitation surveillance efforts to enforce against illegal dumping in the area, especially chronic dump out locations in industrial areas at night.



- Identify potential resources for expanded employment programs, such as Jobs Creation and Jobs Readiness programs, designed for adults and youth ready to enter the workforce. Job development efforts must focus on promoting stronger local linkages between residents and businesses.
- Perform a community-wide health assessment of the neighborhood residents, followed up with targeted health care services and programs.
- Explore feasibility of instituting trolley/light rail service from Red Hook to Downtown Brooklyn for residents, businesses, commuters and visitors to improve mass transportation and promote the Brooklyn waterfront as a major regional tourist and recreational attraction.
- Explore feasibility of instituting commuter ferry service from Red Hook and various points in Brooklyn (such as Fulton Ferry, Atlantic Avenue, Sunset Park and Bay Ridge) to Lower Manhattan.
- Perform a comprehensive landmarking survey of the area and pursue the designations of the additional Clay Retort and Fire Brick Warehouses previously submitted to the Landmarks Preservation Commission for consideration.
- Promote expansion of small business assistance programs that target minority, women and locally-owned businesses.
- Pursue implementation of the 197-a Plan, "Red Hook: A Plan for Community Regeneration," adopted by the City of New York on September 11, 1996.

Respectfully Submitted by:

*Craig R. Hammerman*

Craig R. Hammerman  
District Manager