



# Community Board 12

## The City of New York

### Borough of Queens

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## COMMUNITY DISTRICT NEEDS STATEMENT

### FISCAL YEAR 2008

#### Introduction

Community Board 12 is one of the fastest growing boards in population of all of the 59 Community Boards. The area is bounded by Hillside Avenue (South), the Van Wyck Expressway (West), North Conduit Avenue (South), and Francis Lewis Boulevard/Springfield Boulevard (East) encompassing the communities of Jamaica, South Jamaica, South Ozone Park, Hollis, St. Albans, and North Springfield Gardens, all of which constitutes Community Board 12, Queens. It is the second largest Board in the borough of Queens and takes up a large portion of the southeastern corner of the Borough. Officially, according to the 2000 census, we have a total population of 223,602 people. The number does not reflect an acknowledged undercount, especially among the undocumented residents of Community Board 12. Actually, when the acknowledged undercount is factored in Community 12 has well over 250,000 people with all the additional houses built in the district within the last ten years. The District has become a more culturally and ethnically diverse community. It is situated in the well-known flood basin of the world's largest dam, John F. Kennedy Airport. The Airport, built on wetlands, which was our natural drainage area, has greatly contributed to a lack of adequate rainwater run off in our community. Compounding our problem is the fact that our major trunk line sewer system has been completed. The Thurston Basins system is crucial for the community. We continue to state that Community Board 12, suffers from serious infrastructure problems, our roads and sewers are inadequate to serve our community needs. A great deal of street repair has been done in Board 12, much more remains undone. Yet, until these projects are completed, the residents of our community will continue to live with flooded basements, flooded streets, and a potential health emergency waiting to occur.

There continues to be miles of streets in Board 12, in the residential area in a state of disrepair, they are tied up in capital projects, some more than twenty five (25) years on the book and still not complete.

Street maintenance, at this time, has improved. We continue to feel that a work gang specifically assigned to Community Board 12, Q would be in the best interest of this community.

Economically, the residents of Community Board 12 range from poor to the upper middle class. However, a segment of Board 12's population continues to have incomes below the pov-

erty level, or receive public assistance. Even though there has been a large decrease in public assistance, our district continues to be a “target area” eligible for many different social service programs and grants. While to a large extent these programs are needed and welcomed, there have been more than a few instances of duplication of services, and a lack of coordination among various government and private agencies has led to areas of oversaturation. This causes the residents to feel put upon and dumped on. We desire and would welcome a dialogue involving the city, state, federal and private agencies that run residential facilities to develop a coordinated effort that both serves the needs of these populations and is fair to the communities involved.

### **Parks & Recreation**

Community Board 12 has a large amount of Parkland. We have been successful in getting the majority of our parks reconstructed at this time. One of the major reasons why people move into our community from other parts of the city, is all the greenery evident in our area. Though some trees that twenty years ago were so alluring, are now overgrown, ugly, block street lighting, stop signs and leaning on private property. While proper maintenance of street trees is a cosmetic factor, it is also a necessity. Darkened streets from overgrown trees provide cover for those individuals who would injure members of the community. Trees beautify an area, we are getting more and more request for trees from homeowners, capital projects; but, we have not gotten an increase in service regarding pruning of the trees and stump removals. The Queens Forestry Division must be expanded to provide service to address these problems.

### **Housing Preservation and Development**

Community Board 12 no longer has their Neighborhood Planning Officer in its district, the office has been closed, and is now staffed at 100 Gold Street Manhattan. New Housing program and infill housing continue to be crucial elements in meeting Housing needs in Community Board 12. Housing Preservation and Development (HPD) and the Partnership began construction on a number of housing units in our area in conjunction with the Borough President’s office and the Community Board; they have developed housing programs that are quite innovative in concept. Some 525 units in the South Jamaica area have been built, 400 units with the Urban Renewal Plan, and 225 units scheduled to be built pending acquisition fiscal year (FY’06); the first phase is complete. All parties involved should be applauded for this; however, there remains a strong concern that the housing being built planned too often does not “match” the income levels of the people in the surrounding community. The residents of a community must not be made to feel that they are being priced out of their community. The challenge for all parties involved is to strike a proper balance while building housing in Community Board 12; the Padlock Law must be used vigorously in board 12, where illegal businesses proliferate.

### **Human Resources Administration – General Social Services**

The use of various services under HRA/DSS continues to be very high, and demand outpaces resources by large margins. There is a clear need for more coherent policy regarding the Homeless in the city in general and Community Board 12 in particular. We have the most shelters in Board 12. More community input is needed in regard to conditions for housing, and new techniques other than “warehousing” in seedy hotels is surely warranted. The board continues to be concerned about the closing of the Emergency Assistance Unit (EAU) in Jamaica, thus forc-

ing clients to travel out of the borough for services. This adds an intolerable burden to persons who are already traumatized by their emergency. This policy regarding group homes in Board 12 (and Queens in general) need to be re-examined. There is no comprehensive plan to review and consider residential facilities from all agencies (state, city, and private) when sites for homes are selected. These factors create intolerable burdens on certain communities of the city, such as ours, and causes community residents to oppose services that are legitimately needed out of a sense of frustration. Our area has for years been unfairly targeted and as a result we house far more than our fair share of homeless and individuals in need of mental health residential programs. We must control the continuing expansion of group homes and shelters in our area.

### **Sanitation**

Community Board 12 understands that the Department of Sanitation sustained a sizable loss in manpower see no justification for cutting out our street cleaning crews; hundreds of additional homes have been built in Board 12. In all of these homes you have a family, but we have not received any additional service. Board 12 is united in its opposition to these cutbacks, and they must be reconsidered and rescinded. We are also disturbed that Sanitation is unable to service the islands dividing some of our major thoroughfares on a regular basis. Dumping is an increasing problem and we ask the Department of Sanitation to increase its stakeout presence in our area. We need additional manpower for street cleaning, dump-outs, and litter basket operations. Archer Ave and Parsons Boulevard is one of our busiest transportation hubs, it's not part of the Business Improvement District (Bid), and the litter baskets are always overflowing. Some of our streets are serviced everyday, but they continue to be dirty in some of the areas. This is devastating to our community. Our sanitation garage is in Community Board 10; it should be in the district. In Community Board 12 we have seven waste transfer stations. The Transfer stations in Community Board 12 are not used for the garbage in our community; they are used for the garbage coming from other communities. The community is not aware of what type of garbage is being put in the Transfer Stations. Coming from some of the Transfer Stations are unbearable odors and congested residential streets with their trucks. The community is advancing for more stringent set of guidelines for the Transfer Station to abide by. Other issues revolving around the Transfer Stations are constant noise of 18-wheelers, odors from the stations, moving of particular waste through residential areas along with a host of other issues. The residents in Community Board 12 believe that waste Transfer Stations are prevalent issues facing the community, New York City Department of Sanitation needs to take a more proactive role enforcing the codes and rules set by New York City.

### **Police**

In Community Board 12 we have two Precincts, the 103rd Police Precinct and the 113th Police Precinct. Tremendous revitalization has occurred in Jamaica and its surroundings. Our police precincts continue to show a drop in crime. There is a high rate of domestic violence. The 103rd Precinct has gotten an increase in manpower because of the 10,000 to 20,000 high school students that flow through Jamaica Avenue five days per week and the Airtrain.

The 113 Police Precinct continues to receive a disproportionate number of Police Officers out of classes graduating from the police academy.

We are justly proud of our community. The Police Department has thrown a vast array of manpower and other resources into Southeast Queens to fight crime with the communities in Board 12 can see their Quality of Life improve.

## **Health Services**

Our communities continue to remain medically underserved and that issue must be addressed. We, in Jamaica, Queens have our own ongoing battle with the AIDS epidemic. Nearly twenty-five years after the start of the AIDS epidemic, the rate of HIV/AIDS infections continues to rise throughout the borough of Queens even as it continues a downward trend in “epicenter” boroughs like the Bronx and Manhattan. Jamaica, Queens has the highest AIDS case rate and the second highest number of HIV/AIDS in the borough. The need to address this menace, to explore and implement innovative interventions presently not available in Jamaica, has never been greater.

Queens accounts for approximately 14% of all the HIV/AIDS cases in NYC and Jamaica has the highest cumulative AIDS case rate in Queens. Jamaica also has the second highest number of AIDS cases in the borough. Alarming, the CDC estimates that for every person with AIDS there can be up to five persons with HIV, the virus that causes AIDS. When we consider that an estimated one out of every three persons with HIV are not even aware of their status, the results can be staggering to imagine and will impact our community for years to come.

## **Department of Design and Construction (DDC)**

Community Board 12’s infrastructure has been neglected for years. Many of our capital projects were delayed due to budget cuts, only a few are completed, some are in progress, and some continue to remain in limbo ineligible for resurfacing or other maintenance while awaiting construction.

## **Department of Environmental Protection (DEP)**

Flooding, poor drainage, and a high level of ground water are major problems in Community Board 12. We continue to receive complaints from homeowners and businesses about street flooding so severe that basements and properties are damaged. Existing overflow facilities and outlets are insufficient to handle all the storm water that flows to us above and below ground. We are in need of ongoing routine maintenance of catch basins. We have a number of seepage basins that are not functioning; they function for five years the most.

Station 6 is scheduled to be completed in 2014, at this time it is on hold. A pilot program was conducted out of station 6, a study addressing high level of ground water, it was a success.

The Department of Environmental Protection has numerous projects on hold scheduled to be done in Board 12 to alleviate some of the flooding conditions; but, because of a lack of funding they cannot be done.

We continue to be in need of ongoing routine maintenance of catch basins. DEP is increasing its efforts to address the serious flooding condition in the district, because poor drainage and flooding has been a long standing problem in some areas of our Community District.

## **Department of Transportation**

In Community Board 12 we continue to have insufficient transportation for the area. MTA

has taken over all of the private bus lines, but we continue to wait and see long lines at peak hours and off peak hours. The community relies on the service of public transportation. We continue to be faced with combating the illegal vans and cars in our area. Enforcement has improved some, but stronger regulations are needed. We must address these problems at all times until they no longer exist.

### **Subway Service**

There are four subway lines (E, J, Z and F). The "F" train terminates at 179th Street on Hillside Avenue. Passengers wishing to travel further east have to transfer to a bus. Jamaica Center Transportation Study found the "E" train serves approximately 95,000 daily passengers (source: NYCT turnstile data) at the Jamaica Center and Sutphin Boulevard, Archer Avenue subway stations. Riders of the New York City Transit system primarily use the system to commute to and from work in Manhattan.

### **Long Island Railroad**

The Long Island Railroad (LIRR) station is located at the intersection of Sutphin Boulevard and Archer Avenue. This station serves as a transfer point for several LIRR trains, buses, and subways, and services mainly commuters traveling to and from Nassau and Suffolk counties.

### **Airtrain**

The Airtrain is a light rail service that connects downtown Jamaica with JFK International Airport and Howard Beach. The Airtrain loops through the Central Terminal Area at JFK, it runs above the Van Wyck Expressway connecting to the Long Island Railroad and the subway at Jamaica Station.

### **Fire Department**

In Board 12 in recent years, the incidence of fire and other related problems has decreased. The Fire Department, a number of years ago, instituted a strong and permanent community-based fire prevention program, the Fire Safety Education Fatal Fire Reduction Program, and the Smoke Detector Program. Board 12 once had the highest rate of fatal fires in the City of New York, an additional Fire Engine was added, Ladder 133, Engine 275. Interagency cooperation in the area of fire prevention were something that was finally tapped in Southeast Queens.

With all that has been done, the result has been exceptional. Hopefully, the Fire Department will continue to institute the strong and permanent community-based fire prevention program, the Fire Safety Education, Fatal Fire Education Program and the Smoke Detector Program. These Programs certainly have been effective.

### **Zoning**

Zoning is an issue in the district that certainly needs to be addressed, developers are coming in demolishing one family homes and building three (3) and four (4) family homes, changing the make up of a community.

The community facilities provision in the zoning resolution has been addressed.

Illegal residential conversions and illegal commercial uses are escalating to an alarming degree. Housing Preservation and Development (HPD), The Department of Finance, and other agencies involved in housing, land use and especially the "In Rem" Process must begin to work closely and more creatively within the community.

Each year hundreds and hundreds of parcels are on Tax Lien Sale list, in many cases the property owners are senior citizens and the amount in question is miniscule, but due to fear or lack of information the people do not act and the property is lost.

The Jamaica Redevelopment Study was initiated to review the zoning and land use of approximately 451 blocks located in the northwest corner of Queens, Community Board 12. Existing zoning designations in the Central Business District do not reflect the current availability of good subway and bus transit access nor do they adequately anticipate new development opportunities that are likely to occur in the western portion of Jamaica Center surrounding the new JFK Air train Complex. The study's recommendations propose designating Special Downtown Jamaica District to accommodate the anticipated growth in this unique transit oriented hub in conjunction with other zoning designations intended to direct newer development at higher densities to widen streets with good transit and highway access, to encourage compatible land uses that strengthen retail and commercial areas, and, to support appropriately skilled development in low-rise residential areas. Of four hundred and fifty one blocks that were in the study, 368 blocks will be rezoned from the Van Wyck Expressway on the west to 191st Street and Farmers Boulevard on the east.

### **Education**

Overcrowding is a problem, at this time. Only one Elementary school, Public School (P.S.) 268Q at 175-02 Jamaica Avenue, students from Pre-K to 5th grade has been built. Our community district has 52,054 children enrolled in preschool to high school. This is an overwhelming number and we need more schools to be built so that we can properly place and educate these children. The portable classrooms that are now being used for classes in our schools are not properly assessed to educate our children in our community. This is a major concern in our community. Community Board 12 students deserve the same amenities and services extended to other students in the City of New York. Our schools need funding from the government to expand the buildings and make larger classrooms for our children. We have 4,075 children coming out of nursery and preschool and 3,370 children coming out of kindergarten. We need to expand our schools to make more classrooms. The new Law Enforcement and Public Safety High School constructed at 116-25 Guy R. Brewer Boulevard is open, the new Police Athletic League (PAL) Center located at the same location is open also.

### **Youth Services**

Our youth represents our future, and their needs must be addressed. Among the most important of our youth needs, are more supervised after school programs for our kids to attend. The kids constantly complain about not having structured programs to attend. There is a clear need for more jobs for youth, during the summer and at other times of the year. Locally and citywide, businesses should make a special effort to provide jobs for our youth. Each year the Summer Youth Program suffers.

Efforts must be made to improve and increase the availability of health care for the youth of Community Board 12. Adolescent Health Services, Aids Outreach for Youth and more domestic violence and child abuse prevention programs are among the priorities that we feel must be addressed. At this time some of them are being addressed, but they are by no means enough.

Youth programs and services have always been one of Community Board 12's top priorities. We have two Beacon Schools in the district providing after school and evening recreational programs and activities.

### **Department of Buildings/Consumer Affairs**

We need additional buildings inspectors to address illegal conversion, working without a permit and on the weekends, and to monitor the contractors that continue to build illegal extensions on houses in the areas that have been down zoned. There continues to be a lack of enforcement in Community Board 12. We must have at least one full time Building and Consumer Affairs inspector, plus a processor server. To seriously combat the problems of illegal conversions, illegal buildings and land use must be evidenced by those agencies charged with enforcement. Local Law 6, the Padlock Law, must be used vigorously in Board 12, where illegal businesses proliferate.

Our Community board is getting prepared to start work on our 197-A Plan so that we can progress in the development of our Community. One organization in the district worked on down zoning in their area, it has been approved.

### **Finally**

We will continue at Community Board 12 fighting for our fair share of City services that we are not receiving, that must be provided to maintain the quality of life for all the residents within the district.