



Community Board 6, Queens

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FY 2010 NEEDS STATEMENT

The 1969 Plan for New York Cities Community Boards describes Community Board 6 as “fine private homes on tree lined streets, attractive garden apartments, and towering modern apartment houses, including condos and co-op’s, as well as older rent-controlled apartment houses that make this district a most desirable place to live”. Years after this plan was released this description remains much the same. However, the quality of life issues of the district have changed. The swift increase in population has taxed the capacity of some public facilities. The schools are overcrowded, the subway is jammed during rush hours, and land use matters are becoming a major concern in Community Board 6. In spite of some problems the district provides a superior living environment which promises to continue to attract moderate income and well-to-do families, as well as prosperous commercial enterprises. However, both population and commercial growth have strained many components of the district’s physical and social infrastructure.

Community Board 6 would like to:

1. Protect our established low density residential areas from over building.
2. Discourage intensive and or inappropriate commercial development.
3. Maintain and improve municipal services and infrastructure.
4. Encourage the integration of new citizens into the society and institutional fabric of our community.
5. Promote stable, long term residential tenure.
6. Preserve and enhance community amenities.

Our District Needs Statement is centered around quality of life issues and it is in the form of committee recommendations.

Joseph C. Hennessy
Chair, CB 6

Frank P. Gulluscio
District Manager, CB 6

FY2010

PLANNING & ZONING

Community Board 6 recognizes the following needs:

1. Hire inspectors to respond to complaints.
2. Before permits are issued, review zoning code to see if planned development is allowed by zoning regulations.
3. Stronger enforcement of violations.
4. Follow up with Dept. of Finance to see if payments of violations cleared bank.

The Dept. of City Planning needs to do a comprehensive study before any large scale development. The study should include the following:

1. Electrical grid system to make sure that sufficient power can be delivered.
2. Study of water and sewer systems to make sure the needs of the development can be met.
3. If the development is housing, can the local schools handle the additional students.
4. Can the subways handle the additional capacity during peak hours.
5. Can the road system handle additional traffic.

PUBLIC SAFETY

POLICE

More than 95 percent of CB 6, traditionally a safe, low crime area, is served by the 112th Precinct which has one of the smallest patrol forces in the City. The principal public safety need in this Community District is, not surprisingly, for real increases in the size of our patrol force, for these reasons:

- 1 - A significant rise in population, the influx of new immigrants (many from totalitarian countries), and a substantial increase in ethnic/racial diversity have made policing in CB 6 more complex and time-consuming;
- 2 - Other demographic changes, particularly a great increase in teen/youth population, add burdens to the precinct's workload;
- 3 - The district's relative affluence continues to attract burglars, pickpockets, bank robbers and shoplifters.
- 4 - The 112 Pct. must also provide police services for many tens of thousands of non-residents who enter our District daily - either to transfer (and often shop) at our three intermodal transit hubs along Queens Blvd. (at Union Turnpike, 71 Avenue, and 63 Road) - or to visit the upscale retail/entertainment area along Forest Hills' Austin Street - or to access the Rego Park regional shopping center anchored by Sears;
- 5 - Traffic safety remains an urgent focus of community concern, in view of the long history of pedestrian fatalities on Queens Blvd. An increasing number

of motorists ignore the prohibition against use of hand-held cell phones while driving. Enforcement of this law, while difficult, is essential;

6 - Quality of Life complaints (some not within NYPD's purview) continue to be numerous in CB 6. Although precinct response appears to have improved since our last report, we fear that new and more urgent priorities for our limited patrol force will adversely impact on QOL response; and, finally -

7 - The urgent new counter-terrorism mission for NYPD, which requires extensive training time, assignment of officers to additional posts/duties within the precinct, and their detail for special situations elsewhere in the City, logically will affect performance in a small precinct more seriously than a larger one.

8 - Increase police enforcement on hate crimes in CB 6.

9 - Support for CB 6's Community Emergency Response Team.(CERT)
In addition, a continued focus on the 112th Precinct Explorer's Program.

ADEQUATE STAFFING OF THE 112 PCT. IS OF OVERARCHING IMPORTANCE TO US.

Relations between most residents of CB 6 and the 112 Precinct have been, and continue to be, extremely good and this community has traditionally been very supportive of its precinct officers.

Fire Department

As is well known, CB 6 is densely developed with high-rise and mid-rise multi-family structures, including several of the tallest residential buildings in Queens. CB6 has one engine and one ladder company in a single firehouse within its boundaries, and another on its border. FDNY deployments to structural fires within the district have customarily been satisfactorily prompt. Increased routine or complaint follow-up inspections by FDNY are viewed as essential fire protection actions by this community. All demolition and construction projects, particularly those undertaken by small contractors, in our densely developed district evoke neighborhood concerns and merit FDNY oversight.

Housing market demand has led to numerous illegal conversions of one- and two-family homes to multi-family or SRO's. We believe that participation by FDNY and its Fire Prevention Bureau, to the fullest extent possible under existing law, in the campaign to halt and reverse/remediate illegal conversions, would serve this community well.

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE

For many years the MTA has been reducing service on both subway and bus lines. This has resulted in buses and trains that are overcrowded and also in increased waiting time for buses and trains.

Recently, with the introduction of the Metro Card, ridership has increased, but service levels have not. The result has been even more overcrowding on buses and subways. During the morning rush hour overcrowded E and F trains arrive at 71st Avenue, and passengers cannot enter these trains. CB 6 needs to have some E and F trains originate at 71st Avenue during the morning rush hour.

Service levels must be increased to reduce crowding, and reduce waiting time.

Increases in service levels are needed not only during rush hours but also during non-rush hours as well, as waiting times exceed the times claimed in MTA statements.

Adequate lighting is needed in all subway stations in Community Board 6: on platforms and on mezzanine levels, along with video surveillance and increased maintenance and sanitation in all stations.

A working public address system is also needed. Many stations in Manhattan have PA systems; these are needed in CB 6 to announce changes in schedules, service disruptions, etc.

At major subway stops, such as 71st Avenue, 63rd Drive, and Woodhaven Blvd., unlicensed “taxis” are operating, taking away fares from buses and medallion taxis. Enforcement is needed at these locations. Increase in the amount of police on our subway platforms and mezzanine levels. There still remains a major need for an elevator on 71st Avenue/Continental Avenue for better access for the elderly and disabled.

SOCIAL SERVICES COMMITTEE

While CB 6 is considered a very stable and affluent area, there are numerous needs in the community not visible to the naked eye. We have one of the highest, if not the highest, concentration of senior population in New York City and probably in New York State. There also has been a large influx of immigrants of all ages. The confluence of these two with the usual problems of the general population create needs.

Seniors: The following needs for seniors have been identified:

1. Affordable health care, including dental and eye care
2. Affordable housing
3. Public safety and security
4. Accessible transportation - both physically and affordable
5. Daycare services for homebound and elderly.
6. Affordable mental health services-also to be available to homebound
7. Affordable legal services
8. Recreation including library services for homebound

There are particularly two areas which require special attention in regard to senior services, social adult day care and the immigrant elderly population. The community consists of 30,000 older adults, the largest in Queens. Most are increasingly living lives largely independent of family members who live far away. They turn to their neighborhood based senior service for various assistance. Many are homebound, isolated and frail.

The social adult day program aims to keep at risk elderly in the community and avoid premature institutionalization. These people are unable to leave the house unescorted because of various serious disabilities. The program provides them with an opportunity to socialize with peers and creates a network of support to rely upon. The educational, recreational programs aim to stimulate their minds and bodies and enhance their self esteem.

For the families of the dementia population, social adult day care provides a respite for the family members, and more are needed. These programs have long waiting lists and are very under funded. There is increased demand for services for persons with early dementia as there are wait-

ing lists for the programs for persons who suffer from middle and late stage dementia.

A population at risk is the large diverse (Asian, Russian, Pakistani, etc.) immigrant elderly population, many of whom have not yet been able to acquire the language skills needed to obtain citizenship and have, consequently, lost their benefits that are needed for everyday subsistence, including the ability to pay for shelter and food. As such, there is a tremendous increase in the need for classes teaching English as a second language, conversation groups, tutorials, civics instruction and case assistance. The task is phenomenal as for many learning a new language presents a very difficult undertaking in their senior years. Furthermore, the cultural and language barriers have created increased tensions in the community that are being addressed by the Forest Hills Community House through dialogue groups. These programs are funded minimally through government dollars. Many rely on volunteers. The demand for services is huge and the waitlist, long and discouraging.

ADDITIONAL SOCIAL SERVICES:

Health Concerns, Aids, Diabetes & TB: CB 6 supports funding for enhanced education, service and treatment efforts as identified by the Department of Health and the Health and Hospital Corporation. We also support funding for the Aids Center of Queens, a community service program serving the residents of Queens. Many of the non-senior population of CB 6 have long term illnesses that can also be life threatening such as cancer, multiple sclerosis, etc. These individuals need many of the same services required by the senior population. They include but are not limited to:

1. Improved and timely transportation pertaining to the Access-A-Ride system.
2. Delivery of meals
3. Counseling services - including for the homebound
4. Appropriate housing
5. Hospice services
6. Increased home care through Medicaid or Medicare
7. Recreation activities - including library services for homebound
8. Translation services
9. Appropriate medications. (Many cannot afford their medications now)
10. Respite care for caregivers
11. Bereavement services for family

CB 6 encourages funding for research leading to an end all life threatening diseases, particularly AIDS, Cancer, and Diabetes.

Affordable Day Care for Children - There has been a substantial increase in the number of two parent families in which both parents are working and the number of single parent families. As a result, there is a serious need for affordable daycare for children. This might be combined with senior day care. Intergenerational day care will benefit both young and old.

Services to persons with disabilities. There are a number of people in CB 6 who have some type of disability but could contribute in a more positive way with the appropriate services.

We have identified the following needs:

1. Transportation
2. Accommodation in commercial areas, streets and sidewalks

Domestic Violence - CB 6 supports any program to educate with the aim of eliminating domestic violence. We also support any services which provide assistance to victims of domestic violence.

CULTURAL AFFAIRS

Many cultural organizations which serve the entire city are located in Community Board 6. There is an urgent need for these and other recognized cultural organizations. Permanent facilities for shows and performances, and tutorial and work shop spaces are very much needed also. Community Board 6 requests adequate funding for the Department of Cultural Affairs Expense Budget to help ensure the survival of local arts programs as well as of the many programs and institutions serving the borough as a whole, such as the Queens Museum of Art, the Noguchi Garden Museum, Flushing Town Hall, the Museum of Modern Art, PS 1, and many others. The residents of CB 6, as do all of Queens residents, deserve to continue to receive the level of cultural enrichment which these programs and institutions provide.

Local arts programs in CB 6 are also funded through DCA. These include such groups as the Alliance of Queens Artists, the Americas Vocal Ensemble, Con Brio Chamber Music, and the New Press Quarterly. The presence of such programs enriches the lives of all CB 6 residents. In addition, the Cultural Committee would like to support the local Chamber of Commerce (Jazz Thursdays) and local organizations that want to enhance our community and promote tourist dollars.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

There is a need for programs to assist the commercial strips in Forest Hills Rego Park to improve business and cope with the growing problem of vacancies.

Long term businesses are being forced out because of substantial rent increases. Commercial rents need to be dealt with on a citywide basis.

LAW COMMITTEE

The Law Committee supports the Social Services Committee's request for affordable legal services for senior citizens.

HIGHWAYS, STREETS & BRIDGES COMMITTEE

In terms of infrastructure adequacy, pedestrian and vehicular safety and resource allocation, transportation concerns impact Community District 6 in a variety of significant ways that require priority attention. The following items delineate the principal concerns in this area.

Queens Boulevard - This major artery provides vital transportation access for the entire borough while, at the same time, generating significant and chronic safety problems for both pedestrians and vehicles. During the past decade, CB 6 has worked closely and cooperatively with the NYC Department of Transportation (DOT) in crafting imaginative and effective strategies for promoting safety along those portions of Queens Boulevard that are situated within our district. While we have obviously not seen eye-to-eye with DOT on all items, we recognize that, as indicated by documented studies, these actions have had a measurably positive impact upon safety conditions. Looking ahead, the challenge remains to continue to enhance and refine these efforts to further serve the needs of CB 6 and anticipate the impact of new traffic demands. Chief among the latter is the additional traffic that will be generated by the immanent expansion of the Rego Park Mall, near 63rd Drive. We urge DOT to adopt the traffic mitigation recommendations that CB 6 recently proposed as part of our recent review of this item, in all events, DOT must continue to assign Queens Boulevard traffic safety its highest possible priority for the foreseeable future.

Woodhaven Boulevard - Due to the efforts of our Borough President and local elected officials, Capital funds have been allocated to develop and implement a traffic safety improvement plan for this major thoroughfare. CB 6 looks forward to working cooperatively with DOT in planning the development and implementation of this significant project. In approaching this item, it will be especially important to balance the legitimate needs of streamlining traffic flow with the vital safety concerns of the pedestrians and bicycle riders who access Woodhaven Boulevard. Particular attention must be given to the enhancement of “green-light time” for those seeking to cross the boulevard; the development of cohesive and logical traffic markings that coincide with actual vehicular and pedestrian traffic flow; the implementation of clearly delineated and properly “lined up” crosswalks that are sensitive to the needs of the disabled; and the creation of safe and appropriate bicycle lanes. In addition, the impact of Woodhaven’s traffic flow upon adjacent local streets and the adoption of possible mitigating measures should also be included within the scope of this project. We hope to initiate this planning process with DOT and the other affected community boards in the very near future.

Union Turnpike - Both in terms of traffic congestion and velocity, this heavily utilized thoroughfare situated at the southern end of CB 6, which serves as a de facto alternate route to the Jackie Robinson Expressway, generates significant traffic safety concerns that require DOT’s ongoing priority attention. Specifically, aggressive enforcement plus the installation of traffic barriers are needed to deter the speeding and reckless driving problems that chronically affect this area. In addition, pedestrian crosswalks need to be prominently highlighted and traffic signal “green-light time” increased at the local intersections to promote pedestrian safety. This particularly applies to the 71st Avenue intersection, which provides primary pedestrian access to a heavily utilized playground as well as the recently opened Stop and Shop Supermarket and serves as the point from which horses reach the Forest Park bridal path, via the horse lane that was previously created by DOT upon CB 6’s recommendation. Finally, DOT, the Parks Department and the LIRR must ensure the proper lighting and maintenance of all pedestrian sidewalk and railroad bridge approaches leading to the Stop and Shop.

Yellowstone Boulevard - As it cuts against the grain of the CB 6 street grid, Yellowstone Boulevard generates significant traffic volumes that traverse a frequently winding road and several complex street crossings involving multiple major thoroughfares. In particular, the intersections at Queens Boulevard, Austin Street (which is immediately adjacent to the 112th Precinct and Russell Sage JHS), Selfridge Street and Woodhaven Boulevard present significant traffic circulation and pedestrian access issues that need to be addressed systematically. Beyond this, improved signage and highlighted crosswalks are needed in those areas where the street turns diminish pedestrian visibility. In short, these factors make Yellowstone Boulevard a most appropriate candidate for traffic safety study that warrants the special attention of DOT in the coming year.

Ongoing Infrastructure Needs - It is essential that CB 6 receives its fair share of the street resurfacing and pothole repair budgets that provide essential preventive maintenance. In addition, DOT must ensure the proper maintenance and repair of the pedestrian bridges that, by spanning the Long Island Expressway and Grand Central Parkway, provide safe and essential access to neighboring communities and Flushing Meadows-Corona Park. The same attention must also be provided to the tunnel that links Austin Street to neighboring Kew Gardens. The New York State Dept. of Transportation must also play its part in properly maintaining the Woodhaven Boulevard Bridge that spans the LIRR’s Montauk Branch; the provision of proper lighting, security and sanitation to this bridge’s pedestrian path is a particularly important ongoing need. Finally, adequate provision must be made for the prompt and appropriate replacement of all transportation related street signage when needed.

Maintaining Adequate Staffing - It goes without saying that, in order to properly perform its mission and, in particular, the responsibilities described above, the affected agencies of DOT must possess a level of staffing that, in terms of both numbers and ability, is equal to the task. CB 6 thus strongly supports the department's efforts to fully staff its positions.

PARKS COMMITTEE

Forestry: The backlog of dead trees, shafts, and stumps remains. We support funding for outside contracts to address these backlogs as well as the backlog for tree pruning. Some long range plans should be made to restore Forestry to its full strength. When we are hit with storms that cause much damage throughout the Borough of Queens, it takes months for recovery. Should there be back to back storms, we can have debris on the streets for months. Trees are an asset to a community both aesthetically and environmentally, and we request continued funding for tree planting. Parks, Playgrounds & Recreation: CB 6 requests playground equipment for Annadale Playground at P.S. 175. We continue to support the upgrading of Lost Battalion Hall. We further ask that the Forest Hills side, (Jewel Ave.) of Flushing Meadows Corona Park have installed benches and picnic tables, and that there be benches along the entrance to the park at Jewel Ave. and GCP. There is a need for public transportation into the park from both Forest Hills and Rego Park.

SANITATION

Sanitation services continue to be a priority in both the residential and commercial areas of Community Board 6. In order to properly maintain the cleanliness level of CB6, we require:

1. Increased funding for litter basket pickups on commercial strips and a litter basket truck.
2. Fund regularly scheduled cleanup of medians.
3. Maintain weekly recycling.
4. Hire more Sanitation Enforcement agents.
5. Mechanical broom for the fall leaf season, a 10 yard alley truck, additional salt spreading equipment for the winter, and a graffiti power washer.

PUBLIC LIBRARIES

The libraries in Community Board 6 are heavily utilized by growing numbers of immigrants. It is essential that the libraries remain accessible to all people as an educational tool. Expansion of the Rego Park Library and weekend service to be permanently put in the budget.

EDUCATION

This committee is in the process of establishing a liaison with the Community Educational Council, Forest Hills High School, and the private and parochial schools in CB 6 to determine the needs of the student population they serve, and how best the Community Board can assist them.

YOUTH SERVICES/EDUCATION COMMITTEE

CB 6 is characterized by large tracts of high density housing. All of its parks are less than one acre in size and are heavily utilized by local young people, parents with young children, and senior citizens. CB 6 has only one non-sectarian multi-service Settlement House providing comprehensive

programming to local youth at little or no cost for services.

The community has undergone dramatic changes in its population over the past decade. With the breakup of the Soviet Union, a large and continuously growing influx of Russians and Georgians began arriving in the Forest Hills/Rego Park community five years ago. Even though the community has attracted Russian emigres for the past ten years, this is a new group with different experiences and in some instances, different cultural and family mores. In addition, over the last five years, an even newer group from the former Soviet block has arrived in our community - the Bukharian Jews. These families hail from the Central Asian republics of Tadjikistan and Uzbekistan and trace their ancestry to Persia. These demographic changes are in concert with an influx of families from China and Korea as well as from the Caribbean and Central and South America starting in the mid 1980's. In addition, during this same period, the number of families from India, Pakistan, Thailand, Egypt, Iran, China, and Israel has also been on the rise.

The children of these newcomers struggle daily for acceptance by their peers in their new neighborhood. The teenage years tend to be difficult for all young people, but our immigrant youth carry the added burden of language and cultural barriers and are keenly aware of the disparities between their present lives and the lives their parents knew "at home". Constant work is needed to welcome these new young people to our community and to build harmony between them and the long-time residents.

Further recent developments in the community include the growth of single parent families, a rise in the number of working parents, an increase in the numbers of families receiving public assistance, and a rise in the numbers of youth "hanging out" in the streets, in schoolyards and in local parks. The latch key problem for elementary age children has grown as the adults in most families must work to make ends meet financially. Long waiting lists exist in local after school programs as existing resources do not begin to meet the growing need for these services. These children are increasingly vulnerable and must have the opportunity for supervised after school activities. Additionally, young people 14 and older need the opportunity for summer employment. Without jobs, our youth have no alternative to the streets.

The need for comprehensive youth service programs has risen appreciably as the Youth population has grown and become more diverse in its composition. For this community to maintain its stability and integrate newcomers into an already diverse environment, it is essential to maintain and expand the existing comprehensive youth services program that consists of street outreach, counseling, employment, recreation, and education, including English As A Second Language services, tutorial, and college and career options as well as after school youth development/literacy programs and summer day camp and inter-generational opportunities. Services need to be available afternoons, evenings, weekdays, weekends, and during the summer year round. There is a pressing need for leadership development activities which foster resilience, build skills and bring together youth of varied cultures.

The 112th Police Precinct credits the local youth serving agencies for the decrease in youth crime over the past seven years especially street outreach services offered by The Forest Hills Community House.

Sage Junior High School 190 in Forest Hills has served as a site for a Beacon program funded by the NYC Department for Youth and Community Development since FY99. Beacons are community centers contracted to community-based organizations sited at local schools that offer an array of services for children and families afternoons, evenings, weekends, and summers. Through beacons, youth are offered positive youth development, educational, cultural and literacy program-

ming, residents are involved (through an advisory council) around provision of service, and the community is strengthened through increased access to this community facility. Currently the Beacon, operated by The Forest Hills Community House, is serving only 2,000 community residents annually (DYCD requires that 1,200 be served each year). Because of the efforts to expand the programming at the beacon to serve not only the junior high population, but high school and elementary aged students, Community Board #6 supports an enhancement of \$50,000.

The libraries in Community Board 6 are heavily utilized by growing numbers of immigrants. It is essential that the libraries remain accessible to all people as an educational tool.

The parks in Community Board 6 are heavily utilized by local young people, parents with young children, and senior citizens. Free access to parks by all residents as well as by local community-based organizations operating programs for children and teens must be maintained.

With the growing number of two working parent households, single parent families, and parents on public assistance facing welfare reform, child care continues to be a growing need of this community. Universal Pre-K, which mandates that by the year 2001 all 4 year old residents of New York State have access to a pre-k program, presents both a blessing and a challenge to New York City Schools already overcrowded and communities where parents struggle to find child care services. In order for Universal Pre-K to be effective, greater *resources such as increased funding and availability of space must be allocated. Universal Pre-K presents opportunity for greater collaboration between the early childhood community and the Board of Education and this must be encouraged, in addition the proposed IS and high schools need to be finished. A new Anti-Harassment law needs to be funded.

BEAUTIFICATION COMMITTEE

Community Board 6 has 4 major shopping strips and a combination of private houses, co ops, condos, and rental apartments. The citizens are concerned with improving sanitation, graffiti removal, beautifying the landscape, tending to the myriads of trees in the area, and keeping the parks in good condition. They are a source of recreation and a social meeting place for many groups of people in the summer and fall.

The Needs Statement for the Beautification Committee of Community Board 6 is as follows:

1. Pave berm areas under trestles to eliminate maintenance of weed growth, and to allow for cleaner, healthier, streets.
2. Have a unit within the MTA assigned to the regular removal of graffiti under the walls of railroad trestles.
3. Maintain on regular schedule the cleaning of the traffic medians on Queens Blvd. and Woodhaven Blvd., and beautifying them with colorful perennial plants, bushes or flowers.

CONSUMER AFFAIRS

Community Board 6 supports increasing the numbers of inspectors and the frequency of inspections for all licensees along with more community outreach by the Consumer Affairs Agency. There is also a major need for street vendor enforcement.

Need more community outreach by Consumer Affairs Agency