



THE CITY OF NEW YORK

BOROUGH OF THE BRONX

COMMUNITY BOARD 7



GREGORY FAULKNER, CHAIRPERSON

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COMMUNITY DISTRICT NEEDS STATEMENT FOR FISCAL YEAR 2011

Introduction

Bronx Community Board 7 is located in the northwestern section of the borough and is comprised of all or part of the neighborhoods of Bedford Park, Fordham, Jerome Park, Kingsbridge Heights, Mosholu, Norwood, University Heights, and a portion of the Marble Hill section of Manhattan. We are bordered by Webster Avenue on the east, Woodlawn Cemetery and Van Cortland Park on the north, Goulden Avenue on the northwest, the Harlem River on the southwest, Hall of Fame Terrace on the south, and Fordham Road on the southeast.

There are many attractions in or near Community Board 7 such as the New York Botanical Gardens, Van Cortland Park, Bronx Library Center, Kingsbridge Armory, Lehman Center for Performing Arts, the Bronx's Education Mile, Hall of Fame for Great Americans, Bronx Historical Society, Montefiore Medical Center, and the Bronx High School of Science. The district is home to many post secondary educational facilities such as Lehman College, CUNY on the Concourse, and Monroe College and is also adjacent to Fordham University and Bronx Community College.

This following document represents the various concerns received from community residents, groups, and organizations that affect the district and puts forth the recommendations of the Board and district office to the Mayor's office, the various city agencies, and our elected officials for their consideration in fiscal year 2011. These issues are organized by the committee assigned to monitor, evaluate, and respond to the community concerns and in most cases is directed to the city agency responsible for delivering those services.

Economic Development

Economic Profile of the District

There are many important economic engines that drive the local economy, including the Fordham Road Business Improvement District, the largest BID in the borough and the third largest in the city. Other important economic centers are the Jerome-Gun Hill BID, the Bainbridge-204th Street Merchants Group, and the Bedford Park Merchants Group. Two up and coming business developments coming to the district are the Kingsbridge Armory Development Project and the proposed Webster Avenue Rezoning Initiative. The former plans to develop the "Shops at the Armory", which will include a mix of retail, professional, and entertainment business in Kingsbridge Heights. The latter proposes to create new residential and commercial opportunities on Webster Avenue between Fordham and East Gun Hill Roads with easy access to Manhattan and upstate New York via the Metro North Railroad.

Small Business Development

Small businesses are the lifeblood of many communities, and our district is no exception. In light of the recent economic downturn, it is important that services that help promote small business development continue to be made available through the Department of Small Business Services to help foster a new generation of entrepreneurs, especially amongst minority and woman-owned businesses. Chief amongst these services is the assistance in identifying lenders to provide credit and in increasing incentives for small businesses to startup in our district.

Equally important are the services provided by the Small Business Services (SBS) Workforce 1 Program, which provides assistance in the form of job training, placement, skill development, and recruitment. According to the 2000 US Census, the average percentage of people in the civilian labor force that are unemployed range from 6.6% to 9.1% in Community Board 7, which is higher than the city and national averages. A more disturbing statistic from the 2000 census is the number of young men between 18-24 years old who are unemployed in certain areas of the district, which is over 14%. It is imperative that funding for job training programs like Workforce 1 be expanded to help address the chronic levels of unemployment we face in our community.

Development at the former Fordham Library

The Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH) has acquired the former Fordham Library on Bainbridge Avenue near Fordham Road for the purpose of establishing a full service animal clinic that DOHMH is mandated by law to create in every borough. However, residents believe that the city is trying to force this institution on a community without consideration from or planning with the Board. This building is the same site that community board members have advocated in the past few years for a mixed use commercial building that would provide much needed services such as jobs, business opportunities, child care, and youth services.

The community is vehemently opposed to the placement of such an establishment in the heart of the busiest commercial strip in the borough. This type of establishment is completely out of context with the surrounding neighborhood and businesses and is not a suitable location to handle the entire borough's stray or unwanted animal problem. The pedestrian and vehicular density on Fordham Road is very high, and there is very little parking currently available to accommodate the projected influx of individuals and their pets. The Board continues to recommend the placement of the shelter at a location on Webster Avenue near East 209th Street as a more suitable location that is more readily accessible by public and private transportation. This plan is also supported by the Borough President's Office.

Education and Libraries**School Construction Authority and School Development**

The community strongly disagrees with the School Construction Authority's (SCA) assessment that additional schools are not warranted in our neighborhoods, as identified in the 2008 amendment of the existing five-year plan. The number of school seats on all levels has not kept pace with the increase in residential development in our community since the last census, pushing all of our schools in our district to operate at over 100% capacity and a handful of schools to operate at over 200% capacity.

This situation is not conducive to a healthy learning environment and we impress upon the SCA and the Department of Education (DOE) to reexamine its current five year construction plan to devise a better solution for our children's educational needs.

The Board continues to support and urges the SCA to consider development of schools on the north side of the Kingsbridge Armory complex which currently houses the National Guard. The governor's office has identified an alternative location for the National Guard in the borough, providing an opportunity for the SCA to draft plans for at least two schools on this property. The Board has, for many years, supported the building of additional schools at this site and we urge the SCA to come up with a plan for two or more schools to catch up with the increasing demand for more space.

Additionally, too much space is wasted on the use of Transportable Classroom Units that have become commonplace in our district. While we are encouraged by SCA's plans to remove these units and put new buildings in some locations (like PS 94), units at others schools (like PS 56) are long overdue to be replaced with a permanent building that also provides much needed recreational space.

Resources Conducive for Learning

It is important that our children are provided with opportunities to grow and have positive experiences that are outside of the realm of standardized testing. We urge DOE to maintain funding and, wherever possible, implement new programs to introduce children to the arts and music.

Additionally, the lack of time or appropriate facilities for physical education can have negative impacts on a child's ability to learn. It is strongly recommended that provisions are made to ensure that children in our schools are meeting the state mandated guidelines for physical education.

The community board has advocated on the behalf of the parents of PS51, which has no recreational space for physical education, for several years and has spoken to DOE on multiple occasions to acquire a nearby vacant lot that is ideal for a playground, but to no avail. With the support of our local elected officials and the school's parents' association, we expect once again to bring DOE to the table in the hopes that an agreement can be hammered out to make this playground available to our students.

Support for Our Libraries

The Bronx Library Center is a beacon for learning located in our district and is one of but a handful of libraries that offers a full 7-day-a-week service in the borough. It offers a wide array of programming, lectures, internet access, and other activities that would be otherwise inaccessible to area residents.

In these difficult financial times, we urge the city to find ways to continue full service at both the Bronx Library Center and our Mosholu Branch to provide our communities with opportunities for learning and growth.

Environment & Sanitation

Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) Satellite Offices

As stated in the Citywide Statement of Needs for Fiscal Years 2009-2010, DEP proposes to convert the space at the Jerome Avenue Yard, located at 3201 Jerome Avenue, into a permanent DEP facility that will house both the Water and Sewer Maintenance Units. With the construction of the Croton Filtration Monitoring Plant and the renovations at the Jerome Park Reservoir, both along the borders of our community board, it is vital to have the appropriate services and staff nearby to properly maintain the water system. The Board is supportive of the decision by DEP to purchase the aforementioned property to consolidate its services in the borough.

It is also important for DEP to consider other units that can be consolidated into this facility to better service the local community's and the borough's needs. The Board recommends that permanent offices for the Bronx Inter-Governmental Affairs representative and the Community Affairs liaison in this facility are ideal due to the magnitude of these projects and how they will affect the city's water supply.

Enforcing Environment and Sanitation Regulations

There are many concerns by community residents over the perceived lack of enforcement in both environmental and sanitation issues in our district. While the Board understands the difficulty in enforcing certain issues (i.e. noise), the Board strongly recommends that the departments of Environmental Protection and Sanitation increase the number of enforcement officers and redouble its efforts to address our quality of life issues.

These quality of life issues are particularly distressful in our business districts, as they lend themselves to negative perceptions to both residents and consumers shopping in our neighborhoods. We ask that the Department of Sanitation (DSNY) not reduce resources that would unduly shift the burden of regular street and sidewalk cleanliness upon our local businesses in light of the current fiscal crisis.

Additionally, in areas where responsibility for maintenance is shared by multiple agencies (i.e. subway entrances on overpasses), we implore DSNY to work closely with those agencies to maintain basic levels of cleanliness for the district.

Construction at the Croton Filtration Plant and Related Projects

Community residents and activists are greatly disturbed by the ever-increasing project delays and massive cost overruns associated with the development of the filtration plant at Van Cortland Park. The Board is also concerned about DEP's decision to digress from the original Environmental Impact Study in portions of the construction plans, particularly around the Jerome Park Reservoir.

The Board strongly urges that DEP does not further compromise the project by deviating from the EIS as a way to reduce expenditures and expresses its opposition to any activity that would produce an undue environmental burden on our residents, students, and businesses. This includes the removal of debris from work sites and hauling it through high density residential and commercial areas as a way for contractors to reduce costs.

Finally, the Board has for several months brought to the attention of DEP that it has not fulfilled prior agreements to produce jobs for neighborhood residents at the construction site. While we are pleased with the recent progress that has been made to the commitment on jobs through project HIRE and other programs, we believe it still falls short of original commitments made with the community. Jobs were promised as a prerequisite to construction, beginning at the site, and we implore the DEP commissioner to follow through on these promises.

Health & Hospitals

Addressing Major Health Concerns

Health concerns in the district are reflective of many of the major health concerns affecting the borough. However, the Board believes that resources to address these issues have not been provided at the same level as in other communities. We request that the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH) and the Human Resources Administration (HRA) work with the community to focus on several health issues that are of great concern to our residents.

Prevalence of Domestic Violence- As reported in the NYC Domestic Violence Annual Report – 2007, published by the Mayor’s Office to Combat Domestic Violence, our district, along with several others in the Bronx, is reported to have the highest incidence of fatalities due to domestic violence in the city. There are a number of programs currently in place to bring awareness and provide services to residents, but there must be a greater level of collaboration between the various mayoral and municipal agencies involved if we are to reduce the incidence of domestic violence in our community.

Substance Abuse and Depression- Substance abuse and depression are closely linked to one another, and both are treatable health conditions. As per the Community Health Profile for 2006 published by DOHMH, residents in our community are 60% more likely to experience serious psychological distress than adults in NYC overall. Additionally, the death rate due to drug abuse (in 2003-2004) was 70% higher in our neighborhoods than in NYC as a whole.

It is imperative that resources to address both substance abuse and depression continue to be funded to avert a return to the days of rampant substance abuse and its subsequent negative effects on our communities. We implore the city to increase its education resources targeting drug prevention and mental health initiatives, especially for our youth.

Diabetes and Obesity- Diabetes and obesity are at epidemic levels in our community. Rates for these health conditions continue to increase rapidly citywide, particularly in lower income communities who do not have many food selection choices available to them, further exasperating health disparities between them and other communities. Many residents commute outside of our community to obtain healthier fresh foods, adding an unnecessary financial burden and forcing them to choose between eating healthier or limiting their food choices to provide for other basic needs.

The Board has given its support to the Department of City Planning’s (DCP) F.R.E.S.H. text zoning amendment to encourage developers to take advantage of development incentives in exchange for putting new supermarkets in their commercial spaces. This provides residents with a greater variety of healthier food options and reduces the time and expense related to shopping outside of the district. The Board’s support is also based on the research of many health advocates and to the report “Eating Well in Harlem: How Available is Healthy Food?” by DOHMH. According to the study, “Research suggests that access to food - including the availability, quality, and price of healthy foods, and the presence of supermarkets and advertising - affect the food choices of residents, many of whom shop close to home.”

HIV and AIDS- According to the Fordham Bronx Park Community Health Profile, “the rate of HIV diagnoses is more than 60% higher than the NYC rate, and the people living with HIV/AIDS in the community is 40% higher than the NYC rate”. The report also states that while residents in the community are more likely to get tested for HIV, “nearly one-third of HIV test results are ‘late’ diagnoses, indicating that the disease has progressed to AIDS”.

We support the DOHMH initiative to expand testing to all Bronx residents so that individuals are aware of their status and have access to treatment as early as possible if they are diagnosed with HIV/AIDS. We believe that the agency needs to both expand its outreach efforts on their initiative and provide resources to residents “post-diagnosis” so that they receive the appropriate care and support.

Teen Pregnancy- Teenage mothers and their babies face numerous health risks and socioeconomic strains than older mothers. Many teenage mothers tend to have less disposable income and often times

do not finish high school, while their babies tend to have lower birth weights and other health issues associated with weight. While the teen birth rate has decreased over the last 10 years, the average birth rate of teen mothers in our community is nearly 50% higher than the NYC rate.

We strongly urge DOHMH to provide the necessary resources to our teens, especially to our middle and high school youth, to reduce the incidence of teen pregnancies in our community. We also believe that the Department of Education needs to expand its sexual health education program and work closely with DOHMH to ensure that all principals are in compliance with educating students in our district.

Housing

Affordable Housing

Our office continues to see an increase in the number of individuals who report they can no longer afford their rent and are being forced out of their homes. The majority of these cases have been individuals who are elderly or have health issues and are on a fixed income. Other cases include working families that have never received public assistance and can no longer afford their rent, individuals being turned away from housing because they are on public assistance, and residents moving in from other neighborhoods.

The city must do more to promote its rent assistance programs for our neediest residents and increase both funding and availability for the SCRIE and DRIE programs (Senior Citizen/Disability Rent Increase Exemptions). We ask that the Department for the Aging (DFTA), Housing Preservation and Development (HPD), and the Department of Finance (DOF) to provide additional resources to both residents and property owners in our community so that they can enroll in these programs.

Neighborhoods that are economically stable also experience a degree of social stability. Affordable housing must include assistance for working families to become homeowners without repeating the financial mishaps that resulted in our current financial crisis. The NYC Economic Development Corporation and HPD should encourage developers to construct affordable cooperative housing so that working families can purchase housing and build equity for their families.

Residents' Quality of Life and Self-Certification Abuses

We continue to receive complaints from our residents who have endured substandard living conditions and do not trust the city agencies to assist in the remediation of glaring violations in their apartments. Many tenant advocate groups place the blame on the Housing Preservation and Development's heavy reliance on self-certification for compliance of violations found in a building or apartment.

Self-compliance does not work well unless it is accompanied by a thorough system for verification and enforcement than what currently exist. We urge HPD to increase its current code enforcement personnel and Emergency Repair Program contractors so that it is not as heavily reliant on the self-certification process and to address the concerns of our residents adequately.

Zoning Regulations and Overdevelopment Concerns

Overdevelopment is an irresponsible approach to urban development and has negatively impacted our communities. Rampant overdevelopment without regard to our communities' needs has caused us to have the third most overcrowded school district in the city, unemployment rates in some communities over 12%, and many other issues that contribute to a decrease in our quality of life.

The Board has placed a great deal of emphasis on the sustainability of our neighborhoods and is working with the community and the Department of City Planning (DCP) to rezone various areas to address the issue of overdevelopment while still encouraging development in underserved areas through the DCP's 197C Program. This and other proposals have been put forth by the Board to encourage long term, sustainable development based on community input to the city.

Homelessness and Cluster Site Housing Concerns

Our community has seen an increase in the number of developments that house formerly mentally ill or homeless individuals from outside of the community district. While the Board has been supportive of these institutions in the past, we are concerned that residents from within our own community are not given a sufficient opportunity to partake of these programs.

In addition, we have been made aware of a few instances where the Department of Homeless Services (DHS) has partnered with local property owners to convert individual apartments into temporary homeless residences. The Board continues to express its dissatisfaction with this program, as the Board believes these apartments could be used for affordable housing instead of a stop-gap solution to the city's homelessness problem. Furthermore, the Board is concerned that property managers enrolled in this program are not being properly vetted by the agency. Some buildings used in this program have hundreds of DOB and HPD violations, some very critical, yet they are able to participate without first correcting these violations. Because the agency pays the owner of these establishments a significant rate (up to \$95 per day), the Board is concerned that unscrupulous and irresponsible property owners may be taking advantage of this program to fund repairs mandated by other city agencies.

We ask that the agency develop more stringent criteria to determine which buildings can be used as temporary facilities and that all community boards are notified whenever any cluster-site program is being implemented in their district, regardless of the size or number of units involved.

Long Term Planning

Kingsbridge Armory Development Project and Vicinity

The Kingsbridge Armory is a city, state, and federal landmark in the center of our district. Originally used as a drill hall and headquarters by the National Guard, the Armory has laid dormant for over a decade. There have been several attempts to develop a plan for the Armory, including plans for a sports complex and occasionally as a movie set, but for the most part it has remained vacant.

Now a plan has been presented to the Community Board to redevelop the Armory which will spur economic development and revitalize the surrounding neighborhoods. The Board is working closely with the developer and residents to develop a plan that provides for: job and career development, retail space for minority and women-owned businesses, community space for activities and programming, and addresses the various socio-economic concerns for residents and businesses in the vicinity.

It is important for the district to have the full support of the Economic Development Corporation and the local elected officials to support the Board and offer recommendations that will make the Armory a lasting success in our community. It is important to remember that the Armory is a part of our community's history and that we should work diligently to both preserve its grandeur and develop a beacon of hope and opportunity for future generations in our district.

Access to the Jerome Park Reservoir

Many communities in upstate New York currently have access to the reservoirs for recreational activities without compromising water quality or safety concerns to the drinking water system. The Department of Environmental Protection in 2008 stated that access to our own Jerome Park Reservoir is not possible due to the security concerns.

We ask the city, especially DEP, to devise a balance between security concerns and public access to the park space so that all residents can utilize the area. The Board expressed its frustration with DEP earlier this year when the Parks Department recently proposed to put a jogging track at the western end of the reservoir, but completely disregarded creating any direct access to the reservoir on the eastern side which is adjacent to our district. We ask DEP to provide the community with detailed security concerns at the reservoir and discuss with residents and civic groups scenarios where access to the reservoir could be implemented. We also ask for additional funding from DEP to the Parks Department to construct a complete path around the reservoir accessible to everyone.

Fordham Landing / Kingsbridge Heights Waterfront

Former Bronx Borough President Carrión sent a letter to the Mayor in 2008 requesting the city to purchase through eminent domain a 3.7 acre property along the Harlem River south of the University Heights Bridge. The intent is to transfer the land to the Department of Parks and Recreation for the development of a greenway with waterfront access for the community.

Currently, the district does not have access to most of the waterfront because it is underdeveloped or used for manufacturing purposes. The Board supports the acquisition of the above stated property to create waterfront access for recreational purposes for community residents. In addition, the Board urges the Parks Department to expedite the acquisition process of the parcel of land just north of the University Heights Bridge from the Department of Transportation for the creation of Regatta Park. The Board also asks that the city acquire the parcel of land just north of DOT's property from Con Edison and include it in the development of Regatta Park.

Fordham Landing Water Taxi Initiative

Regional transportation experts have projected a steady and continuous growth of businesses, commuters, and residents in the metropolitan area and it is important that the Bronx expand its existing transportation network to meet this demand. Simultaneously, we must be conscientious of the potential environmental impact on neighborhood residents and explore alternative transportation methods to better meet the projected demand.

A water taxi system along the Harlem River just north of the University Heights Bridge, preferably near the Fordham Road exit of the Major Deegan Expressway, along with an accessible waterfront, esplanade, and green space, is a strategic location because it could divert traffic from the nearby expressway and provide commuter service to points along the Harlem and Hudson Rivers. Additionally, a water taxi would provide another option for area residents to commute into Manhattan and bring relief to overcrowding conditions on existing subway lines.

The expansion of our waterways as a means of alternative transportation is supported by Mayor Bloomberg's PlanNYC, and we ask that the NYC Economic Development Corporation begin looking into the viability and cost projections for a water taxi system in our district.

The district needs public access to the waterfront as is available in the other boroughs to revitalize what has been an undeveloped and underserved area for many years. We believe that the Fordham Landing / Kingsbridge Heights Waterfront will provide many recreational and commercial activities and bring vibrancy to the Harlem River and surrounding neighborhoods.

Webster Avenue Rezoning Initiative

In these times of fiscal uncertainty, it is vital that we spur local economic development to ensure that our communities are not subject to the damaging effects of divestment, a still vivid memory from the late 70's and early 80's for many Bronxites. The Webster Avenue Rezoning Initiative proposes to allow new development in an area while protecting areas with one and two family homes from overdevelopment.

This initiative allows for the development of both inclusionary and market rate apartments to be developed along large portions of Webster Avenue between Fordham Road and East Gun Hill Road. In addition, it requires developers to create ground floor commercial space, thereby bringing jobs and business opportunities to the community.

The initiative also includes areas for larger scale commercial development on the intersections of Bedford Park Blvd. and East Gun Hill Road to diversify the types of businesses that can be established, including professional office space and schools with the intent of creating jobs and economic opportunities for area residents.

However, for the project to succeed, we ask that the city continue to fund a number of initiatives, including funding to: create affordable inclusionary housing, allocating monies for the construction of more schools, and opportunities for small businesses to develop and succeed such as Avenue NYC.

Parks and Recreation

Renovation of Mosholu Parkway and Adjacent Parkland

Mosholu Parkway intersects through our district and serves as a greenway between our major parks (Van Cortland and Bronx Park/Botanical Gardens), a connector to our major roadways (Bronx River, Saw Mill, and Henry Hudson Parkways), and a scenic respite from the surrounding urban environment.

There are discussions between community organizations in our district and the Mayor's office to redesign portions of the parkway to increase the amount of available green space and address traffic flow issues. However, there are other issues that need to be considered in the renovation of the parkway to address long standing community complaints.

Chief amongst these complaints is the constant flooding that occurs on the parkway, especially during the winter months. The areas on the parkway most affected are on the intersections of Bainbridge Avenue and Hull/Marion Avenues, which separates Norwood, a major shopping area, from the northern part of Bedford Park, which is primarily residential with a high concentration of senior citizens. Curb lines and sidewalks are broken, making it difficult for some to cross in fair weather. During and after rain or snow storms, the intersections become flooded and impassible for many.

Area residents have complained to multiple city agencies over the last few years and have not received the appropriate response to this longstanding issue. There are several agencies that must collaborate to remediate this situation, starting with the DEP, so that further damage does not occur to the parkway and for the safety of our residents.

Soil erosion from the adjacent park lands is the major cause of the flooding on the parkway. Lack of proper maintenance and enforcement of quality of life issues (i.e. dumping of charcoal and other contaminants) has caused many barren areas, allowing dirt and debris to flow onto the parkway and obstruct the catch basins. These parklands desperately need maintenance and we implore the city and specifically the Parks Department to remediate the issues affecting our parkway.

Enforcement / PEP officers and Security Issues

Security issues are a major and growing concern in our parks, especially at our recreation centers. Based on the NYPD CompStat reports and community complaints, what should be a welcoming setting for our youth is often times the reverse, a hostile environment where gangs, violence, drugs and other negative quality of life issues occurring on a frequent basis.

Our recreation centers, Williamsbridge Oval and St. James Park, are the most affected by these quality of life issues. It has been brought to our attention that in July 2008, Williamsbridge Oval incurred thousands of dollars in an overnight vandalism spree that destroyed resources that were part of an afterschool program. Likewise, St. James Park has seen a reoccurrence of teenage prostitution and the office has received complaints of open drug dealing at all times of the day and night.

Another concern is the lack of lighting on most of the paths in the parklands adjacent to Mosholu Parkway. These paths are very dark and provide ample opportunity for illegal dumping, loitering at night, and vehicle vandalism for those who park along the parkway. These paths are used by hundreds of school age children and residents going between Bedford Park and Norwood and lighting, particularly during the winter months, would provide an additional level of security to these individuals.

The Board has also received many complaints of illegal gambling in many parks throughout the district, but particularly at Devoe Park and along Aqueduct Walk, specifically at the intersection of West Kingsbridge Road. Devoe Park received millions of dollars in playground and park renovations from the Croton Filtration Mitigation Fund to create a safe place for children to play, and instead it has become a haven for gambling and gang activity. Aqueduct Walk is scheduled to be renovated in the coming fiscal year, but many in the community are fearful that this too will succumb to misuse.

The community implores the Parks Department to increase the number of Parks Enforcement Personnel (PEP) officers and patrols at our parks to assist in making our parks a safer environment for all of us. Additionally, the Board recommends that more lighting and security cameras be installed where necessary, parks and playgrounds be properly closed at the appropriate times, and that there be more collaboration with the community board and the NYPD to address situations as they arise.

Public Safety & Quality of Life

CompStat Reporting and Trends

We are very thankful that we have had the courage and leadership at the 52nd Precinct over the last several years that has resulted in a steady decrease in major crimes as reported in CompStat. The 52nd precinct has been responsive to and continues to work with the district office on many issues raised by the community.

We wish to continue working with the precinct on sharing information on a regular basis that will assist us in providing us better responds to community concerns, planning with local stakeholders, and working with other city agencies to improve the quality of life for our residents.

Quality of Life Issues Affecting Residents

Of particular concern to community residents is the perception that quality of life (QOL) issues are not being addressed as aggressively as the major crime indicators reported on CompStat. There are several disturbing trends that have been reported to both the community board and the precinct that are negatively impacting quality of life issues in the district:

Prevalence of domestic violence- As previously stated, our district is one of several districts in the Bronx that has the unfortunate distinction of having the highest incidence of fatalities resulting from domestic violence. According to victim advocates, many instances of domestic violence are often unreported to the police and claim there is not enough coordination of resources to help victims. The district office has observed that the various city agencies responsible for addressing domestic violence seldom coordinate their services, giving the Board the perception that it is difficult for victims to find the assistance they need.

Nightlife noise disturbances and residential quality of life- There is a growing problem with disorderly conduct and violence related to nightlife establishments (both legal and illegal), especially those serving alcohol, causing constant disruptions to our residents. The Board has begun to take action against these establishments by working with the State Liquor Authority to suspend or revoke the liquor licenses of persistent violators, placing stringent conditions on new applicants, and work with the precinct to find additional ways to deal with problematic establishments.

Rise in youth and gang violence- Many residents have complained to the district office that they have witnessed or know someone who is a victim of gang violence. Of particular concern are communities in the southern portion of our district where many residents have expressed that they do not feel their neighborhoods are safe. At a recent public hearing held by the Board, residents expressed their frustration with the rampant and open violence and illegal activities they have witnessed for a prolonged period of time. They also articulated their dissatisfaction with the precinct's responsiveness to the community's needs and argued for greater sensitivity to their concerns.

Rise in complaints about prostitution- Members of the Board attended a neighborhood association meeting on Davidson Avenue in August 2009 where they expressed their outrage over the increasing number of prostitutes in Kingsbridge Heights, especially in and around St. James Park. Complaints about prostitution have also been reported to the Board along Bailey Avenue, where trucks have been observed parked for prolonged periods of time and active prostitution. The Board recommends that the precinct increase the number of vice squad officers allocated to the district to help address this issue.

Curbing graffiti vandalism- Graffiti vandalism is a chronic blight throughout our district and has many property managers, business owners, and the city agencies spending a considerable amount of financial and personnel resources to remove graffiti. The district office has worked with the Community Affairs Unit in bringing free graffiti removal programs to the neighborhood. Yet, this and other programs are not sufficient in addressing the problem and residents are expecting more from the NYPD. The Board recommends that the precinct restore its anti-graffiti program and implement additional strategies to curb vandalism and prevent the sale of materials used by graffiti vandals.

Staffing Concerns

The Board and community residents are very concerned with the number of officers the precinct has lost over the last year. We have lost the majority of our impact officers as they have been reassigned to other parts of the borough, and we have not received any additional officers from the last two graduating classes. Even when the impact officers were assigned to the precinct in late 2008, the total number of officers was not at the same levels as in previous years.

This trend is particularly disturbing to the Board in light of the increase in quality of life complaints we have received from the community as noted above. The notion that officers are frequently reassigned to address increases in crimes in other precincts is reactionary and counterproductive. The Board recommends to the Mayor's office that the number of classes and officers increase and that the precinct staff levels are raised to appropriate levels.

Additionally, the Board also is very much aware of the overcrowded conditions that currently exist in the precinct, which has more officers that it can physically hold and has not kept pace with the population growth the district has experienced over the past decade. We believe that it is in the best interest to the district that the city purchase or rent the property across from the current precinct to build a new, modern facility that would accommodate current and future officers and vehicles.

Senior Services

Funding Formula for Existing Centers

The Department for the Aging (DFTA) has set what is being criticized as an unrealistic and unattainable benchmark for determining how well senior centers are being utilized. Many senior residents feel that the city is using the benchmark as a way to justify the closing of centers in the immediate future. Senior citizen advocates cite that the criteria for determining center utilization limits itself to how often seniors use the onsite meals program and does not include other programming that might take place throughout the day. Additionally, senior centers are under new pressures to provide additional programming as a condition to receiving their current funding.

The Board continues to support the position that the proposed funding formula does not take into account the true utilization of our centers and voices its opposition to the agency's proposal. The Board recommends the allocation of additional funding to match cost of living increases to our centers to offset previous reductions and to decrease each center's reliance on having to solicit outside funding.

Our centers are often times the only available resource for information, meals, and socialization for many seniors in our community and more must be done to ensure that they are able to weather the current economic downturn. We implore DFTA and elected officials to not turn its back on our seniors and provide the funding to maintain all of the city's senior centers.

Traffic & Transportation

Street Maintenance Issues

The district office has worked closely with the Department of Transportation to address a number of street maintenance issues and community complaints. The district has many major commercial corridors and roadways, including the northern end of the Grand Concourse, which are heavily utilized. However, appropriate funding to repair our major roadways is insufficient considering the number of vehicles and buses that utilize our roads, especially in light of the population growth we have been experiencing and are projecting in the coming years. In the best interest of maintaining our roadways, it is recommended

that DOT reexamine the amount of funds allocated to the district for street milling and repaving to determine if additional monies are warranted.

Public Plazas Program

The Board continues to express its concern with the DOT's "Public Plazas" initiative, as this program requires private organizations, primarily non-profits, to sign maintenance agreements with DOT in exchange for the agency to renovate public space in a neighborhood. These organizations are also expected to provide programming at a fee to other groups for the purpose of covering maintenance costs.

Many in the community feel that the program is designed to shift the burden of maintaining public streets onto private organizations as a way to save on costs and street/curb enhancements. Based on information provided by DOT, organizations would also have the additional burden of having to provide for liability insurance for the plaza as a precondition for joining this program. The Board considers the latter as a major impediment to increasing participation in this program. Organizations in our district who were interested in participating in this program as a way to enhance the community's quality of life have balked at the prospect of being held liable for what might occur on a public street.

There are a number of areas within our district that would benefit from public plazas and we ask that DOT reexamine the criteria used to implement this program so that it does not exclude neighborhoods from participating. Additionally, all public plaza designs should include community board input and approval prior to implementation as a way to increase participation and support for projects that might be located within a district.

Youth Services

Employment and Mentoring Programs

A major concern for the community, especially in these troubled economic times, is the lack of employment opportunities for youth and young adults in our community. The city was fortunate to receive federal stimulus dollars this year to fund additional jobs for youths and young adults. However, it is apparent that there are still too few opportunities for skill development that would prepare these individuals to enter the workforce.

Therefore, it is highly recommended that the Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD) promote existing programs to a greater extent in economically distressed neighborhoods. Furthermore, we implore the city to not reduce funding for existing DYCD initiatives such as the Summer Youth Employment Program and the Neighborhood Advisory Boards, as it is counterproductive for the city to balance its budget at the expense of our youth.

We need the city to provide leadership by encouraging mentoring programs that will prepare our youth by teaching them the skills necessary to thrive in the workplace.

Child Welfare Issue

It is distressful to hear the continued amount of abuse children throughout the city endure, particularly at the hands of those who are supposed to provide for their well being. We applaud the efforts of the Office of Community Partnerships in the Administration for Children's Services (ACS) for working closer with community stakeholders to strengthen safety nets for our children locally. We strongly urge the city to continue to work closely with community stakeholders and provide "one-stop" information services so that partners can focus on protecting children rather than navigating bureaucracies.

Of great importance is the availability of childcare and foster care services that would provide information and services to support families. We ask ACS to expand its marketing of its subsidized child care program so that families can take advantage of the opportunity for free or low cost childcare in their neighborhoods. We also ask the agency to provide more technical support and training to foster care agencies to ensure that issues are addressed in a timely manner and that children are placed in safe homes as quickly as possible.

Closing Statements

On October 20, 2009, the board members submitted their "Service Program Priorities for FY 2011" survey, which ranks how important each of ninety city services are to the district and is not an indication of how effective the service is delivered. Services are grouped into one of five priorities from highest (A) to lowest (E) rank. The results of this survey can be found in Appendix A of this document.

Bronx Community Board 7 is committed to working with the respective agencies in order to achieve the goals mentioned in this document. We are also requesting that the city increase funding to the Community Boards in order for them to do its job effectively. Without the necessary resources, Boards cannot properly advocate for or express the community's needs effectively through the current process.

Community Boards were developed for the purpose of having residents participate in government locally and to address their needs. This also includes the need to share information captured by the 311 system in a manner that is beneficial to the district office so that the information can be disseminated to district residents. The relationship between the Department of Information Technology and Telecommunications (DOITT) and the district office continues to improve and the Board recommends that the agency improve the way it shares data relating to call volume and request type by community district to each of the community boards on a monthly basis.

Furthermore, we ask for the support from the Mayor's office, the city agencies, and our elected officials that the concerns of each neighborhood be considered and discussed in a respectful manner to help everyone through these times of uncertainty. We want to do our best to reassure families and individuals residing in Bronx Community Board 7 that we in government are committed to their well being and that they are able to live and thrive in this neighborhood as in every other neighborhood in city.

In conclusion, the Chairperson, District Manager, Board Members, and residents want to extend our thanks and appreciation to the Mayor, Borough President, City Council, and the city agencies for their continuing assistance in addressing our concerns and in supporting our community.

Respectfully submitted,



Gregory W. Faulkner
Chairman



Fernando P. Tirado
District Manager

APPENDIX A: COMMUNITY BOARD SERVICE PROGRAM PRIORITIES FOR FISCAL YEAR 2011

AGENCY	PROGRAM	A	B	C	D	E
ADMINISTRATIVE SVCS	Vacant Lot Fencing					E
AGING	Services for the Elderly	A				
BUILDINGS	Plan Examination				D	
	Inspections		B			
	Periodic Inspections		B			
SMALL BUSINESS SERVICES	NYC Business Solutions				D	
	Division of Economic and Financial Opportunity			C		
	Neighborhood Development	A				
	The New York City Workforce 1 Career Centers			C		
CHILDREN'S SERVICES	Child Protection Services	A				
	Family Support Services	A				
	Family Court Legal Services			C		
	Daycare/Headstart	A				
CONSUMER AFFAIRS	Licensed Home Improvement Contractors				D	
	Underage Tobacco				D	
	Second Hand Auto Dealers					E
	Sidewalk Cafes					E
	Internet Gaming Cafes					E
	Weight and Measurements					E
	Electronic Stores					E
CULTURAL AFFAIRS	Cultural Activities	A				
ECONOMIC DEV.	Economic Development Initiatives				D	
EDUCATION	Administration Staff (Principals, Asst. Principals, etc.)	A				
	After School/Summer School & Evening				D	
	Building Services (Custodial, Maintenance, Constr.)		B			
	Classroom Instruction (Teachers/Supplies/Materials)	A				
	Counseling/Drug Prevention/Parent Involvement			C		
	Food Services	A				
	Transportation	A				
	School Safety			C		
ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION	Water Delivery			C		
	Air/Noise/Hazmat Enforcement	A				
	Environmental Planning and Assessment			C		
	Sewers/Water Pollution Control		B			
	Environmental Control Board			C		
	Office of Community Partnership		B			
FIRE	Emergency Medical Services	A				
	Fire Extinguishment		B			
	Fire Investigation				D	
	Fire Prevention			C		
	Public Safety Education				D	
HEALTH & MENTAL HYGIENE	HIV/AIDS Prevention Program		B			
	Tobacco Control Program				D	
	Regulatory and Environ. Health Svcs. (i.e. Pest Control)		B			
	Mental Health, Retardation & Alcoholism Services		B			

APPENDIX A: COMMUNITY BOARD SERVICE PROGRAM PRIORITIES FOR FISCAL YEAR 2011

AGENCY	PROGRAM	A	B	C	D	E
HEALTH & HOSPITALS CORPORATION	In-Patient Hospital Care Services		B			
	Preventive/Primary Ambulatory Health Care Svcs		B			
HOMELESS SERVICES	Services for Homeless Individuals & Families			C		
HOUSING AUTHORITY	Housing Mngt., Maint. Svcs. & Cap. Improvement				D	
HOUSING PRESERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT	Alternative Management of In Rem Property					E
	Code Enforcement (Complaints Inspections)			C		
	Demolition/Seal-Up					E
	Neighborhood Preservation/Community Develop.		B			
	Property Management					E
	Rehabilitation			C		
	Relocation/Emergency Housing					E
HUMAN RESOURCES ADMINISTRATION	HIV/AIDS Services			C		
	Domestic Violence and Emergency Services	A				
	Family Independence Administration				D	
	Home Care Services Program (HCSP)				D	
	WeCare			C		
	Medical Assistance Programs (MAP)			C		
	Adult Protective Services (APS)				D	
LIBRARIES	Branch Library Services	A				
PARKS AND RECREATION	Facility Repairs (Skilled Trades)				D	
	Forestry and Horticulture				D	
	Parks Maintenance	A				
	Recreation Programs		B			
	Urban Park Serv. (Rangers & Enforcement Patrol)					E
POLICE	Communications (911)	A				
	Emergency Services/Special Squads		B			
	Investigations				D	
	Patrol (Includes Housing, Transit & Auxiliary Police)	A				
	Traffic Control/Enforcement					E
SANITATION	Enforcement		B			
	Recycling				D	
	Refuse Collection		B			
	Street Cleaning				D	
	Vacant Lot Clean-Up					E
TRANSIT AUTHORITY	Bus Maintenance and Operations			C		
	Rapid Transit Maintenance and Operations		B			
TRANSPORTATION	Arterial Highway Safety, Smoothness & Cleaning					E
	Bridges					E
	Traffic Planning Operations					E
	Sidewalk Repair					E
	Street Lighting (also Parks)			C		
	Street Maintenance/Smoothness			C		
	Signal Engineering					E
YOUTH & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT	Youth Services	A				
	Community Development Services		B			