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Statement Of Community District Needs Fiscal Year 2012

District Overview

Community Board No. 8, located in north Crown Heights, encompasses the neighborhoods of Prospect Heights, Crown Heights, and Weeksville. The community is bounded by Atlantic Avenue on the north, Ralph Avenue on the east, Eastern Parkway on the south and Flatbush Avenue on the west.

The population of District 8 is not only enlarging from the last recorded census count of 2000, but it is also dramatically changing. Once an economically and culturally diverse community, there are noticeable shifts in economic status as well as ethnic and cultural make-up. Wide-spread development projects have an impact on this movement toward gentrification unfortunately, and other planned or recently begun projects, perhaps none greater than the Atlantic Yards Development Project and even the attempt to make certain segments of the community historically landmarked, will only serve to enable gentrification. With these two projects specifically, coupled with many of the smaller scale condominium developments, the racial make-up of District is bound to further rapidly change as well, with a decreasing minority population as present residents are being priced out of the community at an alarming rate.

While the attempt to landmark certain segments of North Crown Heights and Prospect Heights are presently underway, the Crow Hill Community Association has spear-headed an attempt to make a portion of the community not under consideration in either of the first two landmarks proposals historically designated as well. Many wonder what the reasoning is behind these landmarks quests, but one merely has to stroll down any of the blocks in the District to understand that the architectural integrity of many of the buildings is in need of preservation. Modern architecture threatens to destroy the classic and prominent designs from Romanesque Revival and Queen Anne to Renaissance Revival and Art Deco. In addition to the historical designation attempting to preserve the housing stock, the District recently underwent a comprehensive zoning study that was financed in large part by Councilwoman Letitia James and Councilman Albert Vann. We anticipate that the findings will be used to help rezone the remaining portions of the district. We are hopeful that rezoning will protect the integrity of the District from unscrupulous developers who wish to construct massive buildings that cannot be supported by the current infrastructure, and that also are not consistent with current architectural designs.

Overall, the neighborhood has a solid housing foundation, a good transportation infrastructure, and easy access to a number of cultural facilities such as the Brooklyn Museum, Jewish Children's Museum, the

Brooklyn Public Library at Grand Army Plaza, the Brooklyn Children's Museum, Brooklyn Botanic Garden, and Weeksville Heritage Center, all of which have recently undergone or will undergo capital expansion and/or renovation projects.

Despite the many positives within the District, there are many blaring challenges that must be faced and overcome. Included in these challenges are the enormously high poverty rate amongst minority and foreign born residents; the glaring unemployment rate of adult minority males; the alarming discomfort of residents because of police and safety insecurities; a dearth of affordable housing for seniors and low and middle-income residents; lack of medical services and hospital coverage; overcrowded schools; and a dire need for improved economic development. These issues require special consideration and priority from government officials, and Community Board No. 8 is committed to participating in the formulation of plans to address the service delivery, housing, and infrastructure needs of our residents.

The strategy detailed below will facilitate achievement of Community Board No. 8's goals for Fiscal Year 2012 and beyond, despite the city's fiscal constraints.

POLICE

As a densely populated community, there is a dire need for additional police presence in District 8. There are a number of large apartment buildings clustered within a small space, especially toward the eastern end of the District. This high density creates the potential for tension among the residents of the area as well as a potential cloak for illegal activity. It is a known fact that tension can cause crime to escalate unless checked regularly and pre-empted by effective and visible policing. Additional patrol officers are required to intercede on behalf of our residents and keep them safe by curtailing illegal drug rings operating virtually exposed. This particular area has seen a tremendous increase in violent crime and drug activity; furthermore, residents, despite reports from the command that crime is rapidly decreasing in virtually every main category, reflect an opposing viewpoint. The need for additional coverage is evident and pressing.

Moreover, despite the dearth of officers to patrol the area, there are other tools that can be utilized to partially dispel the negative effects of lack of police protection. For instance, ARGUS cameras have proven to be an effective tactic in fighting crime. Additional cameras on Nostrand, Buffalo, Schenectady, and Franklin Avenues would be valuable to the command. As per other areas such as the large housing developments such as Kingsboro Houses, closed circuit video cameras would be an asset to fighting crime in the development, as they have been in Albany Houses.

Furthermore, the command is facing a shortage of equipment; as a result, there is a need for a police van for the Special Conditions Unit and Anti-Crime Teams as well as unmarked vehicles for the Narcotics unit. Also, Police Service #2 (Housing Bureau) is in need of 10 additional bicycles for the officers to gain quick and easy access throughout the housing developments. The addition of these resources would greatly benefit an understaffed command and would make the resources available more effective.

FIRE

We are displeased that the FDNY has been slated for numerous reductions to their budget, including funding maintaining the fifth crew member on many Engine company commands and the partial closure of fire houses. Also, the number of firefighters lost through attrition must be replaced in a timely fashion. It takes valuable time for probationary firefighters to gain the necessary experience in order to effectively fight fires. We need seasoned and experienced firefighters to help them in this task. The department is losing many of its heroes capable of imparting this valuable information and the residents of NYC will suffer

tragically as a result of the mayoral administration's crippling budget cuts. Subsequently, it is imperative that the Department continue to replenish the ranks by hiring additional personnel.

Home fire safety training for our children and adult residents has proven to be effective tools for educating residents in what to do in the event of a fire. Unfortunately, with the spate of lives lost because residents did not have access to this information, we urge the continued, if not increased funding for fire safety and prevention programs. These programs have been proven to be valuable life saving tools and also reduce the amount of damage and loss resulting from the blaze. We also recommend additional life-saving training in the area of Cardio-Pulmonary Resuscitation (CPR). In a district where obesity and as a result, heart disease is at a high level, it is imperative that residents know how to respond in emergency situations to perform life-saving techniques prior to the arrival of emergency medical technicians. Additional CPR kits are required to train residents more effectively in this life-saving procedure. The kits also provide a more sanitary means of training and can be given to class members for practice and for them to train their family and neighbors.

The Fire Department has 10 golf-cart sized EMS gators for citywide use. The gators allow EMS staff to maneuver through crowds' at large events and beach areas to get people needed medical assistance. Most of these vehicles are 10 years old. It is critical that the FDNY purchase additional replacement gators.

Smoke and Carbon Monoxide Detectors have been proven by the FDNY to save lives. Unfortunately, many residents have not been trained in their use and have not received these life-saving electronics that are supposed to be provided by landlords. We insist on expanding and continuing the smoke detector and carbon monoxide detector distribution program so that at risk tenants can receive their benefits.

Furthermore, we encourage the Fire Department and City Council to consider the adverse effects that dilapidated engine companies can have on our firefighters' morale and productivity. The firehouse buildings are extremely old and require new roofs, window replacement, waterproofing, pointing, electrical upgrades, apparatus floor replacement, and new kitchens and bathrooms. It should be kept in mind that the firehouse is a firefighter's home during work hours, and our firefighters must have a comfortable dwelling site to call home to ease the rigors of a strenuous occupation. Funding is urged to make the necessary repairs to the City's firehouses.

DEPARTMENT OF HOMELESS SERVICES/SOCIAL SERVICE FACILITIES

Presently, the District is under attack by a constant influx of homeless shelters, transitional and/or permanent housing for individuals with mental illness and other social ills. This over-saturation of such facilities has begun to decimate a community that was once on the rise and has been calendared for multiple phases of landmarking. Our residents and members feel so strongly opposed to more such facilities being opened in the community that a moratorium has been enacted against any additional social service facilities being opened in the District. However, yet again, our desires and concerns are not being heeded as the Dept. of Homeless Services has moved ahead with its staunchly opposed proposal to relocate the main homeless male intake center from Manhattan to the Atlantic Avenue Men's Assessment Shelter located within the Bedford Avenue Armory. This proposal will increase the homeless traffic and burden on our community as the armory is in an awkward location and the men would have to travel through various streets, posing a threat to our residents. It is a known fact that a large percentage of registered sex offenders reside within the shelter systems, and these predators will be unleashed on our residents without cause and no regard for the effect on our residents .

In view of these concerns, we urge the Dept. of Homeless Services and other social service agencies to reconsider the placement of social service facilities in District 8 until other less affected Districts have reached parity with the number of facilities already present within our Board. If a shelter is considered blight on one community on the rise, then it is similarly unfair for the Dept. of Homeless Services to force this same shelter on another community that is also on the rise.

ADMINISTRATION FOR CHILDREN'S SERVICES

Children are our most valuable and cherished commodity, and therefore, they must be given the opportunity and encouragement to grow into responsible adults that will lead the nation and prepare future generations to do the same. The foundation to make this dream successful begins at an early age and entails the proper environment favorable for learning and social development. Consequentially, the Board recommends and supports an increase in funding for Headstart programs as this program has been proven to provide the stimulating atmosphere necessary to instill in our youth a thirst for knowledge and better social capacities.

In addition to Headstart programs, there is a growing need for group and family Daycare services in District 8, spurred by the growing population of working parents moving into the community as well as the number of working parents already in the community. Quality, low cost childcare is crucial to the development and maintenance of the community's workforce; unfortunately, the waiting list for State regulated and approved centers is excessively long, creating difficulties for parents with young children. Additional daycare slots for all work shifts, not just the traditional shifts of 8:00 AM to 6:00 PM need to be created to accommodate this growing trend of working parents and their need for services.

With the growing number of children already in and vying to participate in Headstart and Day Care programs, it is imperative that groups offering these services receive an increase in "cost per child" allotments. This increase would allow each child to receive further instruction and additional benefits from the program that he or she is enrolled in. In addition, it is crucial that funding be maintained for child care slots for FDC and center-based operations.

Unfortunately, a worrisome shakeup in ACS and HRA funded child care services has been instituted; providers must now submit immunization records for children and staff, parent fee collection records and recertification for parents to stay in good standing with funding agencies. Furthermore, all centers must now meet the 85% licensed capacity minimum or face closing or merging. Needless to say, this will further exasperate the child care shortage in a District that can ill afford to lose valuable child care slots and in fact, are clamoring for an increase in such services.

Whereas our children must be protected from harm not only from their peers but also from their parents, it must be taken into consideration that a good portion of our District's residents (as well as the population of New York City as a whole) are foreign born and have different customs and practices pertaining to child rearing. Efforts must be made to support family initiatives and provide education and outreach services to families to inform them what are acceptable and unacceptable methods of disciplining children in order to strengthen family ties and links not destroy them. Family reunification processes must be immediately instituted to counterbalance the effects of intervention by Protection Services. We also need to fortify parents with the additional tools to help them govern their children when they begin to participate in activities that deem them "out of control" or problem children. Furthermore, ACS must be staffed with knowledgeable employees capable of handling the everyday stresses of the job, including interaction with families from different backgrounds. Training for employees in the protective services division is essential to ACS employees effectively doing their duties. Funding must be provided for these training services.

As the number of children in the foster care system rises, allowances must be made for resources for kinship care and foster parent training and recruitment services. Institutionalized children also tend to suffer from lack of self-esteem and deflated levels of self-worth. It is imperative that efforts committed to the cause of obtaining a family life for all children are provided, regardless of the circumstances of their cases. As the number of children presently in the foster care system greatly exceeds the number of homes available, increased efforts must be made to provide the proper mental health care to prevent children from further losing a sense of self-image and self-worth. Efforts must be made to assure children that their presence is warranted despite a lack of parental and familial influences.

In addition to the foregoing, programs for youth who are aging out of the foster care system are needed. These programs assist in the critical adjustment and transition period for youth who are forced to live and survive on their own with minimal to no supervision. In order to assure that these individuals are able to live successfully without resorting to crime, programs must be instituted to assist them with job training and placement, money management, higher learning, and the like.

HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

Quality healthcare is not something that should only be provided to certain communities. All of New York City's residents should have access to quality healthcare close to their home. The current situation is far from reaching this ideal, unfortunately. There is a major healthcare crisis affecting the residents of Central Brooklyn. Due to budget cuts on various levels, the healthcare system in New York City has been decimated. The Central Brooklyn area, which covers Community Board No. 8 and other low to moderate income communities, has been especially damaged by cuts and subsequent service provider closures.

Central Brooklyn is still considered the epicenter for HIV/AIDS infections and other health ailments including diabetes, heart disease, asthma, stroke, obesity, and many other conditions that require substantial medical care for those afflicted with the illnesses/diseases. Unfortunately, this area is victimized by hospital closings, overall poor health coverage, poverty, and a general lack of both adequate health care and health education. Each year, more health facilities are closing or reducing operations. WIC centers are also closing, thus making it more difficult for mothers to provide adequate nutrition to their children; this will only lead to further inevitable health issues for already afflicted and underserved residents.

Adequate community health education services are vital as there are many issues such as diabetes, a disquieting rate of HIV/AIDS infection, obesity, heart disease and stroke, and other maladies that afflict our residents. Crown Heights is at the epicenter of HIV infection; in recent years, it had been proclaimed that as many as one in every 35 residents was afflicted with the disease. These numbers continue to rise as the foreign born population continues to grow and as education services are under utilized. Additional HIV/AIDS related services are needed for these residents and educational services are direly needed to staunch the unnecessary spread of the virus. Tools for safe sex should be readily available as well as educational information (in a manner in which the different cultures will accept as accurate) on how the disease is transmitted and ways to prevent or reduce your chances of becoming infected. Additional healthcare services and centers specially equipped to handle the needs of AIDS patients are also needed.

Comprehensive substance abuse prevention and treatment services are direly needed as these programs logically assist in stemming the spread of HIV and violent crime in the community. Educational services about the dangers of experimentation with drugs are essential to ceasing the growing number of addicts while also decreasing crime and the need for costly and unwanted treatment facilities.

The closure of St. Mary's Hospital many years ago has left our District devoid of a major medical institution.

Our residents are now forced to travel further outside of their community to receive medical assistance; many are either unable or unwilling to do so and subsequently go without medical care or deficient care. Additional funding is essential to keep the clinics and treatment centers open.

Out-patient health clinics that cater to women's health and an overall subsequent lack of services available to the community are scarce. Sufficient gynecological, prenatal and postnatal care, cancer screening, and other women's health issues are not provided and women are forced to wait longer than should be necessary for care, and in many cases, prolong treatment. Ample health provisions and treatment centers in each neighborhood is crucial.

As the number of dementia and Alzheimer's disease cases grow in the community, additional funds to maintain services for dementia and Alzheimer's cases are required. Research funds are also necessary along with accessibility to the medication on the market to attempt to reduce the progression of the disease among those already diagnosed with it.

Asthma education and care programs are still needed. Conditions within the community (i.e. massive construction projects, demolition, and renovation efforts) have created harsh breathing conditions for current asthma patients and are increasing the number of individuals that suffer from the affliction. Therefore, longer clinic hours need to be initiated so that patients do not have to go to the hospital for treatment.

Obesity continues to plague residents of our community. Children especially are suffering the horrendous effects of being overweight as they suffer stigmatization from their peers, low self-esteem, poor self-confidence and a slew of early-onset health concerns. Programs stressing proper nutrition should be provided for families and students should also have health and nutrition studies added to their educational curriculum to inform them of the dangers of poor health practices. Emphasis should be placed on education describing the dangers of obesity such as diabetes, high blood pressure, heart attack, stroke, asthma, and other illnesses. With education comes prevention, and our residents need to be made aware that they are at risk for many preventable diseases and illnesses.

There is a growing need for mental health services among children and adults alike. These services are essential to maintaining the well-being of our citizens regardless of age. Services geared toward assistance coping with mental stresses from a myriad of sources should be instituted. These services should include treatment and counseling for grief and bereavement issues, societal stress, sexual abuse recovery, depression, low-self esteem, anger problems, and other areas of concern.

HUMAN RESOURCES ADMINISTRATION

Due to a variety of reasons, many women across NYC are faced with new challenges to maintaining their home lives not only for themselves but their children as well. Many have been labeled "displaced homemakers." Displaced homemakers are women who have lost their primary source of income—due to divorce, separation, death, disability of a spouse, or a spouse who has been deployed in the military—and who must therefore obtain or upgrade their skills for transition into the paid labor market. It is imperative that funding be allocated for a displaced homemakers program in NYC to avoid the potential dilemmas these women may face, as well as easing the burden that would ultimately fall upon the City and State.

Furthermore, it is extremely important that we protect our families' welfare and wellbeing from destructive forces within the community, regardless of whether it comes from the home or local environment. Preventive, protective, and counseling services for families must be provided in order to

maintain the health and security of our youth and family structure. In view of the foregoing, the Board supports expanded funding for existing Domestic Violence Victim and Intervention Programs. These intervention services should come from different fronts, including houses of worship, fraternal orders, schools, and public agencies.

It should be noted that violence in the home affects homosexual couples and teenagers as well adult heterosexual couples. Funding should be provided for preventative services to educate women and men of *all ages* on the telltale signs of all forms of abuse—physical, emotional, sexual, and psychological—and how to exit a situation that could be potentially life threatening, not only for her- or him-self, but for any children in the home as well. This will provide pre-emptive services and prevent further destruction of familial ties and bonds.

Domestic abuse stemming from not only an individual's partner, but members of the extended family as well has become a prevalent issue in the City. We must keep in mind that our elderly population is at risk for abuse as well from younger family members and home health aides seeking to take advantage of their frail emotional and physical states. The elderly population—the most vulnerable and often forgotten—requires considerable attention to maintain their safety and well-being, thus preventing them from being subject to unnecessary hardship, pain, and mental aggravation in the form of fear.

Additional services are also needed for the homebound elderly to limit the burdens placed on kindhearted friends, significant others, spouses, and other relatives who are forced to accept complete responsibility for the care of their loved ones. Support services must be provided to these individuals who do an invaluable service to the community. These additional services will reduce the stress of having to care for semi-incapacitated individuals and can also reduce the risk of abuse by overworked and anxious relatives and friends encumbered with the financial and mental cost of care.

EDUCATION

Our children require a well-rounded education that includes not only the fundamentals of math, language arts and reading comprehension, but also science, social studies, art, dance, and music. Each area of instruction should be assimilated in the curriculum of New York City's schools as this would greatly enhance our students' active desire to participate in their learning and instruction. Furthermore, a well-rounded education will enhance our children's ability to excel in the future. Therefore, a broadened curriculum for foreign languages should be implemented in public schools to provide exposure for a myriad of cultures that will be encountered in the workforce.

Our children's educators should be able to relate to them and their experiences. It should be noted that teachers with the ability to relate to their students will have fewer obstacles in the way of reaching their pupils and commanding their attention in the classroom. In addition, teachers must be given the necessary tools to properly instruct students. More staff development, proper teaching tools such as classroom space, manipulative, instruction guides, a supportive administration, etc., should be considered to accomplish this goal.

Also, it is essential that additional assistance is provided to our teachers to allow them to focus on lesson preparation and delivery as well as classroom management and discipline. Also, our teachers need additional staff development days to better assist them not only with traditional lesson planning and classroom management, but also to assist them with using modern technology in their lesson planning so that our youth are able to incorporate that which they learn in their every day activities.

It must be remembered that education is an extension of the home and parents must be informed how

best to assist the education of their children by reinforcing what teachers do in a classroom setting. Therefore, programs geared toward increasing parental involvement, thus making them further involved in educational activities must be initiated for the benefit of our school-age children. Furthermore, as there are numerous immigrant children in the NYC public school system, programs need to be implemented that will assist these parents in learning the function of school agendas and protocol. Programs of these natures will assist in bridging the communication gap between parents and educators. Furthermore, it is a widespread belief that more parental involvement with education will curb the high school drop out rate. Programs geared toward fostering parental involvement should be implemented to accomplish this goal.

Gang violence is a growing concern in a District where a number of youth are forced to rely on alternative activities to keep them occupied as there is a shortage of adult supervision and structured activities for them to participate in. Because the majority of homes in District 8 have working parents, it is essential that alternative forms of supervision and guidance are provided to our youth to keep them from participating in illegal activities. In seeking acceptance from their peers, youth often do things they would normally shy away from if they had access to wholesome activities and the watchful eye of concerned adults. Intervention and early education is required to inform youth of the potential consequences of joining gangs, premature sexual activity, drug use—both recreational and hardcore, and other silly behavioral patterns that may make them a target for violence and retribution. Therefore, we urge an expansion of the present gang intervention programs within the NYC public school system so that outreach is provided to more youth than at the present time as well as additional school sanctioned recreational activities available for participation. Furthermore, parents need to be educated on the telltale signs of gang activity in their children, including but not limited to clothing, apparel, and behaviors.

It is imperative that sex education be continued and expanded in schools as the average age of sexual activity continues to lower. Recent surveys have discovered that two out of every five middle school age children have participated in some form of sexual contact that could potentially put them at risk for contracting HIV and other infectious diseases. Early education is the best prevention method and quite possibly the most cost effective, despite the criticism and outrage that efforts to provide such instruction in schools may encounter.

The City's maintenance of the condition of our students' schools and classroom environments is essential. Interior environments are not conducive to learning as children are often forced to assemble in crowded and cramped spaces with insufficient ventilation (especially in the warmer months), and also in spaces that have not been renovated in many years. Funding must be provided to upgrade the interior and exterior of our schools so that dilapidation will not preoccupy our students. Moreover, the fact that many students do not have their own workbooks and/or textbooks and are forced to share also hinders their education. Funds need to be provided to ensure that all students have their own workbooks to practice the skills they have learned in school.

We promote smaller class sizes for all grades as they are necessary to give each student an equal and ample amount of individual attention and one on one interaction with his/her instructor. Also, smaller class sizes would alleviate some of the strain and pressure on the instructor and allow her/him to conduct lessons more efficiently as well as evaluate and assess student learning and comprehension more effectively. We also recommend the continuance of the Universal Pre-K program as studies have proven that the earlier children receive educational stimulation, the less likely they will be to fall behind in their later school years.

YOUTH, FAMILY SERVICES, AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Services provided to youth are limited despite the high number of individuals under the age of 18 living in the District. With the exception of the over-crowded St. John's Recreation Center, there are few activities available for youth to participate in to keep them out of the path of urban risks. Structured athletic events should be organized to build discipline, responsibility, leadership qualities, social and group skills, and self-esteem. It is essential that either another recreational center be opened within the borders of District 8 to service our youth as well as adult residents, or that the St. John's Recreation Center be expanded to accommodate the growing demand. Also, additional funding for youth oriented programs operated by not-for profit organizations is needed as well.

Early intervention is the key to saving the future of our District's youth. It is well documented by research that inner-city children have a higher risk for crime, dropping out of school and other educational deficits, gang involvement, drug use, and incarceration. We urge funding for activities that target at risk youth. Services for young women are important as well, as this is the target age of pre-mature pregnancy, gang involvement, and crime.

As marijuana and other illegal drug usage among inner city minority youth continues to rise, our children and young adults must be made aware of the painful side effects of drug use to deter them from experimentation and abuse of these damaging substances. It is imperative that funding for substance abuse deterrent and treatment programs for youth ages 12 through 23 be provided to quell drug usage. Since gang activity has become a prevalent issue facing our community, diversion programs are needed to prevent the lure and luster of gang violence from recruiting too many of the District's youth.

We urge the Mayor and City Council to allocate funds for after-school programs that will reinforce what students are learning in school and provide supplemental tutorials for struggling students. Out of school time programs require additional funding to occupy our youth during those segments of the year when they do not have an educational facility to attend. Programs that will enhance our youth's technical and computer skills, make them aware of job and leisure opportunities outside of New York City and the United States, and that will train/prepare them for the workforce are also direly needed.

Organized field trips to business agencies and professional offices and classroom speakers from corporate and local government agencies would expose our young people to different careers and work environments. Adequate funding for these experiences should be provided. Our children should be encouraged to obtain their High School Diploma (HSD) rather than settling for a General Education Diploma (GED). Former students who lack either a HSD or a GED can look forward to a dim future that may lead to a life of crime, with very little hope for employment and financial security. For this reason, it is important that funding include GED courses for individuals 18 and older.

Specifically, the District lacks programs geared toward women's development in the areas of health, personal hygiene, substance abuse, partner/domestic violence, sex trading, esteem, and low educational attainment. Historically the focus has been on at risk young males, more attention is required for our young ladies. Since women are the primary nurturers for the future, it is imperative that they be given the skills needed to participate in this function fully and adequately. In addition, parenting programs for young mothers (as well as fathers) need to be implemented to instill family values in individuals that may not have been reared in a stable family home so that the cycle does not continue to propagate.

The Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP) has proven to be invaluable to our youth in terms of the job experience, training, and responsibility given to its participants. Jobs along with participation in the arts, music, dance, theater, and sport help foster higher self-esteem, positive self-motivation, and elevated

levels of self-confidence. It is our firm belief that our youth will excel as a result of their experience with the SYEP. Therefore, we recommend that funding be allocated for these types of activities in our District, as well as the maintenance of the expanded age interval of SYEP.

DEPARTMENT OF JUVENILE JUSTICE

The worrisome trend of young individuals imprisoned is accelerating. Subsequently, the after effects of youth incarceration are growing as well. Children are detached from the home, the family, and a stable nurturing environment, thereby eliminating the possibility that certain morals and values learned from this space will actually be obtained. In addition, petty offenders remanded to juvenile detention centers are learning the skills to become more hardened criminals. Therefore, alternatives to youth incarceration should be considered so that the population of at risk youth does not broaden.

One of the key components of the rise in youth incarceration is the participation in gang activity. Many wayward (and often very impressionable) youth often seek companionship and communal ties with gangs because of the sense of security and family that is falsely offered. The Dept. of Juvenile Justice, in conjunction with other city agencies pertaining to youth development, should devise programs geared toward increasing gang awareness and the dangers of gang involvement. As more and more youth are participating at an earlier stage than their teenage years, it is imperative that this information be provided along the same basic outline as actual involvement. Education in this field, along with knowledge of the consequences of gang involvement, will assuredly lead to fewer children ruining their chances for a successful future.

DEPARTMENT FOR THE AGING

As a growing population, the elderly require special services and care that should come automatically to a well-deserving and vocal class of citizens. We need to recognize and reward the efforts and hard work of our senior population by providing them the fundamental means of existing above the median poverty line. As proponents of elderly care and in recognition of the special needs of the elderly in District 8, we appeal to a course of action that will make this goal possible. More services focusing on improving the quality of life, residential opportunities, home-care and health-care need to be provided by City-operated and neighborhood based agencies. The home-care emphasis will help reduce costly institutional care and the burdens placed upon kin and will also provide additional freedom to relatively self-sufficient individuals. Services should include senior centers, easily accessible and reliable transportation, truly affordable housing, prescription drug coverage and assistance, and other social and recreational activities.

Studies should be done to determine if an increase in the maximum income levels to qualify for government programs is necessary as many seniors are not eligible for the program but are in dire need of assistance. Values such as out of pocket health-care costs, prescription medications, housing, transportation, and food should be taken into consideration when determining whether one is eligible to receive subsidies. These costs can range to significant levels and reduce the amount of monthly earnings that can be applied to standard living expenses. Subsequently, an increased maximum income level will greatly assist a number of District 8's residents as well as a large population of struggling seniors throughout the City.

The Home delivered meals program has proven to be a success. To make sure the program continues funds for car insurance and additional vehicles to deliver the meals are needed. Also, diabetic and Long Term Care Resources for seniors should be expanded as should Alzheimer's Prevention and Treatment programs.

PARKS & RECREATION

The need for safe and well-maintained parks and playgrounds is a high priority for District 8. A regular maintenance program with adequate manpower is essential. Currently, maintenance staff needs to be increased for all of our Parks and Playgrounds, malls along Eastern Parkway, and the St. John's Recreation Center. Additional Playground Associates, Park Enforcement Officers, and other personnel are required to keep children at play free from harassment from dangerous elements that lurk in unguarded areas. It has been proven that with personnel in our parks, they are cleaner and safer for those that utilize them.

Special consideration must be given to the playground equipment at Lincoln Terrace Park and Stroud Playground. Presently, outdated playground equipment and faulty groundwork and drainage systems mar Lincoln Terrace Park. In addition, the playground equipment at Stroud Playground and Galaxy Playground in Brower Park are also old and outdated, posing health hazards for the children that utilize them. The fencing around Woods Playground requires replacement, and a fence should be considered for Brower Park as well. Though heavily used, there is no comfort station in St. John's Park. Furthermore, our residents complain of the overall lack of cleanliness of our parks and playgrounds resulting from a lack of Park Enforcement Personnel (or PEP officers) to enforce no littering rules. Funding must be provided in order to rectify these problems and make our parks and playgrounds safe and enjoyable for those that utilize them.

With the numerous benefits of trees, we are appreciative of the Million Trees Initiative, which will increase the number of trees planted throughout the City. Unfortunately, there are problems with existing trees. A good portion of trees in the residential areas and parks of District 8 are in dire need of pruning and care. This is evident by the unsightly and gloomy look of many trees that have been neglected for the past few years. There are a vast number of entire blocks devoid of trees, and these blocks should be considered for wide scale planting. Residents that fear the damage that trees may eventually cause to their property and pipes beneath the surface should be fully educated on the various Parks Department programs designed to protect the homeowner such as free pruning services and root splicing, as well as being educated on the benefits of trees not only on their health, but also for their property values.

As funding has been provided to complete the renovation of the Eastern Parkway Malls we await the start of this project.

SANITATION

The cleanliness of the streets and sidewalks of the District is a matter of great concern to us. The Department must have sufficient personnel and equipment to keep the streets clean. As our District is one of the most populous in the City, it is mandatory that Motorized Litter Patrol and street cleaners be provided on a daily basis to assist with street cleaning. The supervisors of the local Sanitation garage also require additional vehicles to assist them with their duties in the District and we are in need of additional permanent Sanitation Enforcement personnel and vehicles for residential and commercial area routing.

Undercover Sanitation Police officers are required to conduct surveillance of known dumping grounds and apprehend those responsible for the illegal dumping. People tend to utilize vacant lots and commercial strips as a money saving device so that they do not have to go through legal and costly avenues to dispose of their waste products. With undercover officers, our streets and lots will not be subject to as much illegal dumping and other infractions as they currently are. In addition to vacant lots, vacant and open and unguarded buildings and construction sites are also the scene of illegal dumping. For instance, the building that used to house St. Mary's Hospital and the parking lot that was to be converted into private homes by the now bankrupt United Homes has blighted the community. The loading dock of the hospital is now a haven for illegal dumping and abandoned vehicles. The construction site for the private homes venture

of United Homes remains unfinished, the lot open and unguarded. It has become a site for mounds of garbage and debris. It is our firm belief that additional undercover officers will help to dispel and deter these types of detrimental activities.

The District office has received numerous complaints of dog feces strewn about the streets. It is imperative that pooper scooper laws be enforced and that signs alerting dog owners that it is their responsibility to clean up after their dogs are installed. As a result, we are asking that funding to re-instate the signage unit be provided so that we may have the signs at our disposal when they are requested.

In addition, funding for litter instruction in schools is direly needed. Our streets would remain cleaner longer and we would require fewer cleaners to maintain cleanliness if our children are taught at a young age (with constant reinforcement) the dangers of littering.

HOUSING

The need for permanent affordable housing in District 8 is one of our highest priorities. Our residents both low and middle income single individuals and families, seniors, and disabled alike require additional resources for housing.

Presently, many of our former manufacturing sites are being utilized for housing projects. These projects are creating market rate housing and contributing to gentrification by pricing out minority and non-upper income residents. Whereas we appreciate housing initiatives in our District, we would prefer to maintain some of our manufacturing sites for manufacturing purposes so that there can be a supply of jobs for residents. One of the goals of District 8 zoning study was to determine the feasibility of contextual zoning, as well as to ascertain the best possible uses of our manufacturing district.

Community Board #8 urges continued funding for capital improvement to city owned properties. We also support continuance and expansion of HPD's basic loan programs—home improvement, small homes private, participation loan, owner services, article 8-A, and senior citizen housing assistant programs. We also urge continued funding for the seal-up and demolition program as well as the third party transfer program.

DEPARTMENT OF CULTURAL AFFAIRS

We urge the City to increase its financial support for the renovation of our cultural institutions. The Brooklyn Children's Museum (BCM) is one of New York City's unique educational and cultural treasures. Since its inception in 1899, it has been recognized for educational excellence and innovation and has had strong local and national impact; attendance continues to grow. The BCM reopened on September 20, 2008, but has since been the victim of harsh budget cuts that is crippling the cultural center. In addition to funding required to complete necessary repairs and upgrades, funding is also needed to maintain staffing levels at a livable wage and hours of operation for the museum. Furthermore and more specifically, funding is needed for the following: construction of a parking facility to make it easier for visitors to access the facility via personal transportation; streetscape enhancement, which would beautify the area; a collections care climate control system to protect the artifacts and exhibits; an enhanced lighting and electrical system for safety and energy efficiency; replacement of the 30 year old boiler system with a new, energy efficient system capable of performing for a 100,000 square foot building; completion of the theater in the expansion wing; rooftop performance area to allow for year-round programming options; and upgrading the roof in the performance area for safety and protection of the facility infrastructure.

We also recommend continued funding for the construction of a new education and cultural center for

the Society for the Preservation of Weeksville as this will allow them to expand their services to children, families, and tourists.

Funding for the Brooklyn Public Library (Brower Park Branch) is also necessary as many students utilize the Library's resources for school projects, term papers, and supplementary education means. Additional hours of operation are necessary to allow students and other residents to utilize the library's resources. Funds should be allocated for land and building acquisition for the Brower Park Branch Library. The building is presently being leased by the city and it is essential that the City purchase the building to make the necessary amendments to the site to make it compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act and meet all accessibility guidelines.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Presently, there is a wide array of sewer and trench replacement work ongoing in the District. Unfortunately, there are still many streets in dire need of such repair. The lack of an adequate on-going water- and sewer-main inspection program has created and contributed to the acute sewer and water problems in District 8 that is beginning to affect our housing stock. Our residents have brought to our attention many locations where the sewer lines are too narrow to handle the output of water during heavy rainfalls, and this defect leads to the influx of water into many homes. Also, a number of streets are direly in need of reconstruction as a result of the horrendous number of sewer, trench, and water main defects. Subsequently, it is imperative that funding be increased for trench restoration, sewer maintenance, reconstruction, and expansion in the District. An influx of stimulus funds would help to accommodate these needs and vastly improve the aging infrastructure of not only District 8, but NYC as a whole.

TRANSPORTATION

Roadway maintenance is of great importance to our residents. Unfortunately, many of our streets require resurfacing or reconstruction due to deep and hazardous defects. We request that funds be allocated for arterial upkeep in District 8 and Citywide and urge additional funding for street reconstruction and resurfacing. Potholes and other defects should be handled promptly and properly, thus minimizing the damage to vehicles and the out of pocket costs for their vehicle owners.

Street lights are a major deterrent to crime in the District as they illuminate our streets and provide residents with visibility in the dark to avoid potential hazards as well as identify illegal activity. However, there are a number of malfunctioning street lights as well as burned out lights in the District. Residents in the areas where these problems exist are the victims of unnecessary offenses on the darkened streets and have become immersed in fear. Funding is necessary to maintain street light crews and speed up the repair process when a malfunctioning or burned out street light is reported to DOT.

Funding should be provided to improve or separate the lighting situation along the Eastern Parkway. As it is currently, the lights along the main road control the lights along the service road, and if one light on the main road goes out, multiple lights on the service road are affected and it is then engulfed in darkness. This creates dangerous conditions for pedestrians and heightens criminal activity. An extensive study should be done to rectify this situation.

Many residents complain of speeding vehicles through residential streets that pose a danger to children playing. Speed humps have proven to be an effective deterrent for drivers that like to speed, whether for fun, because they are in a rush, or because they do not want to sit at an intersection for what they feel is an excessively long light. Additional funding should be considered to enhance the speed hump investigation unit so that they can be installed at a faster rate.

There are numerous heavily traveled intersections in the District that do not allow ample time for drivers turning left to successfully and safely perform the maneuver. Two intersections of primary concern for the District are northbound on Washington Avenue at Atlantic Avenue and westbound on Eastern Parkway at Washington Avenue. To ensure the safety of pedestrians and other motorists, it is imperative that turn signals and turning bays be installed to eliminate traffic backups and unnecessary dangers to pedestrians.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Funding is important for the development of active and successful merchants associations in the District, primarily along the busier commercial corridors. Funding is needed to assist the associations in formalizing their structures for targeting larger commercial centers and enhancing economic development by providing expense monies to facilitate development into legal entities.

Funding should also be allocated for an in-depth study of the current state of retail service offerings in the District 8 area to identify business sectors that offer business opportunities or sectors that require improvement. Grants should be provided to local organizations such as the Washington Avenue Merchants Association, Vanderbilt Avenue Merchants Association, the North Crown Heights Nostrand Avenue Merchants Association, and the Crow Hill Merchant Association (Franklin Avenue) to respond to their appeals for grass-roots high tech and entrepreneurial training programs as well as technical assistance services. These funds would greatly benefit each association to maximize the positive impact on the community and the businesses they represent.

Our greatest recommendations are perhaps, that capital funds be directed toward business development on the commercial strips in the district and toward the development of strong relationship ties with national business chains to increase the economic input and output of residents while increasing our financial status in the economic realm. In addition, funding is required for the retention and expansion of business development programs for small businesses in District 8. Funding for the establishment of a retail incubator in the District should be provided, as this will aid in the development of small businesses, provide local employment, promote economic development, and assist minority contractors and vendors in the area.

Moreover, as the number of establishments that serve alcohol increase, it is imperative that the New York State Liquor Authority, NYPD, and Dept. of Consumer Affairs pool their efforts to aggressively examine each location prior to granting or renewing licenses. This effort will ensure that proprietors are in full compliance with both the 200-foot ruling and 500-foot hearing and that the establishment is appropriate.

Community Boards

Community Boards in general lack adequate operational funding. The meager budget provided for each of the fifty-nine boards citywide does not keep up with inflation and any increased operating costs. We urge the Mayor and the City Council to consider a much needed increase for operating costs and staff maintenance for all Community Boards.

Community Board 8 is the first advocate for community residents facing issues with other city agencies. It is our charter mandated duty to interface with community residents and city municipalities to ensure service delivery in a timely and proper fashion. 311 is not an adequate substitution for the interaction of community boards and community residents. In fact, the 311 system has made it increasingly difficult for community boards to intervene to resolve problems and monitor agency performance as intended by the NYC Charter. Residents increasingly complain about the difficulty of obtaining useful and accurate

information from the 311 system concerning resolution of complaints submitted via the central hotline. The net result of the 311 hotline has been stagnation in service delivery and complaint resolution.

Community Board No. 8 extends a special thanks to the New York City Council and the Borough President's Office for the support shown during the budget crisis in which crippling budget cuts were proposed. Unfortunately, despite the fact that the funds have been restored to our operating budget for Fiscal Year 2011 and forward, we are still not out of the woods yet. Community Boards possess the only budget that has not seen an increase in the past two decades despite increases in operation costs. We operate on a miniscule budget yet perform a valuable service to the community and city. We hope the City Council and Borough President's office will continue to battle with us to keep the voice of local government alive in every community as the alternative is an unthinkable voiceless community.

CONCLUSION

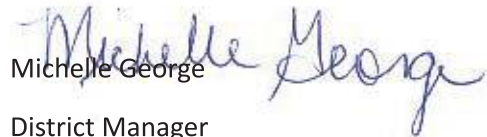
Community Board No. 8 is committed to maintaining and enhancing the quality of life for the residents of our community. We are asking that the Mayor and our elected officials reconsider proposals to cut operating budgets of agencies that provide vital services to our residents. Due diligence is required to bring the needs and requests in this Statement to fruition.

Sincerely,



Nizjoni Granville

Chairperson



Michelle George

District Manager