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THE CITY OF NEW YORK
BOROUGH OF BROOKLYN
COMMUNITY BOARD # 7

Statement of Needs

Community Board 7/Brooklyn submits the following “Statement of Needs” in compliance with the procedures for the establishment of a budget for the City of New York. The contents of this statement result from local citizen complaints and testimony given at prior year budget hearings, information from CB7 Committee Chairpersons as well as from various forms of analyses of City agency service delivery provided by the District Manager.

Community District 7, located in the western section of Brooklyn, is a mixed residential, industrial and commercial area. The home of an ethnically and economically integrated population, the District is comprised of two communities: Sunset Park and Windsor Terrace. Recently, other community identities have gained popularity and become more established, including Greenwood Heights, South Park Slope and East Windsor Terrace.

Sunset Park is consists of a strong residential community, two viable commercial strips, 5th and 8th Avenues, as well as a large industrial area. It is bifurcated by the Gowanus Expressway and is bordered to the south by the Long Island Rail Road cut. The 23-acre facility, Sunset Park, has an Olympic-sized swimming pool, a recreation area and a large open space with spectacular views of the harbor.

Windsor Terrace and the northern part of our community consist of a smaller residential community than Sunset Park, with three commercial strips on 5th and 7th Avenues and Prospect Park West. Windsor Terrace is surrounded by the natural boundaries of Prospect Park and Green-Wood Cemetery, which has the highest elevation in Brooklyn. The Gothic Brownstone “gatehouse” at the cemetery’s entrance is a New York City landmark and the most widely known symbol of the community.

Traditionally, the District has been home to generations of immigrants, Irish and Italian and Scandinavian in the early 20th century and before. Mid-century saw an influx from Puerto Rico, then the Dominican Republic and from central and South American. The 1980s saw the beginnings of a great increase in our residents from China and the 90s began a large influx from Mexico and the Middle East. Our community is extremely diverse and yet our populations live mostly in peace, making for a family-friendly neighborhood.

For years our community was the back end of political districts for elected officials who lived outside of our borders and our community suffered with placement of negative-impact facilities, such as power plants, sanitation facilities and a federal prison. Beginning in the early 1990s that began to change as local leadership began to come from our community and we were able to defeat a plan for a municipal sludge facility proposed for the community.

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Community Boards have had to endure reduced budgets for more than a decade. Despite additional costs, such as increased postal rates, new computers, websites and occasional unfunded, but approved, raises, we have had to self-fund all of these changes and reduce our staff. Our OTPS is now critically low, endangering our ability to buy even basic supplies and communicate adequately with the public. Community Boards should receive a significant increase in their budgets to accommodate the many changes they have endured in the past decade without resources from the City.

The culmination of the Community Board's Statement of Needs, and the subsequent budget prioritization, will reflect our vision of an improved quality-of-life for our residents, merchants, elderly and our children.

Public Safety

Our beat officers serve many important functions in our community. Not only do they protect the public, but they also promote positive police/community relations and the visible presence gives a positive perception of a safe environment where people might want to open a business or raise their families. Economic development and a growing, healthy community cannot take hold without the visible presence and responsiveness of our officers.

Recent sex crimes, especially in the northern section of our District, have brought to light a communication problem between our precinct and our residents. Many in the community felt they were not informed about the pattern of crimes and did not receive information about the attacker(s). A number of residents believe the police were slow to respond and that the response was inadequate. At a CB7 Public Safety Committee, the Deputy Inspector explained what had occurred and gave information on avoiding attacks. Many residents were not mollified. We believe our precinct needs to do both, inform the community about a possible pattern and request assistance to find suspects as well as give advice for avoiding situations. Perhaps a newsletter or regular email as other precincts' do can serve this purpose.

The pattern of sex crimes in the community has become alarming. While we understand these crimes are on the rise city-wide, that is no comfort to a community that feels terrorized by assailants. The northern section of our community has seen an increase in nightlife as well as population while at the same time the number of officers in our precinct has gone down. Residents would like to see an increase in patrols and we believe that only way to do that without harming the rest of the community is by increasing the number of patrol officers at our precinct.

It should be noted that while many populations of our community want to see more vigorous policing, a recent poll of young people in our district showed a concern about overzealous policing and stop and frisk policies.

Drug dealing and prostitution continue to be a concern in Sunset Park. Aggressive policing and arrests have forced much of these activities indoors, making enforcement more difficult. Our Board appreciates the strong efforts made by the NYPD to arrest the perpetrators, but more needs to be done, especially with the proliferation of adult entertainment establishments along 3rd Avenue.

Gang and gang-related crime and violence continue to be a concern. Often gangs are associated with a certain ethnic group or national origin, sometimes making investigation and infiltration difficult. The City must provide additional resources for gang enforcement in our community. However, other

strategies must be implemented to keep youth away from gangs. Additional age-appropriate facilities must be brought to our community, including youth programs and recreation areas.

CB7 is pleased that the State Liquor Authority has been pursuing more cases recently, but we are still unhappy with the number of problem businesses that continue to get liquor licenses and renewals despite community and local opposition. The people in the community are the best judges as to whether or not a business is a nuisance and more accommodations must be made with regard to the community's wishes.

Tighter crossing guard monitoring and additional crossing guard positions are a must in our community. Two new schools have been opened on 4th Avenue the past two years, but we have not seen an increase in the number of crossing guards allocated to us. That means crossing guards had to be taken from other schools, most of which are also located on 4th Avenue, to cover the new schools. Clearly, this thinly spread coverage is a danger to our children. Vigorous enforcement of traffic laws around our schools must also be undertaken.

Speeding on residential streets and trucks wandering off of designated truck routes have become two of our most prevalent constituent complaints. Unfortunately, we recently learned that our precinct has issued fewer moving violations than any other precinct in the past year. This must be prioritized as we have had too many residents killed in the past few years by drunk drivers, trucks and speeding vehicles. This cannot be tolerated and the precinct must make major improvements in traffic enforcement. A car can kill just as many people as a gun. Drivers understand that the chance of being caught is minimal, increasing a perception of poor enforcement activities and dangerous roads. Private buses, especially ones that travel to Atlantic City, have also been growing in number in our community and we often receive complaints of them traveling off designated routes as well.

Transportation

After eight years of study and millions of dollars, DOT finally announced the results of its Brooklyn Truck Route study three years ago. The only strategy recommended for our community was to add positive signage to tell people they are on truck routes. This would be absolutely laughable if it didn't seem like such a colossal waste of money. The plan would do nothing to combat off route truckers who are knowingly taking a different route. Coupled with the NYPD's lack of truck enforcement in our community, this proves that there isn't an enforcement agency that has any interest with the problem truck traffic in our community. Even though we have a large industrial area that generates lots of truck trips to and from our community, even though we have no proper highway entrances, even though new businesses are bringing new trucks to our waterfront every day, even though we accommodate city services, such as sanitation which trucks thousands of tons of garbage in and out of our community every day, we cannot seem to get any agency interested in improving truck movement and public safety. This is a sad commentary about the City's priorities. Sadder still, the City hasn't even bothered to put up the proposed positive signage. We believe this study was a tremendous waste of money.

20th Street is a truck route in our community that suffers because of the lack of highway entrances. The narrow, two-way street is the legal truck corridor for vehicles to travel to the Prospect Expressway entrance on 7th Avenue. This section of 20th Street is now mostly residential and the subsurface of the street is still cobblestones, which cannot handle the weight of modern trucks. We have great concerns about the street's integrity as well as the effects of the vibrations on 20th Street. Unfortunately, DOT's study and plans for enhanced enforcement and signage to keep trucks on-route will only exacerbate 20th

Street's problems, not resolve them. Last year we asked DOT to examine turning 20th Street into a one-way street because of its narrowness and to look for another option for a local truck route. Initially we were told that it couldn't be done, but when we asked for the data, it became clear that no study ever took place. A study was promised but that promise is the only evidence we have that DOT is actually looking at this.

City and State DOT also play an important role with regard to public safety. City DOT recently announced that both 3rd and 4th Avenues, which have a very high accident rate, throughout our community are priority corridors for new pedestrian countdown clocks at every intersection. Our board applauds this decision and hopes for implementation in the immediate future. We would like to see the same prioritization by State DOT in improving the lighting beneath the Gowanus Expressway for drivers and pedestrians alike. Additionally, we would like City DOT to prioritize safety improvements along the 4th Avenue medians by eliminating the jay walking accommodation step, putting in barriers to discourage jaywalking ala Queens Boulevard and to add heavy metal bollards on the medians, as is done in other communities, at every intersection to prevent vehicles, especially trucks, from mounting the median where pedestrians wait.

Many of our schools are adjacent to major thoroughfares, including truck routes. Several high profile tragedies over the past few years in our community and surrounding areas opened our eyes to the necessity of safe corridors of travel for our children. We must prioritize the safety of children crossing the street over the speed of vehicles traveling on this corridor. Particularly troubling is the safety situation and PS503/PS506, located along three truck routes, 3rd and 4th Avenues and 60th Street, and is adjacent to an exit from the Gowanus Expressway. Several years ago DOT undertook the "Safe Routes to School" study, but its implementation on 4th Avenue and 60th Street seems laughable, if it weren't so scary. While neck downs were implemented on 59th Street, they were not added on 60th Street so as not to impede turning trucks. No accommodations were made for kids who must wait on the narrow median, between speeding lanes of cars. Jay walking was encouraged by widening the step which accommodates crossing in the middle of the street to the median. A parking lane was removed immediately adjacent to the school sidewalk, allowing for no buffer on 60th Street and lanes on 60th were narrowed so that trucks could only turn if they go on the sidewalk or into opposing traffic lanes. Finally, and most incredulously, while there are metal bollards protecting fire hydrants and street lights on the same block, DOT refuses to add bollards to protect children. We believe Safe Routes to School was a terrible waste of resources and actually decreased safety. This intersection must be revisited by DOT.

After years of waiting (and another year of construction behind schedule) the City finally finished the second phase of 5th Avenue reconstruction last year, between 24th and 34th Streets. This long awaited project was absolutely necessary for a street in terrible shape and finally allows for an efficient, safe and smooth roadway. The next phase, encompassing 34th through 64th Streets, through the business corridor, is currently scheduled to begin in FY14. We have no confidence that the project will begin on time as it has been delayed many times since it was originally supposed to begin in 1988. When the project finally begins, the department must take the needs and concerns of the businesses along our major commercial corridor into account when developing the construction plan. Our Board is concerned about the potential harmful effects on businesses that could come during the construction period. Special attention must be paid to other major roadway projects, including the Gowanus Expressway, to ensure that the construction periods do not overlap and thereby create additional burdens on our community and infrastructure. Our Board also insists that this corridor of 5th Avenue must be repaved immediately as it is in terrible shape and has not been paved in 20 years. DOT has a

policy that they will not repave a street if it is scheduled to be reconstructed within five years. Unfortunately, due to project delays, the avenue has been within five years of reconstruction since at least 1983, even though this work never takes place.

2nd Avenue is another corridor calling out for attention, particularly around and leading to Lutheran Medical Center in the 50s and near Industry City in the 30s.

Community Board 7 is wary of DOT's policy to add bike lanes to any street they feel like without community input. We demand that local communities be involved in such decision-making as we have greater knowledge of local conditions and patterns.

Sanitation

Our Community Board has tried to reduce the number of street sweeping days in much of our community since at least 1978. In the past ten years our request has been turned down numerous times. Although we felt we had a strong case, there were no criteria for making this change. It was simply at DSNY's discretion. So while neighboring communities with similar cleanliness records were able to reduce their days, our request was always denied.

This year, our Councilmembers resolved this problem by creating legislation establishing criteria. Not surprisingly, we met the criteria and will be the first community to reduce its number of street sweeping days under the new law. Councilmembers Gonzalez and Lander must be applauded for their response to this community need, which allowed us to achieve a longtime goal. We are now awaiting DSNY's plan to revamp the sweeping routes, which will be put before the Board before they are implemented.

It is important to note that this change will not result in a reduced budget for our local sanitation department, but a reallocation of our resources to better meet the cleaning needs of the district. Our Board understands that we can revert to the old regulations if our streets become dirty again and we take that as a challenge to work with DSNY, our elected officials and the local community to make sure that we keep our streets clean. It was gratifying to hear the Sanitation Commissioner acknowledge that reduced street sweeping days can mean less congested streets and less air pollution, an argument we've made for years.

While we were pleased with this change, DSNY threatened a change in the City's Solid Waste Management Plan during budget negotiations which would have meant delaying some new sanitation facilities in other parts of the City while moving full steam ahead on Hamilton Avenue. This would have meant even more garbage for our community as the City would have been forced to continue to send residential garbage to private facilities, such as IESI, while bringing the MTS back online. While this did not come to be, we do not appreciate being used as a pawn by DSNY during negotiations. Our community deserves better from DSNY. We endure enough from this agency.

Community Board 7 is home to numerous sanitation facilities that serve a wider area than our District. We are home to the Hamilton Avenue Marine Transfer Station, which is currently being rebuilt, the IESI commercial waste station, BK-7 and BK-10 garages and the SIMS recycling facility, also under construction, which will take all of the City's glass and metal recycling. Clearly, we will continue to provide more than our fair share of sanitation infrastructure for the City and, given this burden, DSNY should be particularly sensitive to our community's needs.

Many times in the past, CB7 has called upon DSNY to move the BK-10 garage to its home community, only to be denied. We believe that we already host enough sanitation facilities and it is insulting that we also have to host our neighbor's garage without any compensation or consideration for our community. This flies in the face of fair share.

Our office has received numerous complaints about private municipal waste haulers, sometimes filled with garbage, parking for hours on 1st and 3rd Avenues, McDonald Avenue and 24th, 39th and 43rd Streets. DSNY must crack down on this illegal behavior with a zero tolerance policy. This destroys the quality-of-life in a community. We should not have to endure storing tons of putrid garbage in our residential community for hours and DSNY must punish this illegal behavior with the harshest possible penalties.

Our main commercial thoroughfare, 5th Avenue, has an active Business Improvement District that provides for supplemental sanitation services, including street sweeping, graffiti-removal and additional baskets, but the avenue has remained dirty even though the department has increased its summons activities. Much of the problem can be attributed to the many vendors who operate on the avenue, legally and illegally. On weekends the sidewalk can be virtually impassable with the large volume of shoppers and vendors. Our Board wants a stronger, coordinated effort between City agencies to rid 5th Avenue of illegal vendors, or to compel them to legalize their businesses and follow applicable laws. We have also received illegal vendor complaints on 6th and 8th Avenues as well as from the northern section of 5th Avenue.

DSNY must make an effort to shore up the salt shed on the 52nd Street pier in our community. The shed is open and has many obvious holes in the roof and building. We are concerned that the salt can easily find its way into the local water. Immediately adjacent to this facility is the new Bush Terminal Piers Park, which contains important and delicate tidal ponds. It would be tragic if the lack of maintenance on the salt shed was responsible for destroying this fragile, recovering eco-system.

Parks and Recreation

All too often in times of fiscal restraint, the Department of Parks and Recreation is the first agency to realize drastic cuts. It is the belief of some that if recreational monies were drastically increased, there would be no need for increases in the Police and Corrections Departments. It is with this in mind that Community Board 7 requests increases in funding for recreation programs, especially at the Sunset Park Recreation Center.

Parks are oases within the concrete City where people of all generations, socio-economic status and ethnic and national backgrounds can gather, relax, play or simply enjoy a more pastoral setting within the City. They are for mental rejuvenation, physical fitness and stress relief. However, during difficult economic times our parks see an increase in use because of limited personal recreation funds, but often experience a decrease in programming and upkeep. Together these facts spell trouble for our parks as overused equipment falls into disrepair or natural settings are overtaxed. Unfortunately for local parks, the City's main parks seem to get all the attention while our facilities become eyesores. Facility upgrades are left to our Councilmembers' discretion and ability to negotiate and while Councilwoman Gonzalez especially has done a great job bring these funds to the community, we believe it is unfair to her to have to concentrate funds in parks that should be funded directly by the agency.

Community Board 7 has a desperate need for additional park space and recreation programs. Our community has only 0.45 acres of parkland per thousand residents, well below the City's standard of 1.5

acres. We insist that our limited parks are maintained regularly and their space used for maximum efficiency due to our critical need. Additionally, although the Department of City Planning lists more than 25% of our District as green space/parkland, more than 95% of that total is privately owned Green-Wood Cemetery, which provides no recreation space. This categorization by DCP seems laughable and insulting.

Over the past few years several community groups have been formed to plant gardens and to clean and invigorate our parks throughout the community. This is most obvious in Sunset Park and at Butterfly Garden and a few community gardens. Our Board applauds these volunteer efforts and we ask the Department of Parks and Recreation to support these organizations as much as possible. Volunteers for the South Slope Dog Run did a remarkable job organizing, with more than 200 active members, and lobbying to create a dog run along the Prospect Expressway. It was an impressive effort in creating a community facility. We note, though, that the space used for the dog run was unused parkland. It is difficult to approve of other proposed dog runs, such as one proposed for Sunset Park, because of the relative lack of local park space. While we would like to accommodate dog owners and see the merit in dog runs, we do not want to take precious space away from our parks' human users.

In the recent past, the department allowed the roof at the Sunset Park Recreation Center to deteriorate to the point where it needed to be replaced. Maintenance could have saved the roof and saved the City money, but without an appropriate requirements contract, a million-dollar reconstruction was necessary. Community Board 7 requests that maintenance requirement contracts be put in place and fully funded to prevent future waste of our precious few capital dollars. Maintenance is especially vital because of the constant reduction of parks capital and expense funding.

CB7 is also pleased that, after years of discussion, construction has been completed on the Park Slope Armory which is another recreation center that serves our community, although it is located across the street from our District, and will also provide opportunities for local schools to use their facilities as well.

Sunset Park High School was built next to John D'Emic Park on 3rd Avenue, which we note has a play area for young children. We do not believe this is appropriate in its current facility considering the ages of the young people attending school right next door. We urge DOPR to work with the Department of Education to re-imagine and rehabilitate this park to serve the needs of the older children, perhaps with facilities that can enhance the physical education programs at the school. Facilities for younger children should be maintained, but access should be restricted by fencing it off.

Several other parks in our community are in great need of rehabilitation as well, including Martin Luther Playground, Rainbow Playground and Sherman Street Playground. We are, however, very grateful that Councilwoman Gonzalez has supplied funds for rehabilitation at Slope Park, Sgt. John Allen Payne Park and several projects at Sunset Park, including a new ball field, spray shower and a rehabilitated children's playground. We share the Councilwoman's vision that this park should be the jewel in the crown of Brooklyn.

Environmental Protection

The sewers, watermains and catch basins in this community are among the oldest in Brooklyn. There are a number of sewer collapses and undermined roadways reported to the Board each year. Several street reconstruction projects have been on our roster of Capital Budget requests for more than twenty years. The heavy volume of traffic, particularly on 3rd, 4th, 5th and 8th Avenues, major thoroughfares and

truck routes, causes severe wear and erosion on these streets and off-route trucks put an additional heavy burden on our side streets, which were not meant to accommodate such heavy vehicles.

Our old streets and infrastructure are crumbling and additional contracts and resources must be made available for trenching activities. While the City occasionally paves streets, we are fearful that the underlying causes of the street degradation are not being addressed and repaving merely covers over the problems. We believe that DOT and DEP must address these concerns much sooner and more comprehensively, otherwise it may simply be a waste of funds as streets keep sinking despite new asphalt. Most egregiously, 45th Street between 4th and 5th Avenues has needed a trenching contract since the early 1980s but continues to be put off until DEP signs a trenching contract appropriate for streets adjacent to subway stations.

The topography of our community is such that all waste water, above and below ground, runs downhill from 6th Avenue to the waterfront, putting an abnormal strain on existing sewers and roadbeds, as well as clogging catch basins along this route with street debris.

During heavy rain events, much of the water in these pipes will go into the harbor through combined sewer overflows, rather than to the Owl's Head Sewage Treatment Plant. One of these CSOs is located within the boundary of the future Bush Terminal Piers Park. Our Board believes this CSO must be relocated instead of being allowed to continue to dump untreated sewage and runoff within a public recreation and environmentally-sensitive area.

Our Board wants DEP to intensify their catch basin cleaning program in our community, particularly along 3rd and 4th Avenues. These high volume avenues collect an inordinate amount of garbage that clogs the catch basins, which is responsible for flooding the roadways. Residents adjacent to 3rd Avenue are particularly concerned about the catch basins and downspouts from the Gowanus Expressway in the 50s and 60s.

We also receive numerous complaints about amplified noise originating from both businesses and private residences. Unfortunately, both the NYPD and DEP are responsible for investigating noise complaints and often they do not have the manpower, equipment or training to handle these concerns. This is a growing problem, particularly during the summer months. DEP and the NYPD must do more to ensure that every precinct has noise meters and has numerous officers, especially during the night shift, who are trained to use them. These agencies must be vigilant in enforcing the law with regard to this increasing quality-of-life concern. Our office received complaints that the NYPD and DEP are unresponsive to these complaints and sometimes use the other agency as an excuse.

DEP must also monitor and keep the community informed about the emissions spewing into our air and the cumulative impact from the Gowanus Expressway, our garbage facilities, power plants and many other negative-impact facilities. Our community straddles a major asthma and lead poisoning corridor and the City must do more locally to combat these diseases, educate the public and reduce and eliminate the major sources. Similar worries have also been expressed by residents about electro-magnetic fields from our power plants and cell phone towers. Our Board requests that the department monitor and study these impacts, as well.

While we are happy that the City takes climate change and adaption very seriously, and EDC does make accommodations within their property contracts along our waterfront, we are concerned that such efforts are not necessarily comprehensive and seem to be done in a piecemeal fashion that only seems

to take into account properties that are up for sale or lease. We believe a single agency should develop a comprehensive climate change/adaption/storm surge plan for our waterfront and other communities and think DEP would be an appropriate agency to work with communities and develop such a plan. Many of our waterfront facilities are sensitive sites containing power plants and transformers, garbage and sewer facilities, fuel and chemical storage and biological agents.

Education

We are quite pleased that the Department of Education has found a new temporary home for Brooklyn Prospect Charter School instead of keeping the school housed at Sunset Park High School. This fulfills the promise made when the school opened that the charter school would move after two years. However, earlier this year DOE approved the charter school remaining at the high school for at least another year because their permanent site has not yet been constructed. This would have lead to a building bulging at 109% of student capacity in just its third year and was unfair to both schools. Now that the charter school is moving, still within the District, both schools can grow and thrive.

This experience had us questioning DOE's commitment to the school but we personally witnessed the stress this caused DOE staff as they desperately worked to find a solution, which finally came seven weeks before the start of the school year. Now that DOE has fulfilled this commitment to our community, we will push to ensure that they fulfill their other commitments of video surveillance in 100% of the stairways and constructing a black box theater.

The Education Department and School Construction Authority must work with us to improve our school infrastructure and to find sites for new state-of-the-art schools in our community. Obviously, DOE recognizes this need and, since opening Sunset Park High School in 2009, opened PS 971 on 63rd street in 2010 and is working to acquire a site on Caton Avenue suggested by our Board's Site Selection Committee for a new K through 8 school. DOE has also budgeted for another school in the Sunset Park area and our committee has sent both agencies a list of twenty-six locations to examine. We also note that Sunset Park High School will be at capacity in two years and there are many more high school age students in our community than there are seats at the high school.

With the ever-growing and diverse immigrant populations within our community, there is an immediate need for augmented bilingual/ESL education for our Latino, Asian, Middles Eastern and Eastern European populations. Additionally, English proficiency programs, perhaps through our schools using the very students who are mastering language skills, for older residents would serve a great need for our community.

With more and more emphasis being placed on computer literacy and language skills in the job market, it is imperative that funding for specialized education programs be augmented. Work skills and experience programs, such as SYEP and internships, must be expanded to prepare our students for the job market. We are very pleased that our high school's curriculum embraces such learning outside the classroom.

Health and Mental Health

The Gowanus Expressway and other factors, including poverty, contribute to a high rate of asthma in the Sunset Park community. Air quality monitoring and particulate matter standards must be implemented to keep the community informed about dangers and to fight the continued placement of undesirable

and negative-impact facilities in the community. Additional resources must be made available to educate the public and help combat asthma and lead poisoning. The multicultural/multi-lingual nature of this District must be taken into account as well.

The Board requests that the department undertake a study of the air quality in the community and makes the major sources of our pollution public, as well as the amount and kinds of emissions that each major source emits over the course of a year.

Our Board would like to see the same effort put forth in identifying and mitigating our local sources of air pollution as the department put forth to combat West Nile Virus. The same holds true for anti-asthma programs. Many more in our community suffer from and die from respiratory illness than WNV.

Early last year we were appalled that the State cut a very important outpatient substance abuse program in our community. Such programs are an absolute necessity in high stress communities, such as ours. However, a few months later another organization received a contract from the State to provide the same services just a few blocks away. Unfortunately, programs for the vulnerable are extremely vulnerable themselves in difficult economic times, perhaps even exacerbating a cycle.

Access to medical services has become easier in our community in recent years. We note that Lutheran Medical Center has opened a new full service clinic on 7th Avenue in the past few months and have been operating a school-based health clinic at Sunset Park High School since the school opened.

An issue that has been raised recently in several forums has been access to healthier foods. While our community now has at least three farmers markets over the summer, these are not necessarily accessible to all residents. Other times of the year, shopping opportunities for healthier foods are limited in our community, which does seem to have a variety of fast food options. We understand that there is an effort to start a food co-op in Sunset Park and Bay Ridge, but this will not solve the problem for all. We believe efforts should be made to encourage more and healthier food markets, such as fruit and vegetable stores, within our community. Additionally, the Health Department should do more to help educate residents, particularly parents, about nutrition.

Social/Human Services

We have been very impressed with the work being done by Promise Neighborhood, a working coalition started by Lutheran Family Health Centers to create a multi-organization continuum of services from the cradle to career, using the organizations that already exist in our community and to develop programs to fill in the gaps in the continuum. PN has already identified Early Childhood Services and GED programs as needs in the community that are not being met at the rate necessary for our large community and is planning accordingly.

Promise Neighborhood has come about because of the eponymous federal grant that allows communities to plan for and seek funds for community improvement. PN is currently working with local parents and students and dozens of local and regional organizations to develop such a plan and is seeking millions of dollars in implementation funds from the federal government in the second round of grants. Their efforts have been unprecedented in many ways, including holding meetings in four languages, trying to encompass the entire community.

Our senior center programs are also vital to our community as is our senior housing. Despite numerous programs and locations, they do not meet the great need in this community. We were very concerned that we were going to lose one important program, United Senior Citizens of Sunset Park because of a dispute with their landlord, who did not want to replace an elevator after a senior died of a heart attack climbing stairs. Without the elevator or a viable place to move, USC may have had to close. However, DFTA and the Administration did a remarkable job of working with the leadership of the center and, thankfully, the program was saved and the elevator replaced. USC is a very active and community-oriented center, even starting the neighborhood's first Community Emergency Response Team, and would have been a terrible loss for the neighborhood.

Sunset Park Head Start is another vital program serving almost four hundred local families that we could have lost this year. After forty years at St. Michael's, they were informed that their lease would not be renewed. Fortunately, the program found a new home at Our Lady of Perpetual Help, but it is no longer located in the center of our community, making for longer commutes for some.

An increase in voucher slots for day care services continues to be a major priority for our District. Working parents in this community need to be served immediately with regard to their day care needs and this community board will continue to cooperate with ACS to locate suitable sites for additional facilities, but more programmatic funds must be found, as day care slots and programs have been reduced city-wide over the past few years.

Housing and Buildings

Our Board is pleased that DOB is working with the FDNY to visit 200 hundred sites as part of a pilot program to ensure greater compliance with the building and fire safety codes for properties with suspected illegal construction and divisions. These sites were chosen by the amount of complaints received and because the agency was not allowed on site by a property owner to inspect. While this seems to be a case of the squeaky wheel getting the grease, as it is the number of complaints generated that is the compelling factor, not actual need, we nonetheless applaud this pilot program and hope it succeeds and is expanded. We are often frustrated along with our constituents to learn that, despite complaints, cases are closed because an inspector was not able to gain access to a property. This policy unfortunately accommodates bad actors, those who do illegal work, by allowing them to bypass inspection simply by saying no. Hopefully, this pilot program will eventually lead to the elimination of this problem.

Illegal subdivision is a big problem in our community as many apartments and housing have been illegally converted into multiple dwellings without proper permits and safeguards. A vigorous inspection regime must be implemented in our community otherwise more tragedies will occur, when emergency service personnel are unaware of haphazard construction and illegal walls. At the same time, we must recognize that it isn't the tenant, who is often poor, who is at fault, but the property owner. Unfortunately, it is the tenant that ends up homeless while the property owner receives a fine, should DOB actually make this finding. Reasonable accommodations must be made for the tenants in these situations, perhaps using the money paid to the City by the property owner. To not help the tenant with housing would be to victimize them a second time.

Additionally, it is also very frustrating to learn that a property owner who did not allow for an inspection of his property has been granted another building permit for the same property. We would suggest legislation that would prevent issuance of building permits for any property where a buildings inspector

has not been granted access in the past until an inspector is allowed onsite to inspect. The issuance of such permits despite ongoing inspection problems is one reason why people get very frustrated with DOB and stop making complaints about properties, as it appears to some that DOB is more interested in building than safety. This is why the complaint generated 200 building pilot program does not necessarily reach the most egregious properties, although we cannot think of a better way to decide on pilot properties.

DOB must closely monitor unfinished construction sites, such as 23 Caton Place, which lay fallow for years due to foreclosure, poor economy or construction problems. Such sites are an eyesore at best, a public safety problem at worst and a drag on local property values. These sites must be kept sealed and clean and safe and all actions must be taken to ensure that when construction starts again that it is done quickly and safely with minimal neighborhood disruptions. These sites are a blemish in the community for years and neighbors should not have to suffer once again because they are finally being constructed.

Property values have more than doubled in our community in the past decade and housing prices have fallen at a much lower rate than most of the city in the recent housing downturn, according to a recent NYU Furman Center study. Together with having the second oldest housing stock in the city and a recently rezoned 4th Avenue, we believe that sections of our community may be ripe for development once capital is available again. We urge DOB to be careful and deliberate in auditing and inspecting plans and properties should another building boom occur in our community. We do not want to have to monitor all of our construction sites again during the boom because of a lack of inspectors. We are pleased, however, that some self-certifying architects have lost privileges due to skirting the law.

We are also aware of a large number of tax liens in our community that are about to be sold to private agencies for collection. While we recognize the importance of realizing all of the City's tax money, we are concerned that for poorer communities such as ours, this could lead to widespread displacement. Accommodations should be made for senior citizens and the most vulnerable, at least.

The pace of the demolition and seal-up programs must be maintained, both in the number of attended buildings and the turn-around time for completion, if we are to avoid development of decay.

Youth

The population of the District has a large percentage of young people and programs for youth are greatly needed. Since our District has a minimum of public recreation space our children must rely on afterschool and other community-based programs for arts, entertainment, sports and academic help. Many of our residents fall beneath the poverty line and parents often have to work more than one job to support their families. These programs are vitally important to the life, learning and social skills of our youngest residents. The City must do more to support our children and our community-based organizations by providing additional funds.

It is imperative that we seriously consider the need for afterschool and vacation care for children whose parents work. Additional funds must be available to support organizations that provide these services and the City must find a way to create more day care slots for the local community and local day care facilities. This could have an added benefit of creating jobs.

Our local SYEP program is run through a program located at our high school and the school has an aggressive internship program for upperclassmen, but these options are not enough for a community

with such a large youth population. The approximately 1600 SYEP slots are the same amount we had when the economy was good and employers were hiring young people. However, with the poor economy and increased competition from older workers for precious few jobs, youth unemployment is high. These programs provide some of the few opportunities our young people have to gain work experience. They probably are even more critical under current circumstances.

It is unfortunate that we had an increase in homicides in our community last year, but that is directly related to gangs. CB7 held two gang awareness forums last year for youth and parents to make people aware of the local gangs in the community and alternatives. NYPD and former gang members provided dozens of people with stark information. Awareness, avoidance and alternatives are keys to combating this problem in our community and another reminder of the necessity of support and programs for our younger residents.

CB7 was proud to host the Red Hook Community Justice Center's Youth Court for one session last summer and is discussing hosting the court on a more regular basis. The Youth Court is a peer court that provides alternatives to the court system for youthful offenders of minor infractions. Young people are sentenced to community service and we think this is an excellent example of diversion and civic engagement.

Economic Development

Our Board welcomes economic development along our waterfront, but insists that this development be limited to water-dependant and community uses. Our waterfront is our greatest physical asset with spectacular views and large areas ripe for development.

We strongly believe that any development in our community must be sensitive to our current residents and businesses. Should businesses be required to move as part of a major development, priority should be given to relocating the business within the community. Our priority is to bring additional jobs to the community, not to force some businesses to leave.

Our community has seen much of its potential wasted in the past from the placement of negative-impact facilities, such as the Metropolitan Detention Center, power plants and waste transfer stations. The community has received a disproportionate number of these facilities while many of the other neighborhoods in the City receive money to lessen the impact of such facilities or relocated them altogether. In the interest of equity of City services, we must insist that a moratorium on such negative-impact facilities be placed in the community so that we have the opportunity to determine how we may best develop some of our assets, such as Federal Building #2, in the interest of the community. We must insist that fair-share principles are respected and that a local public hearing must take place and community benefits agreements are negotiated for each proposed facility before any new facilities are allowed.

There are many projects and proposals concerning investment on the Sunset Park Waterfront that could potentially bring in billions of dollars in infrastructure improvements and potentially thousands of jobs. These include, but are certainly not limited to, proposals to replace or rehabilitate the Gowanus expressway, a major container port, Federal Building #2, Brooklyn Army Terminal, Axis Auto Group at South Brooklyn Marine Terminal, Bush Terminal buildings, Moore McCormack, SIMS and our waterfront park. In the past, the Sunset Park waterfront was a vital link in the economic engine of Brooklyn, but hard times have befallen this area in the past few decades.

The Economic Development Corporation, which owns most of the land along our waterfront, has a willing and often, like-minded partner in Community Board 7, but often, and shockingly, not only leave us out of decision-making, but purposely keep us out of the loop. Last year, we were kept out of the discussion to bring BioBat, our biotechnology center to the Brooklyn Army Terminal and even left us out of ceremonial aspects, such as a ribbon cutting, in addition to meetings, despite the fact that this is exactly the type of use our board has promoted for our community through our 197-a Plan, a document often cited by EDC.

Furthermore, while CB7 has been a strong proponent of the rehabilitation of the 1st Avenue railway, the project has substantially changed since it was first approved by the board in 2005. First the northern part of the project, on 2nd Avenue, was eliminated. Then, the scope of the sewer project on 1st Avenue was scaled back so that it just includes 1st Avenue near 40th Street, not all of 1st Avenue from 39th to 58th Streets as we were originally told. EDC has deliberately chosen to withhold this information from us.

While we are heartened that EDC recognizes that we deserve the same access to our waterfront that other communities enjoy we are very disappointed that EDC has scaled back our park currently under construction at Bush Terminal. At a time when hundreds of millions of dollars are being found for the creation the High Line and Brooklyn Bridge Parks, it is insulting that our playground, environmental center and active pier have been taken out of the first phase of the park due to a \$2 million dollar cost overrun in the environmental cleanup of the site. Adding to this insult is the fact that the City was responsible for the environmental problems because of a lack of oversight in the 1970s, when toxic materials were allowed to be dumped here. Furthermore, we note that no funds have been identified for the second phase of the park, calling into question EDC's intention of following through with their promise to the community. We understand that at some point EDC will want to turn this park over to the Parks Department. CB7 will not approve of that change of ownership until EDC fulfills its promises to the community and all capital funds have been spent. We recognize that the Parks Department does not have the capital funds to build this park.

Another opportunity for public recreation space lies at the waterfront side of the Brooklyn Army Terminal. This space is immediately adjacent to the 58th Street Pier, which is often used for fishing and public events, and is the only point of public access currently along our waterfront. We believe EDC can cede a few feet along the water at the BAT campus to almost double the amount of access to the water at a minimal cost to BAT and EDC and a great public space can be created for our community.

Additionally, another location for potential public access may be available at the South Brooklyn Marine Terminal if some space, such as the proposed Brooklyn Waterfront Greenway can be integrated into the economic development plans of EDC and Axis Auto Group, which is leasing the space and will bring 400 permanent jobs customizing cars and stevedoring. We have discussed greening the edge of this facility, perhaps all the way to the water. This property is next to the under-construction Bush Terminal Piers Park, thereby allowing a link of green spaces along our waterfront. We believe this model of integration of green space and economic development will be a model for similar development around the City.

Zoning and Landmarks

Our office has worked very closely with the Department of City Planning over the past few years to rezone large areas of our community. In 2005, we were successful in rezoning the Greenwood Heights and South Park Slope sections of our community. In 2009, we succeeded in rezoning the bulk of the

Sunset Park residential community, all of the residential properties in East Windsor Terrace and we also passed our 197-a Plan to protect and enhance the manufacturing zone along our waterfront. Earlier this summer our Board voted in favor of the Enhanced Commercial District on 4th Avenue which extends south into our District to 25th Street.

There are, however, three other areas in which we would like to see some changes. In May, our Board sent recommendations to DCP requesting a study of changing the zoning on 8th Avenue, the last part of the residential community of Sunset Park that was left out of the 2009 plan. This was because 8th Avenue straddles two community boards and it was necessary for Board 12 to actively pursue changes as well. Our Board has asked DCP to institute a height limit for all buildings on the avenue, but also allow for larger commercial buildings, reflecting the same zoning as the 5th and 13th Avenue commercial corridors and reflecting the reality of a booming commercial strip. Additionally, we have asked for a reduction of the commercial overlays allowed on adjoining residential blocks and have asked the agency to look at the possibility of rezoning the southern part of 39th Street between 7th and 8th Avenues from manufacturing to residential use, reflecting the substantial use change that is already taking place on the block. Since this block is only a block away from the subway, we felt it would be an appropriate location to promote smart residential growth. Our Board also requested the DCP looking into instituting new tools for developing affordable housing. We realize zoning is not a great tool for promoting affordability, as the building size bonus allowed on 4th and 7th Avenues in previous rezoning has resulted in zero additional affordable units in our community. We are asking DCP to revisit the tools that they use.

A second potential change would also need to include Board 6, as we are interested in protecting the view corridor from the Minerva statue in Green-Wood Cemetery to the Statue of Liberty. This would mean more changes in District 6 than it would for District 7 and so it is vitally important for Board 6 to be committed to such a plan, possibly through the City's 197-a process, to see it through.

Additionally, while our Board Members were happy that DCP is promoting a more active streetscape along the northern part of 4th Avenue through the Enhanced Commercial District, many were confused why it did not take the whole of the avenue within our community. We have recently written to DCP asking them to consider expanding the ECD south to 65th Street. We are concerned that the same conditions that were created during the redevelopment of 4th Avenue in Park Slope could creep into Sunset Park, should developers decide to make similar investments further south.

We would also like to see the Landmarks Preservation Commission take a more active role in preserving two beautiful but deteriorating landmarks in our community. We are gravely concerned about the condition of the old 68th Precinct on 4th Avenue and 43rd Street, a one hundred and fifty year old building that has been in disrepair for nearly 40 years. We are equally concerned about the condition of the landmarked Victorian Weir Greenhouse on 5th Avenue and 25th Street. Landmarking can make a property much more expensive to maintain and in poorer communities, such as ours, it is more difficult to find those dollars. Therefore, we believe that LPC has a special responsibility to poorer communities to help ensure the maintenance of landmarked properties, otherwise they are quite likely to become eyesores or dangerous.

Consumer Affairs

Over the past few years our community has seen an increase in the number of applications the Board receives for internet cafes. Many of these businesses operate 24-hours-a-day and some are located

within the commercial overlays on residential blocks. At times, these businesses can become hangouts or hiding places for truants. One business owner at a committee meeting even admitted that he takes ten dollars a night for people who have no home, which would mean he's operating a transient motel. Last year there was a homicide from a fight that spilled out from one of these businesses.

Although community boards are allowed review of internet café applications, we only have fifteen days for review, whereas other agencies are given forty-five days. We do not believe fifteen days is enough time to schedule a public meeting with an applicant and have instituted a blanket policy of denial for all internet café applications until community boards are given more time for review. We believe at least thirty days are necessary, the same review period we are allowed for liquor licenses. The quality-of-life concerns of our local community must be addressed and the community's voice should have a much stronger say. Unfortunately, the community is given very little time to respond to the Department of Consumer Affairs.

Summary

We are of the opinion that this Statement of Needs reflects the basic requirements of our residents. The people of our community and the citizenry of New York are among the most heavily taxed population in the nations and, even so, forecasted budget deficits threaten to force budget cuts, which may force service delivery cuts. Our Board will not accept service cuts and this Statement of Needs serves as a blueprint for the improvement of services in our District.

We sincerely hope that agencies will give serious consideration to our needs and suggestions and that blatant rejection of programs and new policies will cease. It is our hope that individual agencies will stop telling us that something "can't be done" but will seriously pursue ways to implement our suggestions. Only in this way and with improved dialogue can we ensure the quality-of-life for our residents and the vital continuation of the City of New York.

Sincerely,

Fred Xuereb
Chairman

Jeremy Laufer
District Manager