



Community Board Ten

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DISTRICT NEEDS STATEMENT FISCAL YEAR 2008

INTRODUCTION

The geographic district of Community Board Ten of Brooklyn encompasses the three neighborhoods of Bay Ridge, Dyker Heights and Fort Hamilton, which are situated along the southwestern tip of Brooklyn. Defining the southern and western borders of our district are the waters of the Verrazano Narrows. To the North, the L.I.R.R./MTA railroad cut from the shoreline at 65th Street, proceeds eastward to 62nd Street, where our district merges with our eastern border at 14th Avenue. The Fort Hamilton area, which follows the southern shoreline, is comprised of historic Fort Hamilton, located near the magnificent span of the Verrazano Bridge and overlooking New York Harbor.

Numerous parksland located throughout the district further enhance these scenic vistas and provide a multitude of diversified athletic and passive recreational facilities to thousands of residents and visitors throughout the year.

Known primarily as a residential community, the stability of the district depends greatly on the viability of its commercial sectors and housing stock. Dissecting the geographic district, the commercial corridors of 3rd Avenue, 4th Avenue, 5th Avenue, Fort Hamilton Parkway, 11th Avenue, 13th Avenue and the bustling 86th Street strip, provide the goods, services and employment opportunities for the community. One and two family homes comprise the major portion of the housing composition and aging multiple dwellings together with some new structures, line Shore Road, Ridge Boulevard and 4th Avenue, while smaller clusters of four to six story structures are randomly situated in other areas of the district. Limited vacant land had inhibited active development of new housing stock and Special Zoning District implemented in 1978, has precluded high-rise construction and inconsistent development.

While our senior citizen population continues to rise, the ethnic and racial mix of the district's population continues to shift with the out-migration of earlier established ethnic groups and the influx of Middle Eastern and Asian settlers and more recently, Eastern European.

The overall population consists primarily of middle income, blue-collar and white-collar workers, who contribute significantly toward our district's low unemployment statistics. Consequently, our

district continues to serve as a vital tax resource base for New York City.

The stable demographic indicators limit the availability of public funding programs for this community. Fortunately we are endowed with concerned, energetic, civil minded citizens who work and actively participate in self-help programs through local community organizations. Accordingly, these efforts have impacted positively on the vitality and stability of our district and our Community Board has supported, assisted, participated and championed many of these activities.

Constantly aware of the dedicated perseverance and outstanding contributions of the people of our district throughout the rigorous era of fiscal crises, our Board continues to aggressively advocate to preserve and strengthen our community's stability by petitioning for improvement of the municipal services our district is entitled to receive.

SENIOR CITIZEN HOUSING

We have identified the need for housing of all types for the rapidly increasing and diversified senior citizen population. High rentals are generating a mobile, transient tenancy and the lack of decent, affordable housing for our elderly population on limited income, presents a very serious problem.

TRANSPORTATION

HIGHWAYS

Numerous years of deferred maintenance and neglect on our street system have impeded the effective use of our roadways and advanced public hazards. The subsequent effects of these conditions posed an additional hardship to our community. Thankfully, during the last half of the past decade, we witnessed the resurgence of work activity throughout our municipality, on our streets, roadways, highways and throughways.

We remain cognizant that agency project management and engineering staffing levels have been seriously reduced and qualified technical expertise is limited. Career incentives must be provided to encourage recruitment for the expansion of the engineering levels, which would assist the acceleration of project development and implementation.

Maintenance personnel staffing levels as well as heavy-duty equipment allocations for the Bureau of Highways must be upgraded. The provision of a small rago-milling machine as standard equipment for Brooklyn's in-house resurfacing force is a positive step to effectuate qualitative productivity and to eliminate ponding and flooding conditions on our streets, but drastic reductions in the Highways work forces has negatively affected our district's roadways maintenance and repairs.

Another long term need we have identified requires the promulgation of regulations to improve the communications and coordination network affecting street cut activities which are conducted by utility companies, private contractors and inter-governmental agencies, as responsible work practices are central to the successful implementation of needed improvements.

ARTERIAL HIGHWAYS

The maintenance work conducted by the Bureau of Bridges and Arterial Highways is the vital function that sustains the viability of our roadways and overpasses. This Bureau is responsible for maintaining the curb area alongside the BQE that runs from 7th Avenue and 65th Street to 7th Avenue and 78th Street. This area is constantly filled with debris and strewn garbage. Due to budget limitations this area as well as the service roads of Dahlgren and Gatling Place cannot be adequately maintained. This Bureau is also responsible to maintain the Shore Road bicycle path and maintain overgrowth along the Belt Parkway and BQE within Community Board Ten area. It is necessary to provide additional funds for routine weekly maintenance with sufficient manpower and equipment needed to meet maintenance commitments.

VERRAZANO NARROWS BRIDGE

Traffic on the Verrazano Bridge and its approaches has reached the saturation point, not only during the rush hour but also frequently at off-hours. Traffic flowing from Brooklyn enters from multiple access points exceeding the capacity of the bridge. The 6 lanes on the bridge then reduce to 3 on the Staten Island Expressway, exacerbating the problem because the bridge traffic has nowhere to go.

Community Boards 10 and 11, together with Council Member Vincent Gentile formed a task force to explore these issues. Better traffic management is needed in Bay Ridge, Dyker Heights and Bensonhurst, particularly during rush hour, and more capacity is needed on the Staten Island Expressway. Moreover, other pathways in and out of New York City, particularly the Hudson River tunnels must be made accessible to all trucks to reduce the pressure on the Verrazano Bridge.

TRAFFIC

Traffic related issues are a major concern in our district. New Initiatives are needed along our commercial strips to provide more off-street parking. The proliferations of both legal and illegal curb cuts in our district are some of the unwanted results of the shortage of parking spaces in our community.

There is a great need to sustain the progressive timely replacement of faded or vandalized street name signs and regulatory signs. The expeditious replacement of critically needed traffic signs, school crossing designations and truck route markers are further hampered with the lack of funding to provide a cyclical replacement program to upgrade heavy-duty equipment as a means of enhancing the Brooklyn Bureau's capabilities.

The provision of Traffic Control Agents is absolutely essential to the successful and timely completion of the proliferating major reconstruction projects and restoration work activity now under way throughout the city's network of roadways, thoroughways, bridges and highways. These agents are cost effective and productive and must be included as the indispensable element for all capital roadway programs.

The State Department of Transportation is currently in the planning phase of the total rehabilitation of the Gowanus Expressway which includes the study of a tunnel alternative. Repairs to this 4-mile stretch will take many years. We are anticipating our streets will be impacted by excessive volume. To this end, we are serious urging the complete coordination with City and State DOT and Community Board Ten to ensure safety to all of our residents.

MTA

Our local subway, when operating properly, provides an extremely valuable resource to the entire community. Therefore it is obvious that all aspects of mass transit need to be continuously improved and updated. The modernization and rehabilitation of the 86th Street Station on the R Line continues to be a top Community Board priority. The remaining stations on the R-Line 95th Street, 77th Street, Bay Ridge Avenue are also in need of modernization. The N line at both 8th Avenue and Fort Hamilton Parkway provide express service into Manhattan, however both stations are also in dire need of rehabilitation.

The MTA proposed eliminating Express Bus Weekend Service. This plan was met with enormous community opposition. Funds were secured from Albany and the Mayor's Office. Express Bus Weekend Service, specifically the X-27 and X-28 remains a valuable form of transportation to scores of commuters including the disabled, seniors, students and local residents.

PARKS

A significant amenity for our community's urban environment is provided by the quality and viability of our district's parklands. The parks within our district have an advantageous geographic proximity to magnificent natural vistas and offer the availability of numerous athletic and recreational facilities, which provide thousands of our municipality's citizens with a variety of recreational opportunities.

As these parklands are among the most highly utilized in our city, the ever-increasing demand for the use of these facilities is commensurable to the increasing need for their expeditious restoration.

Our concerns for the restoration and preservation of our parks are annually emphasized through the high capital improvement priorities we award to Park Projects. These indicators of our concerns have initiated funding for major restoration of several playgrounds and athletic facilities.

However, many of our district's primary tracts of parklands have remained in the design phase while some others have been deferred because of funding constraints. This agonizingly slow process is most evident with the design development for projects slated for Shore Road Park.

There has also been unanimity of concern expressed by all of our city's Community Boards regarding the severe reduction of maintenance personnel, especially in the area of newly rehabilitated park sites. While the citizens of our community have endeavored to address the need for improvements in our parks through their commendable efforts to organize volunteer clean-up programs and ambitious fund raising campaigns, these initiatives cannot replace the urgent need to enhance the ongoing maintenance services in our parks on a daily basis. The provision of the needed resources will improve the maintenance operations and productivity levels to restore the parks to their former viability.

Recreational programs expansion is needed and recreational staffing levels as well as security staffing levels must be increased to provide for the needs of youngsters, adults and senior citizens. The provision of security personnel for the Parks Enforcement Patrols is needed to deter the levels of criminal activity and directly protect our capital investments.

69TH STREET PIER

The most precious jewel in our community's crown is the 69th Street Pier. The Pier has finally been completed and our community is thrilled and continues to celebrate the opening of the restoration of this important recreational landmark. The reconstruction of the Pier is viewed as a great opportunity for our district. The new Pier is serving very distinct and important goals: A) the creation of the most attractive passive recreational facility in our district. B) A properly designed and maintained Pier that will also serve as the impetus to economically revitalizing of the entire commercial strip along 69th Street. However, we still await a very important function of this Pier...the creation of an additional and alternative form of commuter transportation, especially during the time of the Gowanus Expressway reconstruction, by way of the Ferry Service.

We deem it a necessity that agencies such as the Department of Sanitation or Transportation or the Parks Department adopt the Pier for the purpose of maintaining it clean and in good repair. The pier needs to be placed on a regular schedule for cleaning for odor control.

PARKS – FORESTRY

The Department of Parks Tree Planting Program has now been seriously affected by budget constraints. The demand for new tree planting annually increased as the public's awareness and appreciation is aroused for the urban aesthetics that are provided by the beauty, shade, air pollution and noise buffers our street trees offer.

We are still noticing problems created by deferred tree maintenance. Tree pruning is currently on a ten year cycle, and stump removal services are at about a two to three year waiting time. Trees need to be continually maintained; otherwise the trees will suffer from neglect and foster public hazards.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Street undermining and street collapses caused by underground water leaks is an ongoing problem most evident on 86th Street between Shore Road and Fort Hamilton Parkway. The replacement of water mains must be expedited.

Other capital commitments included in the 10-year plan involves the replacement and extension of trunk and distribution mains, upgrading cement pipe sewers, the completion of the third water tunnel, systems and refurbishing the sewer and waste water systems.

These infrastructure initiatives provide a long range forecast for improving the systems viability. However it neglects to address the immediate crucial need for ongoing, cyclical preventive maintenance programs for catch basins that will ultimately provide adequate drainage for the prevention of overflow and flooding on our streets and roadways. This program is an essential mechanism in relieving conditions and its implementation must not be overlooked or delayed. Support is needed to provide resource gains to the Department of Environment Protection to enhance the agency's capabilities to protect the quality of our drinking water, to continue water conservation initiatives, fulfill major capital improvement programs commitments, improve the maintenance of the complex infrastructures and to continue the services that preserve and protect our environmental concerns.

POLICE

We continue to support new initiatives; however we want reassurance that the 68th Precinct will receive its fair share of Police Officers. Specific Police Department initiatives to address the quality of life problems such as community policing and other strategies are commendable, yet their implementation can only be effective through the augmentation of the Police Department's Personnel resources.

It is essential that additional police and civilian work force be assigned to the 68th Precinct to maximize the safety of our residents. Toward that end, Community Board Ten of Brooklyn will continue to direct its efforts, and Police manpower to remain our Board's top priority.

EDUCATION

The quality of our educational facilities has a direct bearing on the stability of our community. Much needed capital improvements need to be addressed. Additionally, overcrowding in our schools is creating many reasons for concern. We will continue our commitment to support the school's capital improvement programs for our district and to advocate for equitable funding for our schools.

LIBRARIES

Our libraries provide a multitude of services within the community. In addition to special programs geared toward special groups, these facilities furnish a myriad of educational, cultural, recreational, business and social needs for countless citizens. It is therefore imperative that our library system be supported and enhanced by maintaining the staffing levels for operational efficiency and providing continuous book inventory replacement and programming restoration to assure that the Brooklyn Public Library receives its fair share of the citywide allocated funds.

SANITATION

Essential to the viability of any community are the viability of the sanitation services, which are provided. In our district, we have focused our efforts to support timely cyclical equipment replacement with special emphasis on mechanical brooms, which must withstand the rigors of extensive use. We are in critical need of enhanced manpower allocations to restore clean team forces and we encourage innovative scheduling and planning to maximize the effectiveness of available manpower and equipment resources.

Some of these efforts have favorably impacted in our residential neighborhoods but, in contrast, the cleanliness problems on our commercial streets and the adjacent residential areas, pose detriments, which negatively affect our community. Although we have worked with community groups to identify the sources of these problems while also examining street cleanliness strategies, the basic component, which is really needed, is the enhancement of our Sanitation District's manpower and equipment resources.

In furthering our efforts to address the need for improvement in our sanitation services, we have recognized the merits of the agency's planning strategies for solid waste disposal as an immediate priority. We have supported these goals by being the first Community Board in Brooklyn to adopt the recycling program.

Our opposition to the siting of any waste transfer station in our district is not consistent with our pledge to do our fair share. We strongly believe that we are already doing our fair share by housing the Owls Head sewage treatment plant in our district and by reducing the amount of waste from the waste stream by increasing our recycling efforts.

DEPARTMENT OF BUILDINGS

The multifaceted functions of the Department of Buildings provide essential services, which are seriously constrained by limited staffing levels and ineffective enforcement mechanisms. The need for expeditious service as it relates to code enforcement, construction monitoring, structural safety inspections and zoning compliance, poses a major concern for our community. Augmentation of the agency's inspection levels, the expansion of the computerization program and the reorganization of the existing enforcement systems, must be addressed expeditiously to keep pace with the multitude demands for that agency's services. The demand for this agency's services has expanded since all of Community District Ten will be fully rezoned by the end of Fiscal Year 2007.

ZONING

Within the past few years CB Ten has surveyed the entire district to determine the effectiveness of its zoning, particularly the Special District Zoning in Bay Ridge, and determined that there are serious deficiencies. For example, the special zoning was intended to "preserve the character of the surrounding community" but instead, seems to encourage developers to demolish old frame houses that essentially define the community's character, and replace them with uninspired six family units that increase the density of the community and put unacceptable pressure on our municipal services. There are other serious problems that must also be addressed.

The Board recently approved the Special Bay Ridge District rezoning plan and is moving forward with Dyker Heights and Fort Hamilton which should be completed by end of FY 2007.

HOUSING

Our Community Board has worked closely with the Department of Housing Preservation and Development to identify and address the need for improvement of deteriorated buildings in our district. The housing survey our Board had initiated over a decade ago, provided a mechanism to facilitate the upgrading of targeted problem buildings through that agency's network of resources. These procedures were effective but also very slow moving, since monitoring activities by Code Enforcement had been limited and litigation systems are very complex and time consuming.

Our efforts to correct the deterioration of our housing stock must be supported by the Department of Housing Preservation and Development. Additional assistance must be rendered by the city agencies to our Board, in monitoring the upgrading of problem buildings and offering the resources of their supporting services to this project.

YOUTH SERVICES

Community Board Ten fully supports activities for youth that includes recreational, tutorial and community based counseling. It is unfortunate that we are unable to provide the services we need. Additional needs must be addressed by offering a myriad of programs for our youth.

HUMAN SERVICES

There is a broad range of human needs service providers located within our district. These services are available through government agencies, not-for-profit or volunteer groups and the private sector, that offers their assistance to fulfill the needs of the community. As public awareness of the availability of these services is limited, the agencies involved must expand their outreach and communications network to arouse public awareness from the affected population groups that include the frail elderly, the home bound, the handicapped, youth, single parents and the economically disadvantaged.

COMMUNITY BOARDS

It has become apparent that the Community Board's role has broadened. Community Boards have greater responsibilities and serve as an essential component of city government. Combined with their charter-mandated responsibilities, they act as a catalyst between agencies and the community.

Community Board budgets have not increased by any substantial way and therefore there is a minimum staffing used to the volume of work and need. Adequate funding should be made available for community Boards so that they can fulfill their charter-mandated responsibilities.

SUMMARY

Community Board Ten of Brooklyn has steadfastly directed its ongoing efforts to preserve and enhance the quality and character of our district. We work closely with the people of our district to respond to their needs and to encourage them to reinvest their trust in the future stability of our community. To fulfill this commitment, we urge that our needs be acknowledged and addressed affirmatively through the enhancement of our municipal resources.

Respectfully submitted,

Craig A. Eaton

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Chairperson

Josephine Beckmann

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District Manager