



# Community Board 12M

Washington Heights & Inwood

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## STATEMENT OF DISTRICT NEEDS AND PRIORITIES FISCAL YEAR 2008

Community Board 12-Manhattan, covers the neighborhoods of Washington Heights and Inwood, from West 155th Street to West 220th Street, with the Harlem River Drive and the Harlem River forming the eastern and northern boundaries and the Hudson River the western boundary. The 2000 Census lists the district's official population as 208,414 (although the true population is most likely much higher when the undocumented who did not respond to the Census are taken into account), with 74.1% of Hispanic origin, 13.6% White Non-Hispanic and 8.4% Black Non-Hispanic. The official population increased 5.2% over the 1990 Census. This district has the City's largest youth population with nearly 46,000 between the ages of 5 and 19. The 25-44 year age group comprises 32.4% of the district (67,630 people), and the 45-64 year age group accounts for 20.2% (42,178 residents). Ten percent of the population is age 65 and over (20,583).

The 2000 Census reports the overwhelming majority of Washington Heights-Inwood (31 of 35 census tracts) has a median household income below the Manhattan average, which is \$47,030 per the Department of City Planning's October 2004 publication, "The Newest New Yorkers 2000." Meanwhile, 30 of the district's census tracts have more than 20% of all persons living below poverty.

An Interagency Task Force was formed in April 2003 to study Sherman Creek, whose initial boundaries were Dyckman to West 207th Street from 10th Avenue east to the Harlem River. The City owns very few properties in the initial study area while Con Edison owns 30%. Therefore, the Sherman Creek study was expanded to its present scope to include much of Inwood: Dyckman and West 207th Streets from the Harlem River to Broadway and the east side of Broadway from Dyckman north to West 207th Street. This area is being studied for rezoning and mixed-use development opportunities with housing as the keystone. The Departments of City Planning (DCP) and Housing Preservation & Development (HPD) presented an initial rezoning proposal to the community on June 28, 2006, which was not well received. DCP and HPD are working on a revised rezoning proposal tentatively scheduled for presentation in fall 2006.

### **HOUSING & HUMAN SERVICES**

For the most part, Washington Heights-Inwood is characterized by a large, privately-owned and still affordable housing stock. Of the 70,576 occupied housing units, 93.5% are renter-occupied and only 6.5% are owner-occupied. Our community has the greatest

number of rent-regulated apartments of any district in the City. According to the Housing & Vacancy Survey conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau in 2005, there were 54,795 rent-stabilized apartments and 2,309 rent-controlled units in Washington Heights-Inwood. Total housing units increased less than 1% in the period 1990-2000. Nearly 33% of the housing units have four or more persons per household.

Community District 12's housing problems result from landlords' neglect to maintain and recondition the neighborhood's existing housing stock, illegal conversion of residential apartments into commercial space, and the inadequate compliance with and enforcement of the Housing Maintenance Code. The Department of Housing Preservation & Development reported 856 complaints and 378 total violations per 1,000 rental housing units in Washington Heights-Inwood in 2004 with 78 of the complaints for serious violations.

Community Board 12 supports the following actions to address its housing problems and needs:

- Expansion of cyclical apartment inspections.
- Increased inspection of illegal conversions.
- Redevelopment funds for city-owned occupied properties.
- Increased funding for small home loan programs.
- Funds for the development of vacant buildings and lots into new housing, including an intensive outreach effort to owners to convince them to rehabilitate their properties. The Manhattan Borough President's Office conducted a borough-wide survey of abandoned buildings and vacant lots in July 2006 that we hope will provide an impetus for this outreach effort.

We also urge the City to prioritize affordable housing in the Sherman Creek plan currently being prepared by the Interagency Task Force and support the development of new affordable housing throughout the community. Only 2% of Sherman Creek's residents own their homes and 32% of the apartments there have more than one person per room, compared to 33% homeownership citywide and 15% of all city apartments with more than one person per room.

In addition, these six housing developments north of West 181st Street are underway, planned or anticipated in the next few years:

- 14-story 140 units at 4572 Broadway (Nagle Avenue). Zoned R7-2 / C2-4.
- 12-story 120 units at 4650-4660 Broadway (Sherman Avenue). Zoned R7-2 / C2-4. Community facility space anticipated on Broadway and two large retail floors on Sherman Ave. with PC Richard (or similar) the anticipated anchor tenant. 100-car garage currently on the Sherman Avenue portion of the property.
- 8-story housing at 29-31 Cooper St. (near southeast corner West 204th Street). Zoned R7-2.

- 6-story building at 120-126 Seaman Avenue (southwest corner Payson Ave.). Zoned R7-2.
- 23-story housing development at 29-31 Overlook Terrace (West 184th Street). Zoned R7-2; community facility will be included.
- 40 units at One Wadsworth Terrace (overlooking Gorman Park). Zoned R7-2.

### **HUMAN RESOURCES ADMINISTRATION (HRA)**

The Human Resources Administration (HRA) must increase funds for immigrant and domestic violence services in Community District 12. Domestic violence is a serious problem in north Manhattan, where 25,000 of the 34,000 reported cases in the borough in 2005 occurred in Community Districts 9, 10, 11 and 12.

The Department of Citywide Administrative Services and HRA must ensure that the Dyckman Job Center moves to its proposed new home at 4055 Tenth Avenue since its current location, 4660 Broadway, has been purchased by a private developer for luxury housing development. The center employs nearly 300 people and provides the Northern Manhattan community with vital services.

### **DEPARTMENT OF HOMELESS SERVICES**

The Fort Washington Armory shelter at 216 Fort Washington Avenue houses 200 mentally ill homeless men. Capital funds have been allocated for much-needed air conditioning. Additional funds are needed to enhance the services at the shelter and for increased security to patrol the area and minimize the impact on the community.

The Department of Homeless Services must also provide funds for additional anti-eviction and SRO legal services in Washington Heights-Inwood to prevent displacement of tenants who need help in Housing Court, where landlords almost always have legal representation.

### **YOUTH SERVICES & EDUCATION**

Washington Heights-Inwood is the one of the most over-populated community districts in New York City, and its school district (Region 10, District 6) has been severely overcrowded for years. The School Construction Authority (SCA) will build new school buildings for Gregorio Luperon High School at 2120 Amsterdam Avenue, which is scheduled to open in September 2008, and the 21st Century Leadership Academy at West 152nd Street and Amsterdam Avenue, which is scheduled to open in September 2007. Community Board 12 has passed resolutions urging the Department of Education (DOE) and SCA also to build new schools on two adjacent lots on Broadway between West 204th and Academy Streets, at the Verizon building at 5030 Broadway, on the site of the I.S. 143 annex at Audubon Avenue and West 182nd Street, and at 200 Sherman Avenue (former St. Matthew's Lutheran School). Additionally, the DOE should provide funds for leased space to further alleviate overcrowding.

We recommend that DOE reinstate funding for all after-school programs in District 6 and

stop the practice of charging facility fees to after-school programs so that more children may benefit from them. The DOE must also provide additional training for special education teachers and furnish elementary and intermediate school students with additional counseling and health services.

CB12 requests the Department of Youth & Community Development (DYCD) provide full funding for a Beacon School after-school program at I.S. 52 in Inwood. In addition, DYCD must increase funding for after-school programs, the summer youth employment program (SYEP), youth delinquency and violence prevention programs, domestic violence, immigrant services and ESL classes to meet pressing needs in our community.

There is a severe shortage of quality daycare in Washington Heights-Inwood. We ask the Administration for Children's Services (ACS) to increase funding for additional daycare programs, including early childhood centers, nursery and pre-school programs, in this underserved community. ACS also must increase funds for immigrant and domestic violence in Washington Heights-Inwood.

## **LIBRARIES**

Community Board 12 requests restoration of six-day service at all three of our branches. We advocate for increased funding for new computers at the Ft. Washington and Washington Heights branches. All three branches must receive additional funds for books and materials including software, subscriptions and recorded matter. It is important that the Ft. Washington and Washington Heights branch libraries are fully renovated so that both are ADA-compliant.

## **SENIOR CITIZENS SERVICES**

More than 20,000 Washington Heights-Inwood residents are age 65 and over, and almost one-fourth of the district's total households (16,556) have one or more senior citizens. The Washington Heights and Inwood Council on Aging (WHICOA) states that the quality-of-life issues for the elderly include improving access to health services, decreasing health disparities, increasing and maintaining affordable housing. The Department for the Aging, together with other City agencies, must also address the following issues:

- Preservation and development of affordable and safe senior housing. Seniors need rents tied to their income levels in order for the neighborhood's elderly on fixed incomes to be able to stay in their homes.
- Seniors need increased legal services to fight landlords in order to maintain the quality of their apartments and to stop landlords that attempt to buy out or force them out of their rent-regulated apartments.
- The Meals-On-Wheels program delivers hot, nutritious food to homebound seniors and provides them with a sense of safety. Keeping its vehicles on the road in light of increased insurance and gas prices is critical.
- Senior centers are the home away from home for many and offer access to information on benefits and services that would not otherwise be available, especially to poor immigrant seniors served throughout our community. In order

to ensure continuation of services provided by experienced, competent staff, we need a permanent mechanism to provide cost-of-living salary increases for staff of these programs. Some centers also need more staff to expand their services.

- Increased funding for renovation and improvement of senior centers (i.e. lighting and noise reduction, painting and maintenance, and increased activities and services).
- Enhanced outreach to the community's veterans and non-English-speaking residents.
- More resources for neighborhood police and community-based services for elderly crime victims.

## **POLICE DEPARTMENT**

Both the 33rd and 34th Precincts are severely understaffed with 155 officers in the 33rd Precinct and 170 officers in the 34th Precinct. A significant increase in the number of officers at both precincts is necessary. On average there is one police officer per 600 residents in the 33rd and only one officer per 700 residents in the 34th. Both precincts had 180 officers in July 2002, and CB12 requests that the NYPD restore them to that staffing level at a minimum.

In addition, these steps are necessary to enhance safety and security in Washington Heights-Inwood:

- Increase the number of narcotics officers in both the 33rd and 34th Precincts.
- Both precincts need two more sergeants for their Special Narcotics Units
- Increase the number of CPOP and bicycle patrol officers
- Enhance the Domestic and Youth Gang Violence Units in both the 33rd and 34th Precincts
- 33rd needs more youth officers with two more schools (970 children) opening by September 2008
- More crossing guards are needed in both precincts
- Continued strong support for both precincts' auxiliary and community affairs units

Both precincts have significant equipment needs:

- Both precincts need another van, two unmarked vehicles with computer terminals, two scooters and a quad vehicle for the parks (this is especially important for the 34th, which has the City's second largest parkland).
- The 33rd needs an unmarked van for its Special Narcotics Unit.
- Both 33rd & 34th precinct auxiliary units need new vehicles.

Funds are required for both precincts to hire additional bilingual civilians to perform support functions (e.g. translation, filing, custodial) and relieve officers of these tasks so they are used more productively to patrol our streets.

## **FIRE DEPARTMENT**

Community Board 12 acknowledges the FDNY's continued efforts in fire safety, prevention and investigation. We suggest that the highest priority be given to the identification of potential fire-hazard buildings. Community District 12 was in the highest category for structural and suspicious fires in 2002, 2003, and 2005. Therefore, we strongly recommend the following actions:

- Increase the number of Fire Marshals so that suspicious fires can be investigated and arsonists apprehended.
- Ensure that all Community District 12 fireboxes and 1,200 fire hydrants are operational.
- Multilingual fire safety and open hydrant educational materials.
- Greater outreach to our schools, parents and block associations, about fire safety and prevention.
- Distribution of emergency preparedness manuals throughout the community.
- Inform every community about the FDNY school program that recruits new firefighters and expand outreach efforts utilizing community-based organizations, religious institutions, etc.

The physical condition of our district's firehouses continues to deteriorate. Engine 84/Ladder 34 on West 161st Street must replace its two basement doors in the front quarters since both are tripping hazards; meanwhile, the floor tiles in the truck side 2nd floor are worn and must be replaced and the floor tiles on the 3rd floor between the engine and truck side are missing. At Engine 67 on West 170th Street, the front entrance door and front apparatus door must be replaced, 50 safety treads on the stairs need immediate replacement, and four fluorescent light fixtures on the apparatus floor and floors above need repair or replacement. Engine 93/Ladder 45 on West 181st Street has severe water leaks and bathroom repairs that must be made.

Finally, we have serious concerns about firehouse coverage when engine companies are relocated for medical, training, and special operations. When any of the district's four firehouses are out of service, the community's public safety is in jeopardy, which happened when a serious store fire occurred on St. Nicholas Avenue and West 171 Street in July 2004. Engine 95/Ladder 36 on Vermilyea Avenue is the only firehouse north of West 181st Street and when these companies are redeployed, tens of thousands of people living in northern Washington Heights and all of Inwood are without adequate fire protection. Also, Engine 95/Ladder 36 is the community's only firehouse with a four-man crew; the rest are five-man houses. CB12 strongly urges the FDNY to make Engine 95/Ladder 36 a five-man house.

## **COMMUNITY EMERGENCY RESPONSE TEAM (CERT)**

Community Board 12 CERT (CB12M CERT) is a nationally recognized team of 43 volunteers that has a waiting list of community residents, business owners and agency personnel seeking training and certification since January 2004. CB12M CERT needs funds to train and certify additional volunteers in emergency preparedness to meet the needs of a community with more than 200,000 residents who are spread across a district with a diverse topography in a variety of dwellings and structures. The team also needs funds for supplies and equipment for volunteers to protect themselves from harm during an emergency.

## **TRAFFIC AND TRANSPORTATION**

Community Board 12 has discussed our traffic congestion problems with several administrations. We ask the NYC Department of Transportation (NYC DOT) to further assist the board in this matter. Accordingly, we support an overall study of Community District 12's traffic patterns that would recommend short-term and long-range solutions to our traffic problems. NYC DOT is studying the Sherman Creek area's traffic conditions, especially on Dyckman Street, West 207th Street, Nagle Avenue, 9th and 10th Avenues. Other locations, including Ft. Washington Avenue between West 165th & 168th Streets, must be reviewed by DOT to alleviate congestion.

The planned redevelopment of the George Washington Bridge bus terminal, which may result in a huge retail complex on both sides of Broadway, will greatly impact the already heavy traffic congestion in the community. A thorough Environmental Impact Study and community consultation are necessary to minimize any negative impacts on traffic and pedestrian safety, among other issues.

West 181st Street traffic already moves at a glacial pace. Former Manhattan Borough President C. Virginia Fields commissioned a 2003 report by Konheim & Ketcham, and NYC DOT will begin examining conditions in fall 2006. In the interim, CB12 continues to submit mitigation recommendations to NYC DOT regarding West 181st Street.

## **PARKING**

Washington Heights and Inwood has lost more than 400 parking spaces in 2006 in privately owned lots north of Dyckman Street, adding to the extremely difficult parking situation in this community. We strongly support construction of municipal parking facilities in Community District 12.

## **HIGHWAY OPERATIONS**

We support restoration of arterial highway cleaning and maintenance crews, and the creation of a three-person crew dedicated to Community District 12's operational needs. High priority areas include the Henry Hudson Parkway and the Harlem River Drive. Repairs are required to the ramp connecting the Harlem River Drive and the Trans-Manhattan Expressway leading to the George Washington Bridge, and the Alexander Hamilton Bridge.

## **RECONSTRUCTION PROJECTS, STREET MAINTENANCE & LIGHTING**

Tenth Avenue is being reconstructed from West 206 to 218 Streets; however, there are several areas where similar projects should be considered, including West 207th Street from 10th Avenue to Seaman Avenue; Nagle Avenue from Broadway to West 205th Street; and Seaman Avenue from Riverside Drive to West 218th Street.

We continue to support the Manhattan Street Maintenance Division's program for resurfacing and pothole repair. Funding should be secured for the expansion of in-house maintenance forces for asphalt and concrete repair. Broadway from Dyckman to West 220th Streets must be milled and resurfaced. The West 215th Street Steps must be resurfaced with new lighting and handrails; meanwhile, the Department of Parks & Recreation should adopt the plant beds as a Greenstreet.

In January 2006 more than 150 streetlights were out in Washington Heights-Inwood, some for several months. DOT must expedite its response time to repair our neighborhood's streetlights.

### **BUSES**

The problem of five bus routes coming across from the Bronx along West 181st Street, the area's major commercial thoroughfare, must be addressed to relieve congestion, air pollution and decrease travel time. These buses block intersections and hamstring traffic. We urge the MTA New York City Transit to remedy this problem.

In 2005, the MTA ignored the recommendation of hundreds of Washington Heights residents and CB12's resolution opposed to rerouting the southbound M101 bus; meanwhile, in 2006 the MTA extended the 207th Street bus stop to Isham Street and placed three buses in front of 4966 Broadway without any community consultation, which has resulted in numerous quality-of-life complaints.

### **SUBWAYS**

The MTA has seriously neglected the Washington Heights-Inwood community for many years. Service on the "A" train, once the pride of the system, has deteriorated to the point where it ranks 19th out of 22 subway lines, according to the Straphangers Campaign's ninth annual State of the Subways Report Card. The "1" line ranked 18th for seat availability, which proves that more trains are needed on this line. The "1" also ranked 20th when it comes to clarity of announcements. The "C" train ranked 20th in frequency of service and 18th in breakdown rate. The conditions on the "C" line at West 155th and 163rd Street; the "A" stations at 181st, 190th and Dyckman Streets, and the "1" stations at West 157th, Dyckman, West 207th and 215th Streets are deplorable. Capital reconstruction projects are required for these stations. The 163rd Street "C" station was rated in the worst condition of all Washington Heights-Inwood stations in Community Board 12's 2006 subway survey. A comprehensive plan is necessary to outline renovations and reconstruction projects for all our neighborhood's subway stations.

Community Board 12 urges the MTA to continue the operation of three elevators at the



West 168th Street station, especially during the morning and evening rush hours. According to Manhattan Borough President Scott Stringer's August 2006 report on elevator and escalator maintenance and repairs in the New York City subway system, one of the West 181st Street "A" station escalators was out of service for 149 days in 2005, far and away the worst figure in Manhattan! One of the 181st Street "1" station elevators was out of service for 34 days in 2005, the fourth worst figure in the borough. Equally disturbing is that only four of Manhattan's 22 fully accessible stations are at or above 125th Street. The MTA must increase the number of fully accessible stations in Washington Heights-Inwood to meet its goal of increasing subway access for people with disabilities, which requires making 67 stations fully accessible by 2010 and 100 fully accessible by 2020.

On the positive side, long-standing problems with filthy conditions, flooding, graffiti and bad lighting at the Broadway pedestrian tunnel at the West 191st Street station on the "1" line may finally be close to resolution with assistance from the Mayor's office and various City agencies.

## **HEALTH**

The Department of Health and Mental Hygiene's (DOHMH) last Community Health Profile in 2003 states that one in two residents of Washington Heights-Inwood was born outside the United States (top three countries of origin: Dominican Republic, Ecuador and Mexico) and that adults in Washington Heights-Inwood do not consider themselves to be in good health. Twenty-six percent said they were in poor or fair health, compared to 19% in the City and 14% in the USA. Heart disease and cancer caused the most deaths in 2001 among the community's residents; meanwhile, the death rate due to accidents and injuries was particularly high compared to New York City overall. Heart disease is the neighborhood's leading cause of adult hospitalization. The data also indicates significant hospitalization rates due to mental illness and alcohol abuse, as well as asthma and injuries. In 2001, hospitalization for mental illness was 45% higher in Washington Heights-Inwood compared to NYC as a whole; diabetes admissions were 15% higher, asthma 10% greater. More than 200 people are diagnosed with HIV each year in Washington Heights-Inwood and more than 2,000 people are living with HIV/AIDS.

Washington Heights-Inwood is near or better than the citywide averages for early prenatal care, low birth weight, and infant mortality. Lead poisoning is still a problem with a rate of 12 children per 1,000 tested (under age 18) diagnosed with lead poisoning. There were 187 children newly diagnosed with lead poisoning in the neighborhood in 2001, which underscores the continued need for Manhattan's only Lead Safe House at 2183 Amsterdam Avenue, operated by the Northern Manhattan Improvement Corporation.

One in five adults smokes while more than 75% of the neighborhood's smokers are trying to quit. Nearly one in three adults in Washington Heights-Inwood gets no physical activity, and one in six is obese, which leads to 12% of community adults having diabetes.

Many Washington Heights-Inwood residents have poor access to medical care: In 2001, about 20,000 reported no current health care coverage; 34,000 did not receive needed medical care, and 68,000 did not have a personal doctor. People's ability to increase healthy behaviors and improve their health is influenced by the conditions in which they

live. A healthy environment that includes adequate housing, neighborhood resources and community services is essential in preventing disease and promoting health. Forty-four percent of adults 25 and over in Washington Heights-Inwood did not graduate high school, 31% are living in poverty, and 53% feel the neighborhood is unsafe.

Community Board 12 strongly advocates for the following community services:

- Increased access to medical, dental care and mental health services through DOHMH, the NYC Health & Hospitals Corporation and the New York-Presbyterian Hospital.
- Increased lead poisoning prevention, asthma and diabetes programs.
- Additional nurses and health educators in our public schools.
- Increased enrollment in Family Health Plus and Child Health Plus.
- Expansion of domestic violence and youth gang violence prevention and treatment programs.

### **BUREAU OF VETERINARY & PEST CONTROL SERVICES**

An intensive rodent abatement program in Community District 12 is necessary to address the neighborhood's serious vermin problem. Rat-resistant garbage cans were distributed to buildings from West 155-163 Streets between Broadway and Amsterdam Avenue; however, more areas must be baited and receive the containers. Multilingual educational materials should be distributed to our schools, parents associations, community-based organizations and elsewhere throughout the district to help foster a cleaner and safer environment.

### **ENVIRONMENT**

The Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) must improve its services to the Washington Heights-Inwood community. Air and noise enforcement is non-existent, catch basins are sporadically cleaned and the department has failed to provide the 33rd & 34th Precincts with additional wrenches to close open fire hydrants despite continuous requests from public officials, the commanding officers and CB12 to do so. It is absurd that the 33rd precinct has only one wrench and the 34th precinct has none! Washington Heights-Inwood is the worst district in the City when it comes to the problem of open fire hydrants, which not only waste substantial amounts of water but also cause low water pressure for household and firefighting uses. In July 2006 Community District 12 led the City with 2,463 complaints about open hydrants; almost triple the number in Brooklyn's District 4. A comprehensive education and outreach program about the dangers of open hydrants is required in our local schools. DEP must expedite repairs to non-working fire hydrants in CB12 and do a better job of tracking the operational status of the district's 1,200 hydrants. DEP is one year behind (as of July 2006) in providing the FDNY with the list of hydrant repairs in Community Board 12. This serious matter must be immediately addressed.

Noise is also a very significant problem in Washington Heights-Inwood. According to a recent report, Community District 12 generated the greatest number of noise complaints to the 311 hotline in FY 2006, far surpassing any other neighborhood in the City. Community Board 12 supports increased inspections and enforcement of noise and air pollution

regulations. Additional funding is needed to assign inspectors for nighttime and weekend duty; only nine inspectors currently work 6:00pm to 2:00am throughout the City. A multi-agency task force must be created to deal with the noise problem here, similar to what was done in Community District 6 in Brooklyn.

DEP must reach out to Washington Heights-Inwood business and restaurant owners about the proper disposal of waste, grease and biohazards.

## **SANITATION**

The streets in southern Washington Heights were among the City's dirtiest, according to the July 2006 Scorecard Report. Overflowing litter baskets add to the problem. We strongly support the following actions by the Department of Sanitation:

- Additional litter baskets and increased pick-up schedules, especially on Broadway and other commercial streets.
- Increased number of Sanitation Police Officers (CB12 and CB9 split a weekend-only officer. That is unacceptable. CB12 requests its own dedicated fulltime Sanitation Police Officers.)
- Additional street cleaners. (We need at least four more street cleaners per day in District 12.)
- Multilingual educational materials on proper garbage disposal and recycling requirements.

The Department of Sanitation must reduce its six to eight-year timeframe for construction of a new garage for District 8M garbage trucks, which currently operate from the West 215th Street garage and contribute to the traffic problem in our community despite the City Charter's requirement for co-terminality in City services.

## **ZONING AND LAND USE**

Much of the actual property uses in Washington Heights and Inwood are contrary to the official New York City zoning regulations, which were last updated in 1961 in the CB12 area and most of the City. In many cases, zoning laws and regulations are not adhered to and this significantly impacts the neighborhoods' quality of life. The enforcement of existing regulations would prevent non-conforming uses in residentially zoned areas. Moreover, the City must provide new zoning guidelines where necessary; for example, CB12 is currently preparing a study of existing retail uses on Amsterdam and Audubon Avenues, which will be referred to the Department of City Planning with recommendations for possible zoning changes. With the City College Architectural Center serving as the consultant, Community Board 12 initiated a land use and neighborhood planning study for Washington Heights and Inwood that is due to be completed in fall 2006.

The City's Interagency Task Force also will recommend new zoning for the enlarged Sherman Creek study area, which hopefully will provide opportunities for new affordable housing and mixed-use development.

## **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

Washington Heights-Inwood contributes to the City's economy and tax base with the following large employers: Columbia University Medical Center, the New York-Presbyterian Hospital, Yeshiva University, Isabella Geriatric Center and more than 3,500 local businesses.

Community Board 12 proposes that the City and the Upper Manhattan Empowerment Zone (UMEZ) focus their resources in the following areas: commercial revitalization and growth, development of office and retail space, and tourism. UMEZ funded only two Washington Heights-Inwood projects in 2005 and must do a much better job of reaching out to our local businesses about its various funding programs. The City and UMEZ must also assist merchants with incentives and loan programs to encourage sidewalk and storefront improvements, which would enhance shopping conditions and improve the quality of life.

The critical shortage of office and modern retail space in Washington Heights-Inwood limits the expansion of local businesses and hinders job creation. Developing underutilized areas, most notably Sherman Creek, would help alleviate this problem, as may the redevelopment of the GWB bus terminal and the Verizon building.

We urge the New York City Economic Development Corporation (NYC EDC), Department of Small Business Services (SBS) and UMEZ to foster economic growth in Washington Heights-Inwood by strengthening the neighborhood's competitive position and facilitating investments that catalyze the economic vibrancy of the community as a whole. The following steps will enhance the Washington Heights-Inwood business community:

- There is an estimated 3,513 businesses in Washington Heights-Inwood, according to the Audubon Partnership for Economic Development. The NYC EDC, SBS and UMEZ must provide entrepreneurs, especially minority-owned and women-owned businesses, with services and programs to benefit new business and help existing businesses expand. There are several vacant commercial locations in the neighborhood including: southwest corner of West 159th Street & Broadway (approx. 10,000 sq. ft.); southeast corner of Dyckman St. & Broadway (approx. 10,000 sq. ft.); 179-185 Dyckman St. (northeast corner of Vermilyea Avenue) (approx. 50,000 sq. ft.).
- Collaborate with commercial banks, lending institutions and local groups to expand alternative lending programs for small businesses.
- Create a business development clearinghouse involving New York City and State agencies and the U. S. Small Business Administration to provide assistance and information to local businesses.
- Organize year-round bilingual seminars focusing on commercial development, and the New York City and State requirements for starting and expanding a business.
- Create a one-stop Business License Service Center.
- Movie and film producers routinely shoot in Washington Heights-Inwood. The

Mayor's Office of Film, Theatre and Broadcasting should fulfill its commitment to create a digital catalog of our community's stores, restaurants, and nightlife.

The City also should assist in the development of Business Improvements Districts (BIDs), in Washington Heights and Inwood, particularly in the following areas: West 207th Street, Dyckman Street, and the southern Washington Heights commercial area pursuant to the Community League of the Heights Neighborhood Planning Initiative.

The City should also work with the Audubon Partnership for Economic Development, Washington Heights BID, Northern Manhattan Coalition for Economic Development, Washington Heights-Inwood Development Corporation, Chamber of Commerce and the Harlem Community Development Corporation to support business development and expansion in the neighborhood.

## **TOURISM**

The City and UMEZ must more effectively promote tourism in the area and work with the community to develop activities that capture more tourist dollars. Washington Heights-Inwood is well on its way to becoming a significant sightseeing destination. The Chamber of Commerce of Washington Heights-Inwood recently published a 50-page book titled "Discovering Northern Manhattan," which highlighted the community's museums, historic houses and apartment complexes, parks and other notable destinations, including the National Track & Field Hall of Fame. The publication is available at the NYC & Co. tourist information office, kiosks and hotels throughout the City and to riders on the Gray Line tour bus that makes its final stop at the Cloisters. In addition, all official City maps must show the entire Washington Heights-Inwood community and reflect its major points of interest.

Each year more than 150,000 people attend the Children's Festival sponsored by the Washington Heights Business Improvement District, an average of 40,000 attend the Medieval Festival in Fort Tryon Park, and the Uptown Arts Stroll has quickly grown into a three-week long event with 60 venues featuring 120 different visual and performing artists in a celebration of Northern Manhattan's growing arts community. We also have magnificent parkland, with Fort Tryon Park considered one of the most beautiful parks in the United States.

## **PARKS**

Thirty-three percent of Community District 12's terrain is parkland. We regard our parks as one of the most valuable resources in the community and urge the continued reconstruction of the pathways in Inwood Hill, Fort Tryon and Highbridge Parks. Improved access to Fort Washington Park is also needed. We are pleased that the restoration of the J. Hood Wright Park retaining walls and the installation of artificial turf at the Michael Buczek ball field in Highbridge Park have been funded and look forward to their completion in 2008.

Our FY 2008 proposed capital projects for the Department of Parks & Recreation are as follows:

- 1) Phase II work on Gorman Park, which includes reconstructing portions of the lower half of the park including the stone stairway, paving, planting and benches adjacent to Broadway.
- 2) Reconstruction of pathways in Highbridge Park.
- 3) Reconstruction of sidewalks and paths in Roger Morris Park, including a wheelchair ramp, drainage work and landscape restoration.
- 4) In Ft. Tryon Park landscaping at the Alpine Garden and Broadway perimeter, including installation of water service and reconstruction of stonework, pathways and staircase.
- 5) Continued reconstruction of Inwood Hill and Fort Tryon parks' paths, including paving, drainage, bench replacement and adjacent landscape.
- 6) Reconstruction and enlargement of the Indian Road Playground in Inwood Hill Park
- 7) For the Riverside Oval (Riverside Drive & West 156th Street), replacement of the curb and fence, restoration of the fountain, water service, sewer connection, landscaping and accessibility for the disabled.
- 8) Equipment for park maintenance including the expanded Greenway.

Community Board 12 urges the City to fund a maintenance program and/or endowment as part of all Department of Parks & Recreation (DPR) capital projects. Horticulturists, stonemasons, general maintenance workers, increased seasonal personnel and skilled trades-people are sorely needed in our parks. Maintenance is the key to keeping our parks in good condition and preventing deterioration. Routine maintenance would save the City money in the long run and avoid costly capital projects.

Providing access to the waterfront and public amenities is another important aspect of the Sherman Creek development. The DPR will build five new street end parks along the Harlem River waterfront in 2006 as the first step in fulfilling that goal.

The 2007 City budget contains \$3 million to increase Park Enforcement Patrol (PEP) officers. Washington Heights-Inwood must receive its fair share of PEP officers to enhance the safety of our parks. Funds also are needed for enhanced pest control and tree pruning in all CB12 parks. Additional resources are required for recreational programs for children at Highbridge, J. Hood Wright and Inwood Hill parks.

### **CULTURAL AFFAIRS**

We request that the Department of Cultural Affairs help maintain all our historic and cultural institutions, including the American Academy of Arts and Letters, Hispanic Society of America, Dyckman Farmhouse Museum, the Morris-Jumel Mansion and the Cloisters. We are especially concerned about the future of the Audubon Terrace complex; the American Numismatic Society recently moved and the Hispanic Society, which occupies about

half the complex, announced that it also plans to move. As a result, CB12 asked the Mayor's Office in December 2005 to create a task force to develop a plan to preserve and revitalize the Audubon Terrace complex.

In addition, we strongly support expediting the opening of the Malcolm X and Dr. Betty Shabazz Education and Research Center at the site of the old Audubon Ballroom.

## **CONCLUSION**

Washington Heights-Inwood historically has been a neighborhood of many different nationalities. Today, the population is largely from the Dominican Republic. Washington Heights-Inwood is in dire need of enhanced municipal services. The City must reevaluate how it views this neighborhood in comparison to the rest of Manhattan. We have experienced an unparalleled housing price boom over the past decade and stand on the threshold of the City's next waterfront rezoning in the Sherman Creek/Inwood area. The preservation and development of affordable housing is critical to the neighborhood, and the City must step up its efforts in this area.

It is now time for the City to invest in Northern Manhattan by committing the resources, municipal services, housing, economic and education programs required to improve not only the Sherman Creek/Inwood area but the rest of this thriving, buoyant community of Washington Heights-Inwood.

*Martin Collins*

Martin Collins  
Chair  
Community Board 12