



Randolph Peers
Chairperson

Jeremy Laufer
District Manager

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

MARTY MARKOWITZ
Borough President

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 Community Board # 7 committee Chairpersons, as well as from various forms of analyses of City 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. Sunset Park consists of a strong residential community, two viable commercial strips as well as a large industrial area. The 23-acre facility, Sunset Park, has an Olympic-sized pool, a recreation area and a large open space.

Windsor Terrace consists of a small, but stable, residential community with a small commercial strip in the northeastern corner of the district. Windsor Terrace is surrounded by the natural boundaries of Prospect Park and Greenwood Cemetery. The highest elevation in Brooklyn is found in Greenwood Cemetery. The Gothic Brownstone “gate house” at its entrance has been declared a New York City landmark.

A shift in population that began in the 1960s continues with an influx of immigrants. 26% of our population is at or under the age of 18 and more than 9% is over 65 years of age, indicating a need for targeted programs for these populations. Our Board’s population grew by more than 17% between 1990 and 2000, without a corresponding increase in our housing stock.

Over 50% of the population of Community District # 7 is Hispanic and between 1990 and 2000 the Asian population in the community has almost doubled to more than 17% and is considered New York’s third Chinatown. The indigenous Puerto Rican population is now augmented by a large influx of Columbians, Mexicans, Dominicans, and Ecuadorians. There remains a large, but diminishing, European population of Polish, Italian, Irish, Finnish, and Scandinavians (accounting for nearly 23% of the population) and we have seen growing pockets of Arabic peoples and immigrants from the former Soviet Union. These diverse populations lend to more diverse service needs in Sunset Park/Windsor Terrace and a mandate to adjust programs to better serve these populations.

In the past year our community won several important victories on long term goals. After 37 years, we finally

4201 Fourth Avenue, Brooklyn, NY 11232 (718) 854-0003 FAX (718) 436-1142

E-mail: Communityboard7@yahoo.com

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received full funding for the creation of Sunset Park High School. A decade of advocacy has achieved funding for the first phase of the Bush Terminal Piers Park, including the largest brown-field grant in State history. Our community came together to advocate for zoning changes in the South Park Slope area. We have been told that our effort achieved the quickest rezoning in City history. The community also came together to finally close down one of our strip clubs, the notorious Sweet Cherry.

The success we've achieved has inspired us to work harder to advocate for other community goals including street sweeping day reductions, better truck and traffic management, improved parks, contextual zoning and greening 4th Avenue. These goals will be discussed in greater detail throughout this report.

We are also looking to expand our outreach throughout the community to foster better communication. We are starting a Faith-based Service Cabinet similar to our Human Service Cabinet, but focusing on our houses of worship. We are also planning to work with community-based organizations to promote and train tenant and homeowner associations. In addition, we plan on holding our first two public speak outs this summer.

In an effort to command better control over future plans by the City, in 1995 the Community Board began preparing a 197-A Plan for the area bounded by the Bay Ridge Yards, the Gowanus Expressway, Third Avenue, Hamilton Avenue, and the lower bay. The most important aspects of this document will include job development, true public access, and recreational facilities and appropriate, community-friendly infrastructure improvements. The document is a truly community-based plan culled from dozens of public meetings and studies.

In the 1980s, the State designated an Economic Development Zone in Sunset Park. The need continues for the State and Federal monies to boost incentives for commercial and manufacturing endeavors to relocate and remain in the Industrial Parks of this district. More than 40,000 of our residents are currently employed within our district. This year the City created an Industrial Business Zone to promote and preserve our industrial and manufacturing areas.

In the past few years, more adult entertainment establishments opened in our community as a result of zoning text changes that helped to close such businesses in other parts of the City. Loopholes in the regulations have allowed these businesses to flourish in this community. Our community deserves the same attention and respect as more affluent areas of the City and we should not have to bear this burden when other areas are free from these problems. At the very least, we deserve additional resources to deal with these businesses' deleterious effects.

The impact of zoning amendments on our community only reinforces our conviction that the Community Planner position that was eliminated from the budget must be restored for every community district. We recently received complaints from all over our district, but particularly along our northern and southern borders, concerning over-development. While many of these projects do fall within the context of local zoning, many are out of character with our local housing stock. Our neighboring communities have implemented protective zoning to lessen the impact of over-development, but as communities grow, development does not stop at the borders of Community Boards. Our community's activism along with the advocacy of our elected officials and the Community Board allowed us to rezone our northern border. We would like to see similar activism and coalitions in other parts of our community.

Community Boards have had to endure a reduced budget for more than a decade. Despite additional costs, such as increased mailing costs, new computers, our website, and occasional unfunded, but approved raises, and increased workload, we have had to self-fund all of these changes and reduce our staff. Our OTPS is 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 over the past decade without assistance from the City. Currently, we cannot even afford to replace our ancient computers.

The culmination of the Community Boards 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.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

The sewers, water mains, and catch basins in this community are among the oldest in Brooklyn. There are a large number of sewer collapses and undermined roadways reported to the Community Board each year. The heavy volume of traffic on 3rd, 4th, 5th and 8th Avenues, major thoroughfares and truck routes, causes severe wear and erosion to these streets and off-route trucks put an additional heavy burden on our side streets, which were not meant to accommodate such heavy vehicles.

The topography of our community is such that all waste water, above and below ground, runs downhill from 6th Avenue to 3rd Avenue, putting an abnormal strain on existing sewers and roadbeds, as well as clogging catch basins along this route with street debris.

Our Board wants DEP to intensify their catch basin cleaning program in our community, particularly on 3rd and 4th Avenues. These high volume avenues collect an inordinate amount of garbage that clog the basins and is responsible for flooding the roadways. Residents adjacent to 3rd Avenue are particularly concerned with the catch basins flooding conditions on the avenue in the 50s and 60s.

Our Board is pleased with the major street reconstruction projects that were recently completed on 19th and 50th Streets, but many more of our streets are in desperate need of similar reconstruction. Our old streets and infrastructure are crumbling and additional contracts and resources must be made for trenching activities. For years, our Board has asked for similar reconstruction projects on many of our streets. However, while the City occasionally repaves some of these streets, we are fearful the underlying causes of the degraded conditions are not addressed and repaving the streets merely covered over the problems. We believe that it may be necessary for DEP and DOT to redress these conditions much sooner and the cover up is simply a waste of funds. The cover up must stop.

Despite repeated requests over the course of at least five years to reconstruct 57th Street, the work was never done. Occasionally, DOT would fill a hole or pave a small section. Unfortunately, the underlying cause of the problem was not addressed and, sadly, in June of 2004 a man on a motorcycle had a single vehicle accident on the bad pavement and was killed. We believe that the City was derelict in its responsibility to fix this street and merely covered over the problem.

This incident could have happened anywhere in our community because there are many sinking streets in our community that DEP must address. These include parts of, but are not necessarily limited to, 30th, 31st, 37th, 43rd, 45th, 51st, 53rd, 57th, 58th and East 3rd Streets as well as 11th Avenue. We believe 45th Street between 4th and 5th Avenues is in the worst shape of any in the

community, but sadly, despite making annual requests for its rehabilitation since 1983, it still requires “further study,” according to the agency.

Our Board has also received numerous complaints about amplified noise, particularly at night. 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. At a committee meeting we were informed that DEP would step up noise monitoring in our community, especially our parks. We have not received any information on this increased activity. DEP and the NYPD must do more to ensure that every precinct has noise meters and has officers trained to use them, especially during the night shift. DEP and NYPD 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.

We are concerned that sewer outfalls still exist into Gowanus Bay. It is especially concerning that some exist within or near the future Bush Terminal Piers Park. These outfalls must be eliminated in the interest of public health and safety and a cleaner environment. DEP should work with EDC to ensure the outfalls do not adversely affect the park and the surrounding environment.

The department 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 recently 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.

TRANSPORTATION

We are very happy to note that State DOT has decided on a single tunnel alternative for the Gowanus Expressway rehabilitation. We are eager for SDOT to study the selected bulkhead tunnel option in greater detail and our Board will determine its position on the tunnel when we see the results.

We are concerned that viaduct or tunnel construction will increase traffic on our local streets as cars exit the Expressway to avoid traffic tie ups. SDOT must plan for the impact on the community, as construction will certainly take many years. Heavy traffic currently burdens our main truck routes, 3rd, 4th, and 5th Avenues, particularly in the morning and evening rush hours and this multi-year construction project has the potential to tie up traffic throughout the community daily. SDOT continues to award repair contracts for the terrible conditions of the Gowanus Expressway viaduct. Unfortunately, there promises to be no end in sight for these contracts until the viaduct is replaced or rehabilitated.

Earlier this year we were briefed on the preliminary results of DOT’s long-awaited Brooklyn Truck Route study. We were surprised that DOT does not seem to have examined the impact of the Gowanus Expressway, and its lack of entrances, has on our local truck corridors. There are no northbound entrances to the Gowanus between 65th Street and Atlantic Avenue. The only southbound entrance, at Prospect Avenue, is closed in the mornings to accommodate an HOV lane. Additionally, unless a truck gains access directly from the Gowanus to the Prospect Expressway, there

are no truck entrances to the Prospect until 7th Avenue. A truck trip generated anywhere in our community (or south of Atlantic Avenue) cannot gain access to these highways unless it travels on local streets. It is unfathomable to us that DOT did not look at the lack of highway entrances.

20th Street is a truck route in our community that suffers because of the lack of entrances. The narrow, two-way street is the legal truck corridor for vehicles to travel to the Prospect Expressway entrance at 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 effect of 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.

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 should prioritize the safety of children crossing the street, over the speed of vehicles traveling on the corridor. Particularly troubling is the safety situation at P.S. 314, which straddles three trucks routes on 3rd and 4th Avenue and 60th Street and is adjacent to an exit from the Gowanus Expressway. We are happy the study was completed and we look forward to the full implementation of DOT's safety plan for this very dangerous intersection.

In the past year DOT repaved all of 4th Avenue and the northbound lanes of 3rd Avenue. The work was done quickly and efficiently with a minimum of community impact. The southbound lanes of 3rd Avenue must also be repaved, as they are also in poor condition and are often used as an alternative to the Gowanus Expressway, particularly during construction.

We are unhappy that utility companies began digging up 4th Avenue less than a year after repaving. We were not made aware of any emergency and, therefore, DOT should not have issued permits and the companies should have been penalized for opening a newly paved street.

Community Board # 7 notes that the Department has completed the reconstruction of 5th Avenue in the community of Bay Ridge, the first phase of the complete reconstruction of 5th Avenue from 24th to 95th Streets. However, like many projects in our community, the reconstruction of our portion of 5th Avenue has been delayed for budgetary reasons. The reconstruction has been delayed twice and is now set to begin in FY08. This will encompass 5th Avenue between 24th and 34th Streets.

The third phase runs through the entirety of the Sunset Park Business Improvement District and the department must take the needs and concerns of the businesses along our main 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.

Given the tremendous difficulty in available parking, our Board is requesting site selection and construction of a municipal facility to service the 5th Avenue commercial strip. In addition, areas along 3rd Avenue under the Gowanus Expressway should be metered or posted to allow additional parking spaces for the community. Our Community Board would also like the department to undertake a feasibility study and a cost estimate to determine the possibility of decking-over a portion

of the Prospect Expressway to accommodate parking for the mom and pop businesses on Prospect Park West.

POLICE DEPARTMENT

Our precinct has made enormous strides in dealing with the safety and security of the Sunset Park and Windsor Terrace communities, as evidenced by our long-term drop in crime. We believe the precinct must make a similar determined effort to increase understanding and trust within the community. Recently, we were pleased that the Precinct has been proactive in this area.

Several high profile incidents over the past few years have spread an undercurrent of distrust in many sectors of our community. Our precinct approached this issue directly and worked through our community organizations and churches to reach out to the community and improve the relationship. It is essential for the continued success of crime reduction as a trusting public is more willing to work with the precinct.

The last few years, after the Puerto Rican Day Parade in Manhattan, there have been confrontations between the police and revelers in our community. We understand that the police are in a difficult position as they try to balance public safety with respect for those who wish to celebrate their heritage. It is unfortunate that these spontaneous celebrations are unorganized and certain individuals are unruly. Organization and sponsorship would make a world of difference. In the future, we would like to see a sponsoring organization take responsibility and plan for the day's event and logistics.

This year Captain Simonetti and his officers made a tremendous effort reaching out the community, elected officials, organizations and churches months in advance to try to keep the day's activities calm. We are extremely grateful that there were no incidents this year and give credit to the Captain and the Precinct for their efforts.

Although violent crime remains relatively low, the drop in crime appears to have waned and there is a perception that certain crimes are on the rise. This may be related to inadequate staffing at the 72nd Precinct, which has seen a decrease in officers. Police details are often sent to other activities in the community, including the Sunset Park pool, guarding prisoners at the hospital after some arrests, public safety at protests at the Metropolitan Detention Center and the ferry pier at 58th Street. In addition, we lose officers over the summer to Coney Island and Prospect Park, further reducing local headcount.

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.

Drug dealing and prostitution continue to be concern in Sunset Park. Aggressive policing and arrests have forced much of these activities indoors, making enforcement more difficult. However, it appears that open solicitation has been occurring again recently along 3rd Avenue. 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. The NYPD should provide our community with additional resources since we are already asked to

take on an additional heavy burden because of the adult businesses.

Our community has seen a great influx in adult entertainment businesses since the City changed the zoning laws to improve the economic development potential of other communities. They are a blight on Sunset Park and give the impression of a raucous and unlawful community. Many of these businesses are located next to residents or more positive institutions. We believe that other negative impacts stem from the perception created by these businesses. We suspect that many of the patrons of these businesses may also be going to prostitutes in the area. Unfortunately, numerous agencies are responsible for enforcement against the many different types of illegal behavior that goes on at these businesses or in the surrounding community, including the NYPD, DOB, and Consumer Affairs. With so many enforcement agencies, we believe that some of the negative impacts do not receive the same attention they would if enforcement of all applicable laws fell under the aegis of a single enforcement agency.

This year we have had successes with all four of our strip clubs. One closed on its own. A second was shut permanently as part of a plea agreement brokered by the District Attorney's office. A third lost its liquor license. The fourth is currently under investigation by the State Liquor Authority. For our community, the loopholed 60/40 businesses are much more prevalent and more egregious because we have no recourse since the zoning law governing them is held up by lawsuit.

Another area in which we believe enforcement should be brought under the control of a single agency concerns noise violations. Enforcement of these violations can be undertaken by the NYPD or DEP. However, we believe that each agency depends on the other to perform these duties and consequently the response is inadequate. We insist that the Department supply our precinct with this equipment and train our officers to use decibel meters so we can control amplified noise in the parks, cars, and from other amplification devices. We request vigorous enforcement of noise violations in our residential and commercial areas.

Gang and gang-related crime and violence continue to be a great concern. Often gangs are associated with certain ethnic or national origins, sometimes making investigation or infiltration difficult. The City must provide additional resources to gang enforcement within our community. However, other strategies must also be implemented to keep youth away from gangs. Additional age-appropriate facilities must be brought to our community, including youth programs and recreational areas.

Tighter monitoring of crossing guards and additional crossing guard positions are a must in our community. Many of our schools are located along major thoroughfares and the safety of the children is of vital importance. Vigorous enforcement of traffic regulations around schools must be made.

Speeding on residential streets and trucks wandering off of designated truck routes have become two of our most prevalent constituent complaints. Vigorous enforcement is essential to combatting this problem, but with inadequate staffing at the precinct and no officers trained with radar for speed enforcement, drivers understand that the chance of being caught is minimal, increasing a perception of poor enforcement activities. This is especially true when other agencies, such as DOS, are increasing enforcement with respect to homeowners and businesses. Private buses, especially ones traveling to Atlantic City, have also been growing in number in our community and we often receive complaints of them traveling off of designated routes, as well.

Two of our main commercial corridors, 5th and 8th Avenues have terrible problems with illegal

vendors. This is another area in which there are numerous enforcement agencies. Although we asked the City to put together a vendor task force in 2000 to coordinate the sweep of these avenues by the enforcement agencies, this effort never took place. The illegal vending problem has only gotten worse. We ask that additional manpower and other resources, including vans, be appropriated so that our agencies can adequately sweep these corridors in a coordinated effort and we ask that the City reconsider creating a vendor task force for our community. This is a quality-of-life problem that creates or exacerbates other neighborhood problems, including the sanitary condition of our streets. We believe enforcement of vending laws will have many positive influences throughout the community.

SANITATION

Community Board # 7 is host to numerous sanitation facilities that serve a wider area than our district. We are home to the Hamilton Avenue Marine Transfer Station, the IESI commercial waste station, BK-7 and BK-10 garages and will soon be the home of the SIMS/Hugo Neu recycling facility that will take most 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. Given this reality, the Department of Sanitation must make greater efforts to address our local issues.

Our status as a host community should allow us consideration on issues that may stem from these facilities. We've asked DOS to consider transferring ownership of the unused 52nd Street Pier to EDC for a future expansion of the planned Bush Terminal Piers Park. We've asked and received commitments from Hugo Neu for use of environmentally friendly technology, local hiring and a recycling education center. Additional issues, however, must also be addressed.

Our main commercial thoroughfare, 5th Avenue, has an active Business Improvement District that provides funds for supplemental sanitation services, including street sweeping, and additional baskets, but the avenue remains dirty even though the department has issued many summonses for dirty sidewalks. 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. The department was very active in issuing summonses after our Board assembled a panel of City agencies to discuss the matter with business leaders. Unfortunately, promised resources never materialized and the vending and cleanliness problems persist. Our Board wants a stronger, coordinated, more comprehensive effort between City agencies to rid 5th Avenue of these twin problems. Most recently, we received vending complaints on 6th and 8th Avenues, as well.

Our office has received numerous complaints from constituents this year who feel that DOS has been overzealous with enforcement activities in our community. This is especially the case with recycling enforcement. The Department's own statistics bare witness to this reality. While we have the fifth-highest recycling diversion rate in Brooklyn, we receive the fifth-most summonses. We recently wrote to Commissioner Doherty about this incongruity and suggested that resources should be readjusted to better serve our needs.

Our constituents have long sought a change in local street sweeping regulations so the entire community can have a uniform two day-a-week sweeping schedule. Our neighboring communities, some of which have lower scorecard ratings than BK-7, have these standards. Many of our constituents feel that these additional sweeping periods amount to an additional form of taxation. We were pleased to learn that our community achieved cleanliness ratings above 90% in all four

zones in July 2006. This is unprecedented in our community and can be attributed to DOS adjusting strategies, such as hand sweeping east of 6th Avenue, and making partnerships, like with the BID. This great success has allowed us to call on DOS to reduce street sweeping to a uniform two days throughout our entire district. We believe that the money saved from reduced mechanical sweeping, as well as the aforementioned recycling enforcement, can be better used for hand sweeping, additional basket pick up, vendor reinforcement, illegal dumping surveillance and other cleanliness programs to better serve our community's needs.

PARKS AND RECREATION

All too often in times of fiscal constraint, 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 recreational 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 all for mental rejuvenation, physical fitness and stress relief. However, during difficult economic times our parks see an increase in activities, but often experience a decrease in programming and upkeep. Together these facts spell trouble for our parks as overused equipment falls into despair or natural settings are overtaxed. Unfortunately for local parks, the City's main parks seem to get all the attention while our local facilities become eyesores.

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 must insist that our parks are maintained regularly and their space used for maximum efficiency due to our critical need.

Over the past few years, several community groups have been formed to plant gardens, and clean and invigorate our parks throughout the community. Our Board applauds these volunteer efforts and we ask the Department of Parks and Recreation to support these organizations as much as possible.

In the recent past, the department allowed the roof of 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 the appropriate funds 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.

The future Sunset Park High School will be built adjacent to D'Emic Park on 3rd Avenue, which we note has a play area for young children. We do not believe that this will be appropriate next to the high school and 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 supplement and enhance the physical education programs at the school. Facilities for younger children should be maintained, but access should be restricted by fencing it off.

The Olympic-sized pool in Sunset Park is only open between the 4th of July and Labor Day. This

heavily used public amenity is one of the few recreational attractions our district has to offer. The pool must be open more than two months during the year.

SOCIAL/HUMAN SERVICES

Social/human services are vital to the well being of this community. The Human Service Cabinet of Community Board 7 is the first such effort in New York City. The cabinet is a coalescing of public, voluntary, and private social and health service agencies that serve the area. The idea of a working coalition of such agencies was originally advanced from the voluntary sector, the Human Resources Administration and Community Board # 7. The broad aim of the Human Service Cabinet is to coordinate the human service agencies in order to address and improve the quality-of-life issues for the residents of the district.

Our HSC was reinvigorated in the wake of the tragedy of September 11th and we increased our meeting schedule from five to twelve meetings a year. We developed working committees to set agendas. Our HSC also polled its members to create a list of our greatest needs and we are in the process of creating committees to address these issues locally. Furthermore, our committee members believe that services for immigrants encompass all of these issues identified and are of extreme importance in this community of many and diverse immigrant populations.

This year our Board held its first Ecumenical Breakfast and were please that more than thirty religious leaders attended. This event inspired us to create a Faith-based Service Cabinet, similar in purpose to our HSC. The FBSC is currently being formulated.

Affordable and low-income housing, as well as supportive services for special needs populations, has become a much greater priority recently and will be discussed in greater detail in the Housing and Buildings section of this document.

In addition to its support of the important work done by our Human Service Cabinet, our Board believes the Administration for Children's Services must establish a local Community District Office that will be held accountable for effective delivery and coordination of services.

An increase in voucher slots for day care continues to be a priority for this 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.

EDUCATION

After 37 years, our community finally believes we won the battle to build the first public high school in this community of more that 120,000 people. When we learned that the planned school might lose its funding again, our community mobilized to fight for the funding. In April, we were delighted to learn that we won and the Mayor and Governor came to our district to sign the bill that provided the funds.

The new high school will be built between 34th and 35th Streets, from 4th Avenue to D'Emic Park. It will have capacity for 1650 students and is adjacent to public transportation. It is scheduled to open in September 2009.

Our commitment, however, does not end with the construction of a building. Our Board put together the Sunset Park High School Task Force to discuss programming and themes, monitor progress and develop creative partnerships with other local institutions and facilities so that our school will provide an outstanding education for every student. We wish to maximize this experience by drawing on the expertise and history of our entire community.

A local high school may be the most pressing, but it is far from our only need. The Education Department and SCA must work with us to improve our school infrastructure and to find a site for new state-of-the-art elementary and middle schools, in addition to the new high school. Our overcrowding problems must be alleviated if we are to improve the quality of education. PS 24 was overcrowded the day it opened. The DOE has not taken our population growth into account and, further exasperating this problem, is the need for additional English proficiency classes for the numerous young immigrant populations.

With the ever-growing and diverse immigrant populations, there is an immediate need for augmented bilingual/ESL education for our Hispanic, Eastern European, Middle Eastern and Asian populations.

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.

Monetary commitment to our two beacon school sites, the former PS 314 and PS 1, as well as to the one at IS 220, just outside our district, should be increased for further outreach and additional programs and services. The beacon programs are vital in a community that lacks adequate parks and community spaces.

YOUTH

The population of the district has a large percentage of young people and programs for youths are greatly needed. Since our district has a minimum of recreational space, our children must rely on our beacon schools 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 so that the organizations can provide these vital services to the community.

Day care is a nightmare of red tape. Several agencies are involved in day care operations. A special day care agency must be established to streamline guidelines and requirements, building and fire code compliance and policy/operation functions.

It is imperative that we seriously consider the need for after school and vacation care for children whose parents/guardians work. Additional funds must be available to support organizations that provide these services and the City's budget must accommodate for more day care vouchers and community-based day care facilities. Furthermore, the department should develop a training program for potential home-based day care providers with the dual purpose of creating jobs and alleviating the day care glut.

We were very happy to learn that the number of Summer Youth Employment Program slots were

increased this year. Early positive work experience is crucial to the development of our young residents. We would also like to see an expansion of the year-round program.

Monies allocated through RFPI and YDDP funds through the “Community Share” allocations must be increased and meaningful monitoring must be placed with the community boards. DYCD is ill equipped to monitor and recommend changes in the program and the review must be a mechanism for change.

The position of Youth Coordinator, which was eliminated from the budget, must be restored. The Youth Coordinator served as a vital link between the community-based organizations and the vast bureaucracy of the city.

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 combat 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 multi-cultural/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 die from respiratory illness than WNV.

The City, State, and Federal governments must stringently apply all applicable environmental standards to our older, dirtier power plants.

HOUSING & BUILDINGS

More than thirty-five percent of our renters live either doubled-up or in severely overcrowded conditions. Looking at only our Census figures from 1990 to 2000, our population has increased nearly twenty percent, but without a corresponding increase in our housing stock. HPD’s grim statistics answered our questions as to where these people live. The people who live in illegally converted apartments are often living in unsafe and unhealthy conditions. The large influx in population has not resulted in an increase in local City services. In fact we have seen police and fire coverage reduced. We are worried that this is a disaster waiting to happen and we feel it is imperative to assign additional buildings inspectors to our community to enforce the law and ensure a safe living environment before tragedy strikes.

The northern section of our community saw over-development encroach very quickly over the past three years. We are pleased that the City acted swiftly on our request to protect the character of the northern part of our district through rezoning. Developers reacted to the 2003 rezoning of the

neighboring community in Park Slope by simply buying properties south of 15th Street on which to build. While there was technically no violation of zoning or building codes in many cases, developers maximized the new buildings to take advantage of the zoning.

Many residents, marched and signed petitions in favor of contextual zoning to protect the low-density, low-rise nature of the neighborhood. This was a process echoed by the residents of the southern part of our district, south of 15th Street, an area adjacent to Bay Ridge, which was rezoned earlier this year. We are hopeful to complete the southern Sunset Park rezoning soon and we are certain that others in our district will begin to lobby for additional rezoning, as was recently done by the residents of East Windsor Terrace. We believe that Sunset Park is especially vulnerable to over-development, given its current zoning.

We are also pleased that City Planning incorporated an affordable housing concept into its plan for rezoning on 4th Avenue, but we would prefer a mandatory program to the planned voluntary bonus program for an area that will already be upzoned.

There was great concern about developers in the rezoned area rushing projects to get a foundation in the ground before the new zoning is implemented, thus grandfathering their project. We believe this rush to construct creates a danger to the community and workers. Our fears were immediately realized because only four days after the Community Board voted in favor of the plan, a worker was killed at a construction site on 20th Street. The location had previously received violations. The City must figure out a way to prevent this rush. Perhaps disallowing new permits and limiting grandfathering to buildings with foundations at the time of certification rather than implementation will eliminate the problem.

City Planning regulations from 1995 helped many areas of the City to get rid of their unwanted adult entertainment establishments. Unfortunately, the regulations that helped to “clean up” Times Square have had a deleterious affect on our community. From 3rd Avenue to the waterfront, these businesses have proliferated. It appears that many of the businesses are openly violating the regulations by locating within 500 feet of a residence, house of worship or each other. We have been informed that most of our businesses do not qualify as “adult” because they fall within the 60/40 loophole in the regulations that defines adult establishments as having more than 40% of their space dedicated to sex related materials. Often these sham regulations are not even adhered to. The City must close the loophole and enforce laws vigorously.

Our Board is pleased the Lutheran Medical Center is seeking to build additional senior housing. However, the City must take a more active role in seeking space and funding for providing additional space for senior, affordable, and low-income housing in the community. Demand for space and rental costs will continue to rise unless additional housing units can be made available through renovation or construction.

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 a cycle of decay.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

There are many proposals regarding investment in the Sunset Park Waterfront that could poten-

tially 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, South Brooklyn Marine Terminal, Bush Terminal, the Moor McCormick Building and a 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. We now see a new tide of prosperity potentially coming to our shore.

Our Community Board recognizes the economic potential of our waterfront and began to plan for our future more than ten years ago by initiating a 197-A study of the area. By the end of the year we will complete our study and be ready to submit it to the City. We have worked diligently to hold as many community meetings and forums as possible and have held these meetings in Spanish and Chinese, as well as English. We have tried to include insights and interests from all segments of our community and have held meetings with many City and State agencies to ensure we are pursuing achievable goals. The 197-A Plan will be an important tool for intelligent development and community-based planning.

Unfortunately, while in many ways the planning effort has been a tribute to the hard work of volunteers, committee members, and staff, we often do not have the expertise when it comes to many aspects of planning and we needed a planner to help in this endeavor. Furthermore, materials and publications are vital to the dissemination of information to the community. While the City provides the legal grounds for the study there is no corresponding budget line. This puts the Community Board in the unusual position of having to raise funds through a fiscal conduit agency to pay for our planner, printing and other expenses. Potentially, this could be a conflict for our or other Community Boards because those who donate funds may seek to influence the outcome of a study. Therefore, we believe that the City should provide a budget line or fund for 197-A plans. At the very least, we believe the City should provide assistance in finding appropriate grants or foundations that may be applicable for these studies.

We are heartened that EDC recognizes that our community deserves the same access to our waterfront that other communities enjoy with theirs. EDC proposes to create a 23.7-acre public park in the area of the Bush Terminal Piers. Our Board strongly supports this effort and we wish for construction to commence as quickly as possible. We also support increasing the size of the park to maximize the community's access to the waterfront and recreational opportunities. Additional public space may also be found alongside some of our development projects. For example, an underused corridor abutting the harbor behind Brooklyn Army Terminal could be attached to the public space of the pier increasing our waterfront access. We are excited about other opportunities for public space as part of a Brooklyn-wide waterfront greenway/bike/pedestrian path as proposed by several organizations.

Another opportunity that may allow for an integration of economic activities and waterfront access is EDC's upgrade of the bulkheads and sheds at the South Brooklyn Marine Terminal. EDC issued an RFP for the site and is contracting with Axis Group, an automobile importer and customizer to operate the facility. We have been informed that such a facility may create 400 jobs. In addition, we discussed "greening" the edges of the facility, perhaps all the way to the water and possibly as part of the larger proposed greenway. The edge of the greenway would be directly adjacent to the Bush Terminal Piers, the future home of our waterfront park, thereby allowing for a link of these recreational spaces. We believe this potential for an integration of economic development and public green space will be a model for similar development around the City.

Our Board welcomes economic development along our waterfront, but insist this development is limited to water-dependent and community uses. Our waterfront is our greatest physical asset with spectacular views and large areas of land ripe for development. Very little of our waterfront, Brooklyn Army Terminal Pier 4 (58th Street), is open for public access making it even more valuable to the community. Much more of our waterfront must be made accessible for the people of this community. The recent construction of a power plant at 23rd Street by the New York Power Authority on the waterfront has taken a large site from the community and placed a facility on the water that could have been placed in an area that wasn't adjacent to the harbor. Despite a promise from NYPA, this site is now strewn with weeds and garbage, thereby increasing the negative impact this loud, odiferous site has on the community.

We strongly believe that any development in our community must be sensitive to 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 the former FDA building on 3rd Avenue, in the interest of the community. We must insist that fair-share principles are respected when siting such facilities and that a local public hearing must take place for each proposed facility before any other facilities are allowed.

In addition to our industrial and manufacturing area, economic development must also address the three major commercial corridors in the district: 5th Avenue, 8th Avenue, and Prospect Park West. These commercial areas must be maintained through grants, low interest loans, and a serious attempt to address the universal needs of store owners, such as over-zealous Sanitation Enforcement Personnel, maintenance, and replacement of parking meters, more lighting on the strips and better protection from the NYPD. The City should also consider locating municipal parking facilities near these vital commercial centers.

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 nation 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 and cooperation can we ensure the quality-of-life for our residents and the vital continuation of the City of New York.

Sincerely,

Randolph Peers

Randolph Peers

Chairman

Jeremy Laufer

Jeremy Laufer

District Manager