



MANHATTAN COMMUNITY BOARD FIVE

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DISTRICT NEEDS STATEMENT FISCAL YEAR 2008

INTRODUCTION

Community Board Five represents the central business districts of New York City including midtown Manhattan. We also represent residential areas with diverse needs. Our district is the center of New York's tourism industry. Times Square, the Empire State Building and three of the regions transportation hubs; Grand Central Station, Penn Station, and the Port Authority Terminal, all fall within or lie on the border of Community Board Five. The majority of New York City's more than 50 million visitors each year will walk our streets. We strive to accommodate the residents, businesses and tourists of our community.

Everyday our district faces extreme congestion. Both vehicular and pedestrian traffic already exceeds sidewalk and street capacity. It is critical to both the quality of life in our area, and the impression made on tourists who visit New York City, that all city services focus on minimizing this congestion and its negative effects. Many of our needs are simple: improve traffic control, limit emissions from trucks and buses on our streets, enforce parking regulations throughout our district, improve pedestrian flow, enforce laws and regulations restricting street peddling, and consider limiting the size of trucks permitted in these congested areas.

Midtown has seen record development and we anticipate additional growth in this heavily congested area. Residential and office towers are continuing to be built on Sixth, Seventh and Eighth Avenues. Concern for safety, cleanliness, and the effects of these projects on pedestrian and traffic flow still top our district's needs. We continue to urge the City's agencies to increase inspections and fines as both an enforcement tool and a revenue source. Accident site prevention should be a high priority and construction sites should be closely scrutinized.

At the same time the libraries, parks, museums, and other institutions serving our area are vital to the cultural health of the City and our district's ability to maintain the tourism that is essential to our economic future.

Noise is a frequent complaint that the Board receives from its constituents. The City needs to adopt a meaningful noise code.

Community Board Five recognizes the need to provide safety and security to our citizens as a top priority for the City. We commend the heroic efforts of the Fire and Police departments. Terrorism continues to be a real threat in our district. The majority of the City's landmarks and tourist attractions are within our Board. We believe that all city departments should focus on developing emergency information channels and a civil defense program.

We are privileged to have several Business Improvement Districts in our area and we feel they are successful in providing better services within their borders. We endorse the BIDs and the work

they have been doing and are encouraged by the Mayor's willingness to allow increases in the BID budgets. However, the City should not reduce service in the BID areas in expectation of the BIDs covering the shortfall. BIDs should provide supplemental services to those already provided by the City and should not be used to reduce the cost of basic city services. Many areas within our district, which are not covered by the BIDs, are poorly maintained and unacceptably dirty. These areas should be provided with additional trash baskets, improved trash basket pickup, more frequent street cleaning and better sanitation enforcement.

HUMAN SERVICES (Dept of Homeless Services, Human Resources Administration and Dept. for the Aging)

There is an increased need for basic services for the homeless, affordable quality housing, preventive mental health services, childcare, foster care, drop-in-centers, outreach programs and improved shelter programs. Homelessness in particular remains a terrible problem citywide and especially in the CB5 area. We are particularly concerned about the reemerging homeless issue in Times Square. Increased funding to serve this population is necessary.

Community Board Five strongly supports initiatives to reduce overhead and streamline the administration of social services, however, reductions in personnel in divisions responsible for child welfare, public assistance, medical assistance and adult services should not place a burden on the poor, needy and disadvantaged.

HOUSING PRESERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT

The construction, renovation and restoration of affordable housing must be expedited. We recommend that the various agencies responsible for housing integrate strategies. There is an urgent need in our City for the development of programs that can provide permanent, affordable housing more quickly and efficiently than is done under currently existing programs. The West Side development provides a great opportunity to address the affordable housing issue.

Proper code enforcement should be encouraged. We encourage HPD (along with DOB and Corporation Counsel) to vigorously pursue the collection of fines from repeat violators.

DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

The City must move forward with a meaningful noise code. We urge the Department to engage other relevant city agencies (like DOB for construction related noise and NYPD for commercial noise) and civic organizations in discussions regarding proposed changes. There should be an opportunity for full community participation as the proposal develops. Furthermore, additional inspectors are needed to ensure compliance with noise code.

Safety of our water supply and air quality monitoring is a crisis, need today. Given the wear and tear on the infrastructure, and the crush of pedestrians and vehicles on our streets, sewer and water main maintenance are of paramount importance. Water main breaks have caused extensive damage in our district resulting in the expenditure of tens of millions of dollars, the loss of business and major disruptions to residents' and visitors' lives. Clean air commercial and public buses are the preferred means of transportation on our streets.

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Traffic

Traffic problems continue to plague our district. We support the City's moratorium of street fairs. There is still a pressing need for more traffic and parking control agents and Police Officers. Any reduction in police enforcement should be matched by an increase in Traffic Control Officers. Laws against double parking, blocking intersections and blocking bus stops should be vigorously enforced and ample staffing levels should be maintained to allow consistent parking enforcement throughout our district.

The City should undertake programs to discourage the use of private vehicles in Midtown. The City should review policies regarding black car services and tourist buses to address the congestion they create. These programs should focus on the problems faced by emergency vehicles attempting to get through our crowded streets. The City should limit hours of operation and access to certain streets for large trucks in Midtown; this would reduce peak hour congestion and air pollution.

Prompt repair of potholes, cracks, replacement of street signs and the painting of lane markings are essential and should not be delayed. All repairs must be complete and flush with existing pavement.

The muni-meter program has been well received in our district and we support expansion of this program, which has potential to reduce cost, improve enforcement and increase revenue.

Late Night Towing

Community Board Five has a continuing problem of noise and traffic caused by the proliferation of bars and nightclubs. We support nighttime towing and ticketing as a successful strategy to the ancillary problems of the City's nightlife.

Bicycles

Unsafe cyclists continue to present serious traffic problems. We need enforcement of traffic laws to protect both the cyclists and pedestrians. A licensing system should be considered. We also support the 8th Avenue bicycle lane.

Pedestrian Traffic

Community Board Five has three major transportation hubs, the theater district, and commercial enterprises which cause a high influx of commuters and patrons. The City must study and develop a long-term strategy to ease pedestrian congestion and related safety issues.

Bollards and planters complicate the pedestrian and congestion issues. We need a more consistent policy that balances security concerns and the needs of pedestrian safety.

PARKS

Park Sanitation

We are particularly concerned about the growing rodent and sanitation issues in our parks. Use of our parks requires a strategy, which is not solely focused on commercial, and fund raising

activities. We are particularly concerned about the extensive use of Madison Square Park and Bryant Park for commercial activity.

Community Board Five places a high priority on the Parks in our district. We need our Parks to be clean and well maintained. Renovations must be carried out with input from the community and kept consistent with agreed-upon plans. Changes to an approved project must be brought back for community input prior to implementation.

Both Union Square Park and Madison Square Park require full-time staff. Local business and community support should be fostered and used to help with park maintenance, but we disagree with placing management of parks in private hands.

POLICE

We believe it is essential that this district be safe for its residents and visitors. Police effectiveness is determined by the officers who are available to make arrests and deter crime through their presence. Assigning officers to non-patrol administrative duties reduces police effectiveness and increases costs. We continue to press for further civilianization of administrative functions within the Police Department.

We urge that officer deployment be assigned by volume, not by precinct, so that large, busy precincts are not understaffed as compared to smaller, quieter precincts. We support the technological upgrades of our precincts to increase efficiency at an expedited rate.

Community Board Five would like to see Cabaret units reinstated in all precincts. We urge the expansion of the Paid Detail Unit (PDU) program to include nightlife establishments with liquor licenses.

We are also concerned with the impact of street vending on pedestrian congestion and on commercial store operators. Recent changes in street vending laws have made enforcement difficult, at best. We urge the City to develop comprehensive training for Police Officers in the enforcement of regulations pertaining to street vending. Strong enforcement is critical to reduce sidewalk congestion and to protect legitimate merchants. We urge strict enforcement of laws regarding counterfeit goods.

We urge aggressive enforcement of laws regarding bicyclists and bike lanes; police bicycle officers should be increased to combat this problem. A licensing system should be considered for bicycles in the City.

There is a pressing need for an increase in the number of traffic control agents. Direction of traffic and traffic enforcement, with particular emphasis on the problems of double parking and illegal standing, must become a top priority throughout our district.

FIRE DEPARTMENT

As with the Police Department, emergency service systems must be integrated between all emergency responders. There is also need for improved training for personnel in the emergency (911) system. A media campaign is needed to alert the public to the importance of allowing emergency vehicles the right-of-way on our streets. Existing firehouses are essential to public safety and protecting property. Any firehouse closings would threaten the safety of this densely populated district.

DEPARTMENT OF BUILDINGS

We encourage DOB to vigorously pursue the collection of fines from violators through increased inspection, additional plan examiners and reduction of self-certification. An increased emphasis on site safety and hazardous material enforcement is needed in our district.

Community Board Five feels that a comprehensive overhaul of construction regulations is needed to bring the construction code up-to-date. Inspection and enforcement of work sites is critical to reduce collapse and scaffold failures in our district.

The Board also encourages aggressive enforcement against illegal signage, including signage on temporary scaffolding. We do not support the use of over sized signage in mixed-use areas.

DEPARTMENT OF CITY PLANNING

With increased pedestrian usage in our district comes the need for more sidewalk area. At many hours of the day, Midtown sidewalks are overcrowded, creating a safety hazard. Coordination with the Department of Transportation and the Department of Buildings is needed to ensure that construction in crowded areas includes setbacks at the street level to allow for more sidewalk space.

The zoning and building regulations for new construction are outdated. They are inadequate for dealing with modern building usage and do not reflect the accommodations necessary for integration of new buildings into the Midtown environment. Additionally, security precautions and the use of “black cars” and tour buses should be incorporated into land use designs.

Current regulations do not provide for any accommodation for the many small trucks and vans that clog our streets by double parking. Vendor carts using garage space for parking also create congestion, which needs to be addressed. Many large tenants employ fleets of car service vehicles, which line the streets waiting for their designated passengers. New buildings should be required to accommodate this usage with on-site facilities and a plan to minimize traffic disruption.

Pedestrian circulation requirements should be strengthened and expanded. All new large buildings (including so-called “as-of-right” developments) should undergo a discretionary review process designed to ensure that pedestrian and vehicle traffic will not be adversely affected by the new development. Included in this review should be a greater emphasis on the needs of persons with disabilities. Mid-block pedestrian passageways with appropriate safeguards should be a goal for every standard block in Midtown. Regulations to ensure that existing mid-block passageways remain open and visible to the public should be strictly enforced.

All buildings must be designed to accommodate present-day recycling requirements including on-site accommodation for sorting, separation and storage as well as adequate off-street loading facilities. Loading facilities should accommodate trucks with 75-foot trailers and provide ample room to turn around inside the building so that trucks can both head in and head out for deliveries and pick-ups.

EDUCATION

The overall success of the City’s schools has a great impact on our community and the lives of all New Yorkers. The inadequacy of the City’s education system hinders the City’s job development, economy and anti-crime efforts. Adequate funds for qualified teachers in all classrooms, after-school enhancement programs, E.S.L. initiatives, proper class size, and tutoring at the primary

level are necessary. Class size should be kept small enough to allow learning. Capital must be provided to ensure the renovation or replacement of decaying schools. A better system for controlling costs of school operations is critical. We are also concerned with the rising cost of tuition within the City University of New York system. The City should aggressively seek funding from the state to supplement this vitally important education resource.

311 COMPLAINT CENTER

A centralized information and complaint center for New York City has become an important tool for servicing our citizens and visitors. It makes sense to centralize complaints so that statistics can be mapped and patterns discerned. However, this information must be shared with the relevant Community Board so that we may continue our charter-mandated mission of identifying community needs, resolving community complaints, effectively representing our community and making recommendations on its behalf. Accurate and detailed statistical data as to what complaints in our district are being filed directly with the 311 system is critical for proper enforcement and district needs assessment. Stronger coordination between City agencies is needed.

There should also be improved training of 311 personnel to ensure that complaints are properly recorded and routed to appropriate agencies.

CULTURAL AFFAIRS

We strongly favor increases in the City's cultural affairs budget, not just for the Cultural Institutions Group, but also the Program Groups, which represent hundreds of large, medium and small arts organizations in neighborhoods of the City. We urge the development of a comprehensive plan for the arts that will maximize the potential of these activities and their links to tourism and business.

MAYOR'S OFFICE OF MIDTOWN ENFORCEMENT

We find the Mayor's Office of Midtown Enforcement (OME) critical to a safe environment in all of the Midtown districts. OME does an invaluable job of controlling illegal activities in Manhattan from 14th to 59th Streets. OME also develops specific civil enforcement initiatives in other areas of the City. The activities of personnel in this agency are also revenue generating and should not be cut.

DEPARTMENT OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS

DCA must be more aggressive in licensing, inspecting, and enforcement of sidewalk cafes and street vendors.

HEALTH (Health and Hospitals Corporation and Dept. of Health & Mental Hygiene)

We rely on the hospitals in the City for crises and healthcare service. These hospitals must be funded appropriately.

Specifically, being in the catchment area for Bellevue Hospital, the district depends on the Hospital for a wide range of services including emergency and outpatient care. Bellevue needs adequate funding and equipment to provide:

- Treatment for non-English speaking and hearing-impaired patients

- Care for the victims of violent assault
- Care for AIDS patients
- Continuation of the TB program
- Enhancement of AIDS/HIV services in psychiatry
- Prison health care improvements
- Increased pharmacy access
- Patient education/counseling
- Asthma treatment programs

SANITATION

Community Board Five requires constant street sweep-up and basket trucks because of its high concentration of commercial activity, public areas, traffic congestion and escalating residential population. Streets in the non-BID sections of Midtown are unacceptably dirty. Trash baskets continue to overflow or are missing. More litter baskets will help keep the area cleaner as well. Damaged litter baskets should be replaced throughout the district. We believe that additional basket trucks and crews are necessary in the CB5 area.

Community Board Five continues to support recycling efforts. The Department of Sanitation should look for ways to make recycling more economically sound. Strict enforcement of pick-up rules must be imposed to prevent diversion of trash to illegal operators. Waste prevention should be vigorously pursued. The City should look for ways to reduce the proliferation of non-degradable packaging. The City should study practical uses of waste materials and vigorously pursue utilization of recycled materials by City agencies that will allow the Department of Sanitation to realize significant savings in the cost of waste pick-up and disposal and allow the reinstatement of full recycling.

“Clean-up bonds” should be required for parades as they are for street fairs. No use of public streets or parks should be permitted unless the City is guaranteed that there will be no additional cost of cleaning up.

Additional sanitation enforcement agents and sanitation officers are needed. Since enforcement positions are revenue producing, it is economically advantageous to increase their numbers. The lack of enforcement is a particular problem at our many construction sites.

YOUTH (Dept. of Youth and Community Development and Administration for Children Services)

Adequate funding for the Department of Youth and Community Development and the Administration for Children’s Services is necessary. We specifically ask for increased funding for programs serving children at risk.

LIBRARIES

The New York Public Library continues to need additional funding to meet the demand for increased materials and hours of service. Funding for capital improvements is critical as many librar-

ies in our district are housed in aging buildings. We request expansion of the libraries' websites, additional technological training and on-line access to reference materials. With the increased technological services offered by the library, additional funds are needed for computer equipment, maintenance, support and public training. In addition, sufficient funding levels for library building maintenance and security are essential.

LANDMARKS

Community Board Five is home to many significant landmark buildings and several Historic Districts. We are requesting increased funding for inspections and strict enforcement. We believe all landmark violations should result in significant fines.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

New York needs a marketing plan that will bring technical, service, and professional employment opportunities. A cost/benefit analysis should be conducted before any subsidies or tax breaks are granted to retain or attract corporations to the City. Furthermore, a corporation that is granted a subsidy but which fails to fulfill its part of the contract should be penalized. Training programs for welfare recipients moving to work are essential to integrating this group into the work force.

TIMES SQUARE

Additional resources should be made available in Times Square to ensure that traffic moves smoothly, construction sites are safe, pedestrian flow is unimpeded by barriers, illegal street vendors, or dangerous/defective sidewalks. Alternative transportation strategies should be considered. Community Board Five urges the City to adopt a moratorium on the erection of any new permanent impediments to pedestrian circulation (including but not limited to newsstands, kiosks, telephone booths, statuary, lighting poles, bollards, planters, sidewalk cafes and signposts and other street furniture) in the bow-tie area, between Broadway and Seventh Avenue, from 42nd to 48th Streets, except for such items designed to reduce congestion. We also support expanding pedestrian sidewalk space in the Times Square area. We encourage and support the City's investment in improving Duffy Square, including TKTS.

Businesses that have frequent onlookers or waiting patrons standing on sidewalks and blocking pedestrian flow, should be required to present plans to the Community Board before they are allowed to use public space and amenities for their private commerce.

Respectfully submitted,



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