



Community Board No. 2

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STATEMENT OF DISTRICT NEEDS

INTRODUCTION

Community Board 2 represents the areas of Sunnyside, Woodside, Long Island City and a portion of West Maspeth. The district is bounded on the north by Queens Plaza North, the northern property line of the Sunnyside Rail Yard and Northern Boulevard; on the east by the Con Rail property; on the south by Calamus, Maurice and Maspeth Avenues and Newtown Creek; the East River to the west.

Community Board 2 is a diverse zoning district consisting of one, two family homes as well as a large number of multiple dwellings including Queens West, a very rapidly expanding residential district; commercial, manufacturing and industrial areas; mass transit systems and is accessible by a number of arterial highways, bridges, and the Queens Midtown Tunnel.

Board 2 is home to Citicorp Tower One and Two, Gotham Center, the UN Credit Bank, Silvercup Studios, DeVry Institute, LaGuardia Community College, LaGuardia Performing Arts Center, P.S. 1 Contemporary Art Museum, Thalia Spanish Theatre; and the Borden Avenue Veterans Residence. The Long Island City Business Improvement District and the Sunnyside Business Improvement District are working to improve and enhance the commercial districts in CB 2.

Board meetings are held on the first Thursday of every month September through June.

An example of the diverse residential and commercial districts within CB 2, Sunnyside Gardens was designated as a Landmark District while not far from Sunnyside Gardens there is the industrial portion of Maspeth with some of the largest trucking and distribution firms in New York City.

Hunters Point, in Long Island City, a special mixed-use district with an IBZ, (Industrial Business Zone) and is experiencing rapidly expanding residential developments. The Department of City Planning rezoned portions of Long Island City that will allow for commercial development along Jackson Avenue and created a Hunters Point Sub District.

The Queens West Waterfront Development in Long Island City has seen a rapid growth of residential developments along what is known today as Queens West North. Hunters Point South is planned for 5,000 new mixed income residential units to include retail stores, a new school and waterfront park land along the East River.

DEPARTMENT FOR THE AGING:

Community Board 2 is home to one of the largest populations of senior citizens. This Board conducted a survey and identified that seniors in this district are in need of senior multi-language counseling and application preparation services, affordable housing, around the clock home care, health care and transportation services.

In addition, attention has been directed with a need to expand the Meals-On-Wheels Program to the homebound residing in the area and an increased demand for skilled nursing to conduct home visits to the growing frail elderly population residing in Board 2.

Presently, seniors within the boundaries of Community Board 2 are serviced by only one full service senior center located in Sunnyside at Sunnyside Community Services. The seniors in the communities of Long Island City and Woodside, with over two-third of CB#2's senior population, need community based full service senior centers. There is a need for new centers and maintaining of St. Mary's Senior Center in Long Island City and the growing Latino and Asian senior populations in Woodside. With the increasing number of participants seeking services, Community Board 2 supports increased funding levels to senior centers in order to meet the needs of our senior citizen population.

CITY SERVICES

Livery Services

The number of base stations and livery car services operating within Community Board 2 continues to be a major source of concern. Because of the district's proximity to major arterial roadways, and the mass transit system, this area has become a prime location for livery companies. Currently, there are approximately forty (40) base stations housed within this district and growing.

Despite the fact that livery drivers claim to be dispatched from off-street parking locations, they routinely roam local roadways, and they utilize on-street parking spaces at metered areas along Queens Boulevard and Roosevelt Avenue. Moreover, the Board is regularly presented with inadequate, and often questionable, leases or other documentation of licensees' off-street parking facilities.

Complaints related to livery drivers who double park, obstruct hydrants and crosswalks are frequently generated to Board 2. The noted issues create a minimum number of on-street parking spaces for patrons shopping at local businesses, and unsafe conditions for pedestrians and motorists throughout the community.

This Board has benefited from TLC Enforcement programs that have been addressing complaints. Further, Community Board 2 continues to review TLC applications, makes recommendations on base station requests, and notifies the agency of problematic operations in the district.

Community Board 2 welcomes increased enforcement, on a continuous basis, of licensee's utilization of metered spaces, particularly at 61st Street at Roosevelt Avenue and at Queens Boulevard at 46th Street. In addition, the Board would like to see greater TLC verification and oversight with respect to the leases and other documentation tendered by licensees for off-street parking facilities.

LIQUOR LICENSING

The New York State Liquor Authority issues liquor licenses to establishments throughout the City of New York. However, this agency (with a minimal number of inspectors for New York State) is not empowered with the responsibility to enforce the laws of both the state and city. Local precincts have, and continue to conduct inter-agency inspections of local businesses that serve alcoholic beverages.

The Board has frequently requested information from the NYS Liquor Authority and invited SLA representatives to meet with CB2. More significantly, the Board regularly submits comments, and occasionally objections, with respect to the granting and/or renewal of certain SLA licenses, without response from the SLA as to its action on such applications or renewals. This occurs even under circumstances where the SLA is required by law to make a finding that the granting of such a license "is in the best interest of the community" and delineate its reasons for such a finding. The New York State Liquor Authority needs to pay more attention to community concerns and issues, prior to approving liquor licenses.

SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT

Residential curbside recycling and source separation of paper, metal, plastic bottles and glass was implemented in this District in 1993. Currently recycling in New York City is only 17% and initiatives should be developed to increased diversion rates for recyclables.

Marine Transfer Stations throughout the City should be re-opened and utilized for the transport of putrescible waste by barge. Transport by rail should also be implemented. Currently, New York City's garbage is being trucked to landfills in New Jersey, resulting in increased air pollution, damage to highways and bridges by the additional heavy trucks and wasted money.

New York City should implement collection of paint and hazardous waste to safely dispose of toxic materials. Collection of compostable materials, as well as distribution of the compost, should be continued and expanded to include yard waste collected in the spring and summer.

DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Air Quality

Air pollution continues to be a matter of great concern in Community Board 2. This mixed-use district consists of a vast number of manufacturing, industrial and commercial operations with several waste transfer stations that are expanding their facilities--issues that warrant air monitoring. These concerns as well as Board 2's proximity to several arterial highways and major thoroughfares (i.e. Brooklyn Queens Expressway, Long Island Expressway, Queens and Northern Boulevards, Roosevelt Avenue, etc.) contribute to this district's focus on air quality. Plans to place air monitoring equipment at sites throughout the borough, particularly in Community Board 2, requires continued support by our Environmental agencies.

Noise

Loud noise raises blood pressure, disturbs sleep and causes hearing loss. New York City government has recently recognized the negative impact of noise on the health of its citizens by enacting noise regulations. The city should enforce this law for the health of its citizens.

Also, there have been increasing complaints within the Community Board 2 district of noise emanating from within bars and other establishments, as well as outside such establishments from patrons congregating for the purpose of smoking. The Board would like to see greater enforcement of existing regulation of such conduct, rather than the enactment of additional restrictions such as the proposed Cabaret Law and Noise Code changes.

As part of the East Side Access Project, environmental barriers should be erected on the south side of the new track near residences and businesses to ameliorate the existing noise (currently 68 decibels) and that expected to be caused by the additional trains.

Sewers

Community Board 2 is served by storm, sanitary and combined sewer systems. Many of the sewers now in use throughout our district are among the oldest in the City and are unable to handle the increased volume caused by plans for higher density residential development and business expansion and growth. The City must continue to provide improved systems and participate in the planning for new development.

Sludge Management

The beneficial reuse of sludge continues to be a priority concern since the City signed the Ocean Dumping Ban Act. The heavy metal content of city sludge must be abated and environmentally conscious programs and technologies must continue to be studied, and disposal techniques developed.

Water Supply

The construction of Water Tunnel 3, which runs through Community Board 2, is expected to improve the distribution system in western Queens. Board 2 has been approved by Percent for Art to develop open space at 73rd Street, north of 51st Avenue at the water tunnel construction site in our district.

Board 2 supports the establishment of a public display about the water tunnel project, as well as outdoor recreational space, on 37th Avenue, between 46th and 48th Streets. This site is owned by the City of New York and is currently used by the Department of Transportation to store Jersey barriers and light poles. In the future it will be used for access to a valve chamber for Water Tunnel 3. The site has a historically valuable building once used by the New York Water Works. It is in Board 1 just to the north of Board 2 but will serve residents of both boards, as well as visitors to the area.

EDUCATION

Schools

For a number of years Community Board 2 has requested improvements to existing schools located in School Districts 14 and 30 serving this area's youth. Many of our schools have outstanding work orders for repairs to broken windows, inoperable doors and faulty plumbing. School structures should be maintained in top condition to insure the safety of the student enrollment. The Board of Education and the School Construction Authority need to review procedures for repairs to school facilities and streamline the process to allow for repairs within a reasonable timeframe.

Board 2 has identified a need for new schools to alleviate overcrowding and to create additional classroom space. We must continue to advocate for funding to construct new educational facilities and expand existing schools. We would welcome the addition of more new small high schools to our area, as long as they are developed on a new site, and not housed in any of our currently over-utilized school buildings. Community Board 2 looks forward to working closely with the noted agencies to assist in identifying suitable sites for these new high schools, for expanding and creating additions to existing schools, and for the construction of new schools. CB2 is looking forward to a new school at the Hunters Point South development site. IS 125 is in need of attention, as the students are still housed in portable classrooms.

FIRE DEPARTMENT/PUBLIC SAFETY

Firehouses and Battalions servicing this district and adjoining communities should be kept open to insure the safety of the public. In addition, with the on-going development of the Long Island City waterfront, the NYC Fire Department must review the current services in south-western Queens to insure manpower levels and equipment are adequate for the safety of the Long Island City community.

We must continue to work with the NYC Fire Department's Emergency Medical Services to identify permanent sites throughout the district for their equipment.

The Board's area also lacks adequate EMS ambulance coverage on a 24-hour basis. The boundaries of the Community Board are spread out and the recent traffic safety changes along Queens Boulevard appear to have added to EMS response times, which exceed citywide averages. The Board would like the number of 24-hour ambulance tour shifts currently serving our community increased to no less than five such shifts.

HEALTH ISSUES

Southwest Queens lacks a primary care medical facility and outpatient clinics to serve the medical needs of Community Board 2's increasing population. In the past, this Board spoke to the Queens Borough President on the concept of construction of a major medical complex in western Queens. Currently, Queens' residents travel to Manhattan or to Eastern Queens to receive specialized medical services.

The Long Island City area is severely underserved by the City's public health network. In a health care survey, by the Floating Hospital of New York, Long Island City was found to be one of the most critically underserved communities in New York City. The area has one of the highest rates of child and HIV-AIDS caused diseases in Queens County. The nearest city supported full service health care facility for low-income families is either in Manhattan or Eastern Queens. A full service health clinic needs to be established in the Long Island City area.

In addition, there is a dramatic need for a low-income child daycare center within Community Board 2. In the last six years, in the Sunnyside/Woodside area, the birth rate has averaged over 1,500 live births per year; 85% were births to foreign born mothers, and 65% to mothers on Medicaid. This high rate of births (4th highest CB rate in Queens County) and high rate of mothers on Medicaid (3rd highest CB rate in Queens County) calls for affordable child daycare for the more than 95,000 minority residents in Board 2.

POLICE DEPARTMENT

The 108th Police Precinct presently located at 5-47 50th Avenue, Long Island City, is in the southwestern most portion of our district, just two blocks from the East River.

The existing building was dedicated in 1904 and is surrounded by attached row homes and manufacturing firms to the west and is east of Vernon Boulevard. The stationhouse is too small to accommodate the number of police officers assigned to this precinct. There is a lack of ample facilities for female officers and the building is deficient in adequate space for support services of the 108th Police Precinct.

The 108th Precinct lacks off-street parking areas to accommodate staff vehicles, as well as official vehicles assigned to the precinct. Due to the lack of space, parking around the precinct is a nightmare; resulting in obstructed sidewalks, driveways and long-term use of DOT metered locations.

Community Board 2 requests site selection and acquisition of property to construct a new centrally located stationhouse, to include increased floor area, with ample off-street and on-street parking sites. This Board looks forward to working closely with the involved agencies in identifying suitable sites for this project.

Commitments to increase the 108th Precinct's manpower levels, remains a critical issue. Despite the on-going assignment of new officers to the 108th Precinct, manpower still remains low due to reassignments, transfers, retirement, etc. It is imperative for the City to assign at least 25 new officers each graduating class to enable adequate response to emergencies as well as quality of life complaints.

Quality of Life Issues

Vandalism in the Parks and of cars; substance abuse, noise pollution, and graffiti in our open public space, abandoned cars; double parking; sidewalk and hydrant obstruction; illegal truck traffic and speeding conditions are making ever-increasing demands on the current manpower of the 108th Precinct. We want to improve the present manpower levels at the 108th Precinct.

The District is home to the Van Dam Correctional Facility that draws from our precinct's manpower. There are three major bridges, the Queens Midtown Tunnel, Long Island Expressway and Brooklyn Queens Expressway that connect with other boroughs. Community Board 2 also has a large portion of the City's Rapid Transit system running through our district, as well as the Sunnyside Rail Yards. Manpower is drawn from the 108th Police Precinct whenever an accident or major incident occurs at any of these locations; as well as for large citywide events.

Enforcement

There is a proliferation of auto body shops and car service establishments throughout the board area. Many of these businesses utilize on-street parking spaces to accommodate their day-to-day operation. Consequently, our sidewalks and streets are constantly obstructed by illegally parked cars/trucks. Traffic Enforcement must be increased and continue to be able to monitor the district and execute City laws.

Traffic Control Agents

This district continues to experience a marked increase in traffic congestion and poor air quality due to the number of reconstruction projects currently underway with a projection for additional projects in the near future. We continue to express a need for Agents on a daily basis in our community to insure adequate flow of traffic.

DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AND RECREATION

With less than 20 acres of parkland, Community Board 2 is greatly in need of further development of open spaces into parks. Pocket areas or vacant and unused properties that lay dormant are acquired and developed into open space under the “Greenstreets Program” and other programs, to provide recreational areas for our diverse population.

Open space and waterfront access continues to be a priority of this Board. Development of the Long Island City Waterfront must provide adequate recreational space to accommodate the planned growth of that area while incorporating the needs of the existing residential community, manufacturing firms and businesses surrounding and adjacent to the waterfront project.

Constant use of our parks necessitates daily clean-up and maintenance of the parks sites in Community Board 2. Overflowing trash baskets combined with piles of litter throughout the parks attract vermin and rats, which are detrimental to our residents and discourage use of our precious open spaces.

Forestry

Trees, both in our parks and along our streets minimize the effects of pollutants in the air. This Board continues to request funds for continued tree planting in the district.

Through the years, CB2 has found that requests to address diseased trees, pruning of existing trees, and the removal of dead trees are severely backlogged. Looking ahead to the Mayor’s 2030 plan, CB2 welcomes the additional funding and planting of additional street trees in our district.

DEPARTMENT OF YOUTH SERVICES

Community Planning Board 2 lacks available space and funding for Youth Service programs. A multi-service youth center is needed and has been a priority of Board 2 for many years. It is imperative that our young people be provided with structured programs at no cost, in safe environments. Programming needs to include recreation, counseling, health services, substance abuse prevention, conflict resolution, job training and placement mentoring, college options, internships, peer leadership, academic enhancement, and family services. This type of multi-faceted programming would benefit both the “at-risk” population as well as those young people who function well but need support.

Special needs continue to be increasingly evident in our community. The need to address immigration issues continues to be a priority in our multi-ethnic neighborhoods. Also, with the increase of parents in “welfare to work” programs, as well as the increase in parents working two or more jobs, there is a significant increase in “latch-key” children. Additionally, schools and youth servicing agencies are reporting increases in child abuse and neglect cases. There also appears to be a growing number of teen parents. Parenting skills programs need to be included in any strategic planning.

In light of the fact this district lacks a multi-service youth center, at this time, and until we acquire one, maximum use of available space must be considered. Public school buildings should be utilized for extended day, evening and weekend programs. This includes the establishment of a Beacon program within the Queens Community Board 2 boundaries. Our young people deserve programs that they can walk to. Safety issues preclude traveling to distant locations. Additionally, the opening fees and custodial fees being charged to community-based organizations need to be lifted in order to allow the greater use of school facilities.

The Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD) has increased its scope of services to include Out of School Time (OST) Programs for youth. These programs may offer a mix of academic support, sports, recreation activities, the arts, and cultural experiences free of charge to young people after school, during holiday breaks, and in the summer. While six of these programs are located in schools within our community board, most are either limited to providing services only to the students of the host school, or offer only specialized programs to a specific age group of young people. Although we are appreciative of any additional youth programs in our board, there is still a large gap in services for our youth population.

These programs do not provide regular evening or weekend services, nor do they offer multi-generational programs to address the needs of the entire family. Young people are not completely autonomous, and their actions and needs are frequently reflective of their family's actions and needs. A child who is struggling in school and cannot obtain the necessary help at home because of the limited English or literacy skills of the parents, cannot easily overcome the academic obstacles in his path through a program designed to help only the youngster. An adolescent who is exhibiting at-risk behavior cannot be effectively treated unless the parents and family members also are engaged in counseling, parenting skills workshops, and support groups.

Our community desperately needs to embrace a more comprehensive approach to youth services through the establishment of a Community Center or Beacon Program, where multi-faceted programs and services for children of all ages, and for adults, could be offered year-round, during the daytime, in the evenings, on the weekends and holidays, and throughout the summer.

Joseph Conley, Chairman, Community Board 2
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Document Statement of District Needs 2012