



THE CITY OF NEW YORK MANHATTAN COMMUNITY BOARD NO. 3

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District Needs Statement for Fiscal Year 2012

Community Board 3 Manhattan covers the Lower East Side and part of Chinatown. Its boundaries are 14th Street on the north, the East River on the east, south to the Brooklyn Bridge and Fourth Avenue and Bowery on the west, extending to Baxter and Pearl Streets south of Canal Street. It is a community filled with a diversity of cultures, religions, incomes, and languages. Its character, drawn from its heritage as a historic first stop for many immigrants, continues to the present day. Community Board 3 is one of the largest and most densely populated districts in the city. It has over 172,000 people. At the last census, 43,000 required income assistance. This is 26% of our population and 83% greater than the median for Manhattan community boards. Seventeen percent of our population is under 18 years of age and 13 percent are senior citizens. The demographics of the district also illustrate our diversity and reflect our immigrant population. The 2000 census indicates that the residential population of this district is 35% Asian/Pacific Islander, 28% white nonhispanic, 27% Hispanic, 7% African American, as well as other parts of the world represented in smaller numbers.

The district has recently been greatly affected by increasing gentrification, which has enriched the community in many ways but also changed its character, culture, and businesses. The district continues to attract more people and businesses that support the growing market-rate housing and high-end retail, but many people within this community continue to live on the edge of homelessness and economic survival.

Community Board 3 has worked to retain affordable housing and local businesses as well as serve the needs of the newcomers to this community because it recognizes that the displacement of long-time residential and commercial residents has caused great loss to this community. Many small family-owned stores, especially those that serve local retail needs, arts businesses, and nonprofits have closed and been replaced by an ever growing number of bars and restaurants. Families have been displaced from their homes because they cannot afford increasing rents. Community-based organizations, which provide essential services for community residents, struggle to provide more services and to afford their own costs with fewer resources. Their budgets have decreased because the new market-rate residents have changed the demographics of this community, making the percentage of those needing assistance smaller although their actual number may increase. This is in addition to budget cuts necessitated by the bad economy.

Economic Development

The overwhelming use of commercial storefronts in Community Board 3 is by small businesses that employ between 1 and 4 employees. Recent analysis of some of our larger streets, such as

Avenue A and Mott Street, indicates a current vacancy rate of 8 – 9%. For a vibrant, diversified community, our small businesses need to be successful. A survey of small businesses on one heavily commercial block has reported problems in the following areas: high rents, lack of financing, property taxes, and leases. The current recession has exacerbated those problems.

A recent public meeting sponsored by CB3 between the NYC Finance Commissioner and small business owners addressed property tax increases that are being passed from small property owners to their small business tenants. This is a serious problem for our small businesses. Preliminary research indicates that our elected officials and agencies should propose legislative or regulatory solutions to protect small businesses from tax increases they cannot absorb and give more education for small businesses regarding lease and tax consequences.

The Board is working with local artists and landlords/real estate brokers to explore the short term use of vacant storefronts by artists to mitigate the impact of vacancies by lessening the negative impact of shuttered store fronts. Using nonprofit organizations as mediators between landlord and artists to facilitate these uses has been one method explored. Further work is needed to bring foot traffic to retail corridors, to help retain existing local businesses, and to return to a more diverse business community. Finally, the Board is investigating the creation of a Chamber of Commerce for Community Board 3. We will push for the creation of a Chamber of Commerce as a useful mechanism for small businesses for networking with other businesses and learning more about government sponsored programs that would be helpful to them. As we found with the Finance Department discussion noted above, providing information to the business community gives them the ability to make better decisions for their businesses.

One of the answers to the question of what makes a vibrant, diversified community is: more butchers, bakers, dry cleaners, shoe repair stores, and similar small businesses. We will continue to work with government officials and elected leaders to make this happen.

Housing and Land Use

The crisis in affordable housing within Community Board 3 continues to worsen. Years of gentrification, rising rents, the opting out of Mitchell-Lama, limited dividend, and project-based Section 8 housing for market-rate housing, and a shortage of Section 8 vouchers contributed to this problem. Affordable housing projects and other housing programs are disappearing from our community.

Our country, state, and city face incredible budget constraints brought on by this devastating recession, which has resulted directly in cut backs by government agencies. Fortunately, Community Board 3 has managed to avoid the widespread foreclosure crisis. Nevertheless, we must remain aware of the possible problems should unemployment rates continue to rise and not entirely forget goals to attain additional affordable housing funds.

With new sources of affordable housing unlikely, the preservation of affordable, safe housing for low-income, moderate-income and middle-income families, and senior citizens remains a priority and is essential to preserve the diverse character of our community and the well-being of our residents. The City must redouble its efforts to focus its resources on protecting housing for its residents.

Adequate funding to community housing advocacy and legal groups is essential to safeguard existing affordable housing. These groups provide essential assistance to tenants who are fighting the lack of basic services, building code violations, and threatened evictions that are part and parcel of

concerted efforts to replace long-term neighborhood residents with market-rate tenants. This harassment harms rent regulated tenants. Because our community groups often work in concert with the Department of Housing, Preservation and Development, reduced funding to such groups prevents them – and HPD -- from staving off the displacement and homelessness of our residents and in the long-term forces the City to expend greater funds to find displaced residents alternative shelter.

Agencies can issue violations, but there are no other measures for the city to take corrective action. Landlords are receiving violations from the Department of Buildings, but are not correcting the violations. This is sometimes done to eventually create unsafe buildings that will necessitate vacates of tenants. This in turn allows the landlord to renovate the buildings for high-income tenants. Legislation is needed to force landlords to cure violations to ensure the safety of the tenants and also to preserve affordable housing.

New development has often favored large-scale development, including the construction of luxury housing and hotels, whose scale is contextually incompatible with surrounding buildings and fails to address community housing needs. The Department of Buildings (DOB) has increased fines for and monitoring of noncompliant development, but more effective plan examination and increased enforcement is necessary so that noncompliant development does not go unchecked. The lack of monitoring continues to threaten our community. Systemic change that will enable DOB to follow up on violations and ensure that violations are corrected, including follow up of Environmental Control Board violations, is essential to ensure that violations are not merely absorbed by developers as part of their cost of doing business.

To protect our existing housing, agencies must work cooperatively to ensure adequate code enforcement so that serious violations are promptly corrected. Strict code enforcement and multilingual outreach and services are vital. Community Board 3 recognizes that NYCHA is the largest provider of affordable housing within the City. Although NYCHA residents must pay their fair share of expenses, they cannot be expected to shoulder the entire burden. NYCHA's increased fees for essential services such as garbage disposal and rising rents have created uncertainty for NYCHA residents who are unable to pay these extra expenses and fear that NYCHA is abandoning its mission of public housing in favor of privatization. Our city officials must effectively lobby state and federal governments to ensure that this does not happen.

At a time when housing costs continue to rise, the conversion of subsidized housing to market-rate housing decreases the availability of urgently needed affordable housing. Tenants who were previously the beneficiaries of state and city Mitchell-Lama programs and federal mortgage and rent subsidy programs, e.g. project-based Section 8, have lost such protections or are at increased risk of losing them. Although these projects may contain tenants of varied incomes, a large minority of tenants of subsidized housing are poor and low-income tenants. Absent such subsidies, many long-term tenants would be unable to remain in their homes or in our community. Specifically, we are opposed to any proposals to “block grant” the Section 8 Voucher Program. The diversity of our neighborhood must be maintained by ensuring that affordable housing is accessible. Community Board 3 opposes cuts or limitations of the Section 8 Voucher Program and other aid programs that increase the availability of affordable housing. As our district continues to struggle with finding a balance between its history and its growth, we must prioritize protecting affordable housing for our residents. This is a basic need for our community and will also protect the diversity and character of the neighborhood.

Although Community Board 3 is now located in the economic exclusion zone of the 421-a tax abatement program, we still support revisions to the program that would 1) eliminate the use of negotiable certificates, 2) mandate that developers provide 30 percent of affordable housing on site to qualify for property tax exemptions, and 3) mandate that developers taking advantage of both 421-a tax abatements and

inclusionary zoning bonuses should allocate 40 percent of the on-site units for affordable housing.

Chinatown

As one of the oldest neighborhoods in New York City and the country, Chinatown has been a traditional gateway for immigrants, particularly from East Asia. While Chinatown's population and boundaries have grown dramatically over the past three decades due to reforms in national immigration quotas, it continues to struggle as a densely populated, low-income neighborhood with limited language access to mainstream services and programs. Chinatown's economy suffered greatly in the period after September 11th due to restricted flow of commerce under the security zone, and more recently gentrification pressures from neighboring areas have contributed to a loss of affordable housing and dislocation of low income residents and small businesses.

In late 2008, a planning body called the Chinatown Working Group was formed with Community Boards 1, 2, 3, and other local stakeholders to identify major issues of concern in Chinatown and to come up with ways to allow Chinatown to grow while protecting and retaining its historical character. The preliminary planning needs of Chinatown have focused around a few core issues, namely rezoning for preservation and creation of affordable housing that is affordable to existing Chinatown residents, combating tenant harassment and illegal eviction, support for small businesses and job creation for locals, developing more parks and usable open spaces, improving traffic flow and pedestrian safety, bolstering immigrant social services, creating spaces for local arts and culture, enhancing educational opportunities for youth and adults, and preservation of Chinatown's unique immigrant culture and history.

Community Board 3 urges a sound planning process for Chinatown, and supports our continued involvement in the Chinatown Working Group.

In order for Community Board 3's efforts to be most effective, we request City support for our participation in the Chinatown Working Group. As well, we request support for the overall 197-a process, which encompasses issues pertaining to parks, transportation, economic development, and preservation, as well as zoning.

Bowery Area

Community Board 3 recognizes that we are quickly losing the historic Bowery area. We support a new contextual zoning plan for the Bowery.

Nightlife and Licensing **Nightlife**

The Lower East Side and East Village have been identified as nightlife destinations. As a result, the population of people who enter these neighborhoods to patronize nighttime businesses has increased exponentially. Not only does this district now absorb an influx of people from other areas of the City, it also attracts people from outside the City, State, and Country. Hundreds of restaurants and cafes, serving beer, wine, and liquor, now populate most of the streets in this district. Eating and drinking establishments continue to open on avenues and residential side streets whose commercial use previously consisted only of small retail businesses. Many provide a bar, lounge, or music venue to retain dinner patrons. Bars, lounges, clubs and multi-level venues with ancillary or no food service are in much of the Lower East Side and many parts of Chinatown. Numerous large and boutique hotels, including restaurants, lounges, bars, and licensed outdoor spaces accessible to the public, now operate in the East Village and the Lower East and rely on these public

amenities to be destination locations because their room occupancy rates have plummeted below sixty percent within the past two years and have only begun to rise as of April of 2010. More businesses have applied to upgrade their liquor licenses and alter or expand their method of operating in an effort to attract more patrons. Many are also seeking to commercially use outdoor space, such as backyards, side yards, sidewalks, and rooftops.

While eating and drinking establishments may provide economic, cultural, and other benefits to the City and State, so many establishments in such close proximity has caused late night noise, increased vehicular and pedestrian traffic, increased rodent problems, overflowing garbage, and other quality of life concerns of residents and other businesses. Further, an increase in the number of sidewalk café permits issued to eating and drinking establishments in Community Board 3 has effectively pushed the growing patron population onto narrower sidewalks causing increased sidewalk congestion and noise and also increasing complaints. Residents complain to 311, the police, and the community board about noise and congestion from patrons standing in front of nighttime businesses and traveling from one business to another, noise from music and people emanating from specific businesses, noise from the commercial use of outdoor areas, and sanitation issues associated with commercial locations. Most of the businesses on residentially zoned side streets are not legally zoned for commercial use but were grandfathered as commercial use specifically for small local retail needs and extending this unzoned but grandfathered commercial use to eating and drinking establishments has caused great tension between residents and businesses as noise created by businesses and their patrons has disturbed the quality of life of residents living on these streets.

The outdoor spaces with liquor licenses now operating within feet of bedroom windows has contributed to the tension between businesses and residents. Some of the benefit derived by this community from these licensed businesses is thus offset by the cost to its constituents and the City from the increase in service delivery related issues resulting from these conditions. Given that the surrounding neighborhoods bear the impact of such conditions, it is fair and appropriate that there be an increase in the allocation of resources for enforcement in these neighborhoods to address them. Issues of noise, disorderly conduct, traffic congestion, sanitation and overcrowding are severely taxing the resources of our already overburdened City agencies, such as the New York Police Department, Department of Environmental Protection, Department of Sanitation, Department of Health and Department of Transportation, and Department of Buildings, whose existing infrastructure cannot now adequately address them. For example, Community Board 3 has the second highest number of commercial noise complaints within a community board in the City, however, residents often complain about the lack of timely response to noise complaints made to 311 and the local police precincts. The Department of Health is currently targeting restaurants in this area that have health code violations for best practices education in an effort to decrease the ever growing rodent problem.

The City needs to implement more effective policies governing enforcement, such as this best practices education, as well as provide more staffing and resources to its agencies, including increasing police staffing, specifically patrol officers, at nights and on weekends, to address the growing noise, congestion, and other issues resulting from the increase in nighttime businesses. Allocation of resources for increased nighttime enforcement of noise would alleviate some of the complaints regarding specific establishments and complaints of noisy and congested conditions generally. The City should expedite the hearing of violations issued for noncompliant use of back and side yards and should increase penalties for such noncompliant use in another effort to minimize outdoor commercial noise complaints. The City and elected officials should also collaborate with Community Board 3 to promote business diversity in its neighborhoods which have lost many of their retail establishments.

Licensing

Community Board 3 has spent most of its time and resources evaluating approximately 300 liquor license applications this past year to address complaints about existing licensed business and provide opinions to the New York State Liquor Authority regarding pending licenses. Opinions often include agreements negotiated between the community board and applicants which the New York State Liquor Authority will then include as conditions of any approved liquor license. Community Board 3 attempts to resolve complaints about businesses and will work with city agencies to enforce regulations, but neither the community board nor local city agencies have the resources necessary to continually address enforcement concerns.

While sidewalk cafes add vitality and movement to streetscapes, Community Board 3 believes that bars and restaurants should be required to insure that noise attendant to their operation does not negatively impact the quality of life of surrounding residents. Community Board 3 urges the City to create legislation to differentiate between businesses seeking to obtain permits to extend food service to sidewalk seating and those seeking to extend their bar space outdoors and require businesses that are permitted to operate on the sidewalk to create waiting areas within their perimeters rather than push waiting patrons onto narrower sidewalks. The City must also create legislation to regulate the use of the public sidewalks which are overwhelmed by the growing patron population yet increasingly smaller as portions are allocated to private businesses. The Department of Consumer Affairs should also be provided the resources and staff necessary to increase weekend and evening inspections to ensure that sidewalk cafés are complying with their permits.

Youth and Education

Community Board 3 has an increasing need for youth and education programs ranging from pre-school programs to after-school programs for adolescents and teens to youth employment programs and the addition of more middle schools participating in our existing teen job training programs.

Presently, there are 8,200 children in District 1 public schools, 1,000 District 1 children in schools outside the district and 1,100 District 1 children in alternative education, such as private or parochial schools. While Community Board 3 recognizes that there are diverse factors influencing the families who have chosen to send 20% of eligible District 1 children outside of this district, by establishing more specialized programs, strengthening moderately performing traditional schools and allocating resources to schools with the greatest need would attract more District 1 children who may be unable to attend existing oversubscribed specialized programs in area schools or who do not have confidence in the traditional school programs within District 1, raise district wide scores and increase enrollment and parent involvement. The formation of viable School Leadership Teams to encourage collaborative decision-making by parents, students and faculty is also critical to the improvement and success of our district public schools. Further, Community Board 3 strongly opposes the transfer of our local school buildings to special programs, such as citywide gifted, talented programs and charter schools that do not continue to preserve a significant number of seats for and serve the needs of children residing in this district.

One major step toward attracting district families was the Department of Education's new admissions policy that 1) establishes Pre-Kindergarten as a point of entry to the school system and eliminates the need for re-application for Kindergarten and 2) gives siblings priority for placement in a school where an older sibling is enrolled, thereby reducing childcare, transportation, and economic burdens on families with multiple school-aged children and fostering parent involvement in schools attended by all siblings. A major step that is still needed in the admissions process is to provide a mechanism that assures the maximum diversity in all district schools.

Two areas need additional allocation of funds. In its Contracts for Excellence Plan on July 5, 2007, the Department of Education (DOE) proposed spending only \$300,000 on Pre-Kindergarten education, only \$25,000 of which is currently allocated to District 1 although it has been a long-time policy of the District that every elementary school has a full day Pre-Kindergarten program. Both planned expenditures must be significantly increased to attract the 20% of District 1 children who leave the district for other education alternatives. In addition, many schools in Community Board 3 are lacking proper gym facilities. This is a priority necessary to foster physical health and fitness at an early age, which will continue to be beneficial as these children become adults.

Family academic advisement and counseling, as well as tutoring and remediation, would benefit students in our district, particularly those seeking post-secondary education or job training opportunities. Further, there must be more diversity training for staff and students in our district to foster a safe and healthy environment for students of all ethnic backgrounds, economic status, sexual orientation and gender identity.

The past two years has seen an increase in teen crime in Community Board 3. This is reported to be mostly geographically (turf) based and includes younger teens than usually seen in this activity. The NYPD, NYCHA, the District Attorney's office, and community non-profits are currently grappling with this problem. We have seen problem areas particularly at First Avenue and 14th Street, Campos Plaza, Smith Houses, Coleman Park, Gompers and in the vicinity of these locations. There is a need to create a tracking system which will pin point violence and the type of violence.

All agencies working with this population agree those proactive programs are needed. The at risk youth particularly need employment and training opportunities and other programs other than just sports programs. Families of these youth also are in need of intervention and support system programming. Community based afterschool programs such as Out-of-School time and Beacon community centers are vital to promote positive self-esteem, youth development, and leadership skills among young adults in our community.

At the present time obesity is near epidemic proportions with school aged youth who face early health problems. Youth need to be exposed to learning how to establish and practice smart fruit and vegetable eating habits for a lifetime. Education plays an important role in encouraging youth to adopt good eating habits. Even though parents play an intricate role in this education process, which is the starting point, it should be a joint effort with one reinforcing the other. Youth want to be fit and healthy, however there is a need for early intervention. Teaching youth the importance of eating fruits and vegetables can provide energy, assist with weight and may protect them from illnesses.

The Board of Education should include nutritional education in the classroom with the goal of students turning their nutritional knowledge into real world practice. In addition, the Board of Education should create nutritious snacks and meals. Their vending machines should also be overhauled, banning candy bars, soda and juices. It is necessary to foster physical health and fitness at an early age, which will continue to be beneficial as children become adults.

Human Services, Health, Disabilities, Seniors

Health

There continues to be urgent health concerns in this community. The triple threat of city, state and federal budget cuts further comprises the urgent healthcare concerns of our community. The proposed cuts must not only be restored, but funding should be increased to insure that essential services are available to everyone.

With the economic downturn and hospital closings, more people are becoming dependent on Health and Hospital Corporation facilities, while the system is being scaled back. These cuts will impact the ability to provide care for people with health needs. Furthermore, with the recent closure of St. Vincent's Hospital, nearby hospitals are experiencing severe overcrowding. With no hospital located within Community Board 3, it is essential for greater investment into community-based primary care organizations within our community district.

Many residents, within this district, do not seek regular preventive medical care, one in four does not have a regular doctor. More than 16 percent are not insured or under-insured. Many use emergency rooms as their first medical alternative, although this area has numerous other medical facilities. Gouverneur has four satellite clinics in the area and Ryan-NENA, Betances, Charles B. Wang and Community Healthcare Network are other healthcare centers within CB3. Easily accessible are New York Downtown, Beth Israel and Bellevue hospitals. With improved community education, all of the facilities could be better utilized by community residents for regular health and mental health care visits. Health programs within these facilities must be ready to respond to large immigrant, non-English speaking and undocumented population within this area.

There are two major health concerns within this area. HIV/AIDS funding is being slashed, yet the number of people living with HIV and AIDS in the black/Latino community is at epidemic levels. More funding is needed for education, prevention, testing and counseling, as well as food, nutrition and housing.

Second, the community cancer-related death rate is greater than the New York City average, yet fewer area residents have cancer screenings than the New York City Department of Health suggests. There is a need for more education stressing the importance of early screening especially for breast and prostate cancers.

We have known from the beginning of the HIV epidemic that sharing needles is associated with HIV and other infectious diseases, i.e., HEP B and C. In New York City, the proportion of new HIV diagnosis among injection drug users fell from 6.7 % in the first half of 2008 to 4.6% in the first half of 2009. This decrease can be accounted to the impact of needle exchange programs in the city as well as in the Lower East Side. Despite this success, overall, there is still limited access to syringe access, disposal, and needle exchange programs, as well as referral and linkage to HIV prevention services, substance abuse treatment and medical and mental health care. Due to the fragmented framework from which many programs exist, CB3 strongly advocates for the allocation of funds to enhance existing and develop new programs, that will address the needs of this particular population.

During 2008, 26.2% to 35.4% of the population in the Lower East Side had a fair or poor self-reported health history; and approximately 14.0% to 17.0% reported a history of depression. Six percent of CB3 residents experience serious psychological distress. Nevertheless, there is a continuous need to expand mental health services to address the cultural and linguistic diversity in the Lower East Side. The lack of bilingual/bicultural mental health providers is paramount to the Latino and Chinese population. In addition, there is a lack of culturally appropriate resources to address the psychiatry needs of children and adolescents in the Lower East Side.

Seniors

Based on NYC Center for Economic Opportunity data, 34% of people aged 65 and over in Manhattan, live in poverty. CB3 has the second highest rate of poverty for people over 65 in all of New York City. Community Board 3 supports the continuation of services that allow senior citizens to remain in their homes and communities by providing meals, healthcare, recreational activities and affordable

housing. The closing of senior centers should not be an option. Expecting seniors to walk or to be transported to other centers 10-12 blocks away is unreasonable. The seniors who will no longer have senior service activities available to them will lose their motivation and ability to engage in certain things. This will include, but is not limited to socialization, recreation, case assistance, health and wellness programs and other services. This will lead to the physical and mental deterioration of seniors who will not be able to avail themselves of service.

Now that Lillian Wald is the only senior center still open in that area, the Department for the Aging needs to greatly increase the number of lunches allotted to that center to make up for their past shortages, but to also accommodate the seniors from the closed Riis Center. Senior centers are not just Bingo and a hot meal. Accessible senior centers are essential to the lives of these poor and elderly people.

There are also many seniors who live alone, with no family or friends nearby who they can turn to for support and help. Programs like the Visiting Neighbors not only can provide for them, but can also benefit the young people who help our shut-ins. For seniors who live alone and have been recently discharged from the hospital, discharge planning must be essential for full recovery. Too often, seniors are left to care for themselves or the responsibility falls on family and friends when nurses and doctors are tasked with developing full discharge plans.

Homeless Services

The homeless population, both families and singles are in desperate need of permanent, affordable housing.

Abuse of the elderly and domestic violence are problems within this community that do not receive sufficient attention. Multilingual education about these problems is needed in order to reach Continuation of World Trade Center related programs such as the WTC Health Registry. The WTC Environmental Health Center and others must continue to help victims of the WTC disaster.

Public Safety

Community Board 3 is within the jurisdiction of the 5th, 7th and 9th Precincts, Public Service Area 4 (PSA 4) and eight fire companies.

Police Department

We are concerned that local precincts are losing staff as the population of our district is growing. For example, enforcement is needed for the growing problem with youth violence.

Our district is an increasingly popular nightlife destination, so we feel there is a need for a dedicated cabaret unit as part of the local precincts. This would benefit the owners/operators of nightlife establishments as well as the neighbors. Common sense enforcement is more likely to be routine if specialized officers are dispatched to deal with complaints. Their ongoing relationship with the establishments would allow cabaret unit officers to distinguish between problematic operators and nuisance complaints, to the benefit of everyone.

The City needs to expand the force of Traffic Enforcement Agents (TEAs) deployed by NYPD's Lower Manhattan traffic command. Increased infrastructure construction (water tunnel, E Houston reconstruction, etc) is causing/will cause congestion due to constricted traffic patterns and construction movements. TEAs are also needed to support DOT's initiatives: bike lanes, bus lanes, and pedestrian safety measures.

There has been a significant increase of bicycling in recent years, so there is now a need for enforcement of traffic laws regarding dangerous and illegal cyclist behavior such as driving against traffic, sidewalk cycling, red light running, and failure to yield to pedestrians.

We strongly support both the Auxiliary Patrol Units and the multiple precincts covering specialized Rescue Units currently known as Auxiliary Police Support Unit (APSU) who are the auxiliary arm and adjuncts of the NYPD Emergency Service Unit (ESU). We urge their immediate reinstatement to their full emergency, lifesaving duties on the street, and their complete revitalization and restoration of equipment, vehicles, training, status upgrade and medical care and NYPD ESU oversight for the Auxiliary Police Support Unit. There are never enough trained, uniformed volunteers in times of crisis – particularly during this time of decreased staff.

Fire Department

Eight fire companies currently serve Community Board 3. The neighborhoods of the Lower East Side and Chinatown are some of the most densely populated areas of the city and contain hundreds of tenements over a century old that are structurally vulnerable. In light of multiple alarm fires in our district in recent years, as well as the thousands of emergencies that the FDNY respond to on a normal basis, Community Board 3 opposes any cuts to first responders, including potential fire house closures. Public safety depends on it.

Environment

The demands of climate change and environmental health needs require community participation in concert with a reorientation of government agencies towards environmental planning. Community Board 3 has few City resources allocated to reduce air pollutant exposure and asthma triggers despite a disproportionate amount of air pollution sources from the expanded 14th Street Consolidated Edison fossil fuel power plant and vehicular congestion from its three bridges, transportation corridors (e.g., the FDR Drive and Canal Street), vehicle idling, and curb-side “Chinatown Bus” operations. Air pollutant exposure is compounded by the heat island effect of roads, artificial turf, and bare roofs, which raise temperatures and elevate ozone levels. Shockingly, unlike other areas of the City, the extent of these environmental health hazards within our district is largely undocumented.

Sanitation

Community Board 3 is still in great need of increased services. We are a very densely populated and still growing district in an area of old tenements without access to indoor storage or compactors. Our district is also an increasingly popular nightlife destination, so it is typical that bags of garbage and overflowing trash baskets increase sidewalk congestion and attract rats. Therefore, weekend basket pickups must be restored and wire mesh baskets must be replaced with rat-resistant baskets. Rat infestation continues to be a major problem in the district; we are designated as a UAR—Urgent Area for Rats. Public education and regular inspections are critical. Enforcement is needed for garbage storage and removal by street vendors. Policy concerning vendors must be reviewed and modified so that vendors are able to operate consistent with regulations.

Transportation

The most important transportation problem within Community Board 3’s boundaries is the lack of adequate public transportation; however, inadequate public transportation is exacerbated by the intense traffic congestion on our streets. The closure of Park Row and the congestion through and

around Chatham Square continues to be a major challenge. Community Board 3 urges the City and its various agencies to improve the environment for public transportation within Community Board 3 by taking strong, creative measures to reduce traffic congestion.

Public Transportation

The Community Board 3 district is underserved by public transportation. We continue to oppose cuts in service on any bus route within the district. Despite the district's density, many of our residents are poorly served by the subway system and live more than half a mile from the nearest subway stop. The eastern and southernmost residents of the district will continue to be denied public transportation until the MTA restores or extends cross-town bus routes, especially on Grand St. The recent implementation of bus service cuts (June 2010) has had an immediate and negative impact on the already limited transportation option in the district and further reduced access to the disabled.

Private Bus and Van Services

There has been a dramatic increase in the number of companies providing transportation services with coach buses using the streets in Chinatown and the surrounding neighborhoods to layover and to load and unload passengers. The use of passenger vans contributes to traffic and parking congestion, especially in Chinatown. The operation and idling of diesel buses on the narrow streets of the district creates health and safety problems. The City has been working on a plan for bus layover and parking (storage) for years. The imminent opening of the September 11 Memorial makes it increasingly important to resolve this issue. Community Board 3 welcomed the narrowing of South Street, which has reduced bus layover there and increased public access to the waterfront, but it is critical that the City implement a realistic bus storage plan to avoid unplanned dispersal of coach buses in our neighborhoods.

Community Board 3 believes the city should limit the number of bus companies and buses allowed to operate in the area. In addition, locations for loading and unloading must be restricted and designated.

NYPD does not enforce idling laws and they cannot do so effectively. The City must have an enforcement mechanism that will focus and enforce idling regulations. Follow up of DEP violations for idling shows that these are often dismissed.

Illegal Parking

Produce wholesalers and private limousines routinely violate parking regulations and monopolize small streets and sidewalks, causing sanitation, parking, safety, and transportation problems.

Parked cars displaying dashboard placards from City agencies routinely saturate the streets of Chinatown and other locations in Community Board 3. The large number of these illegally parked cars threatens public safety by obstructing access for emergency responders, disrupts businesses by blocking deliveries and customers, and restricts disabled access. Enforcement of existing laws concerning placard parking is critical at fire hydrants, corners, crosswalks, curb cuts, on sidewalks, and in No Standing zones. There has been increased enforcement in the Chinatown area, but this type of enforcement is needed in other areas of Community Board 3. The NYPD needs to devise and enforce policies that will eliminate illegal parking permit abuse by law enforcement and court employees.

Sidewalk Congestion

Sidewalks and curb cuts are in disrepair which is a particular hardship for people who rely on

wheelchairs for mobility. It is very disappointing that the City was not able to meet their agreement to make pedestrian walkways handicapped accessible by 2010. We encourage an expedited schedule for the remaining installations, since missing curb cuts reduces access to mass transit and causing safety issues by forcing people to travel in the street/busy traffic. Curb cuts that do not meet smoothly with the street bed should be repaired and missing curb cuts should be installed. We are concerned that the loss of one of the two DOT milling and resurfacing crews will cause further delays in this effort, as well as causing a maintenance deficit leading to increased drainage problems and ponding conditions.

TLC Enforcement

The destination nightlife areas in Community Board 3 have become areas of severe traffic congestion on the weekends, particularly Saturday nights. Much of this traffic is comprised of taxis and Community Board 3 has continued to receive numerous complaints of taxi horn honking that continues into the early morning hours and disturbs the quality of life of residents who cannot sleep.

Bicycle Facilities

There has been a significant increase of bicycling in recent years, largely as a result of progress implementing the 1997 NYC Bicycle Master Plan. DOT should continue to include reduction of pedestrian-cyclist conflicts as a design consideration of all bicycle facilities. The increased use of bicycles citywide has given rise to the need for bike parking. The lack of adequate bike parking facilities is an impediment to bicycle usage and also results in bicycles chained to public street fixtures and obstruction of sidewalks. DOT should augment its CityRacks Program, which allows the public to request bicycle racks one at a time, with planning efforts to systemically identify areas with a need for more bicycle parking and suitable locations for installation.

Parks/Recreation/Cultural Affairs/Landmarks

Community Board 3, like most districts in the City, does not meet the City Planning Commission's guidelines for per capita open space. The open space/population ratio is approximately 0.7 acres per 1000 people. By comparison, the Governor's Open Space Report recommended 2.5 acres per 1000, and New York City averages 1.5 acres. The open space that we do have is not evenly distributed throughout the district. The area west of Avenue A and the Chinatown area lack adequate open space. Compounding this deficiency is the increased use of existing parks by individuals and groups for organized events from both inside and outside the community. Increasingly, groups from outside of our district are using Community Board 3 parks. While we do not seek to exclude outside groups from our parks, we do feel that priority should be given to local groups. Our emphasis on local groups includes a re-examination of Park Department policies that restrict the use of parks and play areas during daytime hours. There are seven Jointly Operated Playgrounds (JOPs) in Community Board 3 co-located with the following schools: PS 110, 63, 20, 140, 137, 134, and 188. These sites are important to their attached schools for playground use during the school day and to the surrounding community at all other times. The Parks Department commitment to cleaning these parks by 8 AM every morning has not been kept. Parks and the Department of Education must find acceptable solutions that will ensure clean and safe playgrounds for school use during the school day and for community use after 3 PM on school days and all day on non-school days. The Community Board insists on policies that foster the most open use of facilities by residents of the community while respecting safety concerns. Any agreements between Parks and other entities should be brought to Community Board 3 prior to finalization.

A few community gardens have been transferred to the Parks Department, but at the same time,

the fate of many others is still uncertain. For sites not being transferred to the Parks Department, the City should consider transferring them to local community organizations that can maintain the locations as permanent open community space. Once open space is lost to development, it is very unlikely that it will ever be replaced.

It is one thing to have land set aside as a park, but our parks also need constant maintenance by trained DPR professionals. The number of park workers is at a 30-year low and funding for park maintenance is equally scarce. Many of the parks in our district have suffered from years of neglect and deferred maintenance, and now are experiencing increasing levels of usage. Increasing the number of full time, permanent park workers and staffed playgrounds will allow for fuller use of our parks and play areas.

In addition, Community Board 3 has found that Parks buildings in our community have been used as storage for equipment and supplies for Citywide Parks operations. Given that Community Board 3 already has so few open space and community facilities, our local parks should not bear this unfair burden of being storage for other neighborhoods. Parks should allow the public to reclaim use of the Parks buildings, particularly those within Sara D. Roosevelt Park, by redistributing storage more fairly to outside areas and programming public use of those buildings.

Community Board 3 parks have continued to be overrun with rats year after year. This is aggravated by some specific conditions such as the underground space beneath Peter Cooper Park and the dense grass coverage on the Essex strip at Seward Park. Although the grasses are beautiful visually, they must be replaced so that the park can be better baited and maintained. The Parks Department has only one full time exterminator, which does not allow for adequate baiting. Although many of the Parks staff has been trained to meet the need of more extermination, they do not have the years of experience and expertise that comes with experience. More full time experienced extermination and staff to maintain and clean the parks is necessary to protect the health and public safety of the community. Until it has enough staff to adequately deal with the problem, Parks should work with the Health Department for regular and frequent strategic baiting. The rodent problem is also exacerbated by the Parks practice of leaving garbage in plastic bags on the sidewalk for pickup—sometimes for hours or overnight. Parks should work with other agencies to resolve this issue as well as provide better storage for garbage.

The permitting procedure for recreational permits has improved in having fields accessible to local groups and for fair distribution. Community Board 3 asks that Parks Department continues to maintain this fair distribution of park permitting time for local groups and to upgrade its computer system to improve its permitting process.

Parks also needs improved procedures for park event permits. Community groups complain that information and approvals are not communicated in a timely manner. The Community Board has suggested that small, non-recurring events, such as school end-of-year parties and similar events, be handled in an expedited manner. A birthday party for 3-year olds may not necessitate review by Parks.

Also, Parks needs to ensure review from the NYPD and the Community Board for larger events. A concert permitted for the same day as a large parade that requires police staffing might end up with potential problems. Additional Park Rangers and sound monitoring equipment are needed to deal with the negative effects of these events on the residents surrounding Tompkins Square Park. PEP officers, on a regular, sustained basis, need to be assigned to the major Community Board 3 parks. Tompkins Square Park in particular can use a temporary sound barrier that can be set up for these concerts to mitigate the noise to the surrounding residential buildings.

Toilets in Community Board 3 parks and playgrounds are badly needed. There are several locations of which the Parks Department is already aware, but some of the longest standing needs are the toilets in Luther Gulick Park, Corlears Hook Park, and Sol Lain Parks. The lack of functioning toilets in this park is exacerbated by its proximity to the East River Park amphitheatre. The numerous concerts in the amphitheatre and the continuing overflow of pedestrians through Corlears during concert season make this a higher priority. Since 2008, Parks has not yet advised Community Board 3 of progress concerning toilets in most parks.

Our Council Members, the Borough President, and the Parks Department have funded Phase I of the Seward Park renovation. Phase II of the renovation is a top priority for the Board. It deserves funding by the Borough President and Council Members to complete the renovation for a much underserved area.

The reconstruction of East River Park is underway and the seawall work was scheduled for completion in July 2007. We were then advised that the landscape in the park was scheduled to be completed in the 2008 – 2009 timeframe. Our current understanding is that the public esplanade and the landscaping will be delayed even further. We again urge Parks to keep the contractors to the agreed timetables so that full public use of the park can be restored.

The Mayor's vision for a Manhattan surrounded by parks at the water's edge will be severely tested if Consolidated Edison does not widen the north-south pathway at 14th Street. Consolidated Edison made a commitment to accomplish that goal. We call on the Parks Department to assist in achieving that goal.

At the request of Parks, Community Board 3 approved an expansion of Tanahey Park. The Board was also promised that basketball court and hockey rink improvements would occur to allow the local community to productively enjoy the park. We urge Parks to implement these improvements as soon as possible. Additionally, Coleman Oval needs a basic level of amenities such as trash cans and benches to support the skateboard and dog run facilities.

In recognition of the history of the whole Community Board 3 area, a Landmark Subcommittee was created to address the various issues concerning the possible landmarking of individual properties or designation of historic districts. Community Board 3 anticipates working closely with all parties involved in this issue including, community organizations, government agencies, and officials.

Community Board 3 asks that the Landmark Commission expand its survey of ideal sites for landmark preservation similar to the one it has already done for the East Village. Such landmark studies should include Chinatown and the Lower East Side, in light of the recommendations for Special Districts coming out of the Chinatown Working Group.

New York City Libraries

Community Board 3 has five branches of the New York Public Library (NYPL) system: Chatham Square, Hamilton Fish, Ottendorfer, Seward Park, and Tompkins Square. While we appreciate the renovation of our libraries, private donations and discretionary funds from our elected officials have paid for much of the work. Community Board 3 branches have the highest levels of use in the City. The libraries are especially necessary to our many low and moderate income residents who depend on the libraries for access to books and film and who use the library as their only quiet place to read or do homework or other work. In addition, we are seeing many residents who have laptop computers, but cannot afford internet fees, use the library for internet access. In the last year there were 1, 276, 586 visits to Community Board 3 libraries. This is an increase of 14.39 percent over the previous year. It is not only imperative to keep our libraries open 6 days a week to serve our residents, we need

to expand funding for expansion of collections, automation, staffing, and programming.

In light of increasing youth violence experience by the community in the past year, Community Board 3 requests more youth programming in libraries as a way to engage youth in meaningful activities. Certain programs, such as the art space in Tompkins Square Park, should be supported with more programming and expanded to other libraries.

Waterfront

Community Board 3 established a Waterfront Task Force in 2003 to formulate a viable plan for the area from the Brooklyn Bridge north to East River Park. The Task Force recognized that our waterfront has been a focal point for generations of Lower East Side families, but also an area that has been long neglected by the City. We now have an East River Park esplanade that is being improved to make it safe and attractive. But large portions of the Community Board 3 City-owned piers are underutilized; and the esplanade south of the piers is in need of repairs to improve safety and add amenities to increase its usefulness. We would like to reclaim the waterfront for public use, keeping in mind the primarily residential nature of the adjacent community.

Through a series of community meetings begun during the latter part of 2003 and continuing through early 2005, the many constructive and creative ideas expressed by community members for the waterfront were shared with the NYC Economic Development Corporation, Department of City Planning and other City agencies. These ideas were generally approved by the Community Board in July 2004, and the City's Concept Plan was approved by the Board in September 2005. This approval was given with the understanding that Community Board 3 will be treated equally and equitably with Community Board 1 in all waterfront planning. Many of the community's ideas have been incorporated in a broad waterfront plan encompassing the area from Battery Park to East River Park to be funded by the Lower Manhattan Development Corporation. It is anticipated that the long-term portion of the plan will be completed over a three- to five-year period ending in 2010. A few improvements have been provided along the esplanade, including the removal of Jersey barriers and the installation of planters.

The Community Board is very concerned about the future of Pier 42, the only sizeable area in this community that extends over the River. We agree with the Concept Plan that the shed area of Pier 42 should be removed to provide for a beach area. We strongly urge and expect that the relevant City agencies will raise the necessary funding to complete this improvement and stabilization, within the 2014 timeframe, so that Pier 42 will never be lost as a crucial amenity to this community.

Community Board 3 recently supported the long-awaited design concept for the esplanade between Pier 35 and Pike Slip. This design reflects Community Board 3's input, based on results from many facilitated community meetings described above to gather input from the community at large, for amenities, lighting, plantings, grading, a pavilion with community use space, ball courts and game facilities, and passive recreation uses. Community Board 3 continues to prioritize improvement and access to its Waterfront as a necessity for the community.

Arts & Cultural Affairs Task Force

Our district has long been a historic incubator of the performing and visual arts, with a higher concentration of artists than most districts. The arts serve as an important means of expression, preservation and exploration of our diverse community and cultures. District arts venues remain

closely tied to our diverse culture and balance the scales of gentrification. Cultural venues clearly have a synergistic relationship with neighborhood small businesses, and are economic drivers to our local neighborhoods. Fourth Arts Block alone, using the US Department of Commerce's conservative economic multiplier of 2.01, estimates that their member arts organizations generate more than \$24.8 million in annual economic benefits for local restaurants, shops, and support services. When networked across the Lower East Side, the economic impact of neighborhood arts groups is over \$50 million. Yet the district has lost many of its arts venues in the last decade due to real estate competition and speculation, and artists and organizations are not always at the table when economic impact and quality of life issues are discussed by elected officials and City agencies. President Obama addressed this chasm with the creation of an arts platform prior to his inauguration. And although the economic impact of the Theater District is widely recognized, it is not recognized that most Broadway product gestates in such venues as those which our district still provides. Community Board 3 calls on City agencies to include commercial and nonprofit arts venues and organizations in their economic planning and development policies.

Apart from economic impact, the effect of the arts on quality of life in the district cannot be underestimated. In fact, access to the arts has been included in an amendment to the U.N. charter as a human right. Arts in the schools and in after-school programs in the district exist under extremely fragile conditions. Arts and arts organizations are sometimes unaware of innovative policies or resources in such areas as land use, low-income housing, tax credits, access to public buildings, health insurance, and capital support, which can sustain artists and organizations. The Federal Justice Department's Art against Crime Program, and the Anti-Graffiti Program of the NYPD, are diverse programs which can have an impact in the areas of education, crime prevention, improved quality of life, and arts organization stability. Creative cities are those which attract and retain not only the best artists and creative industries, but also the best businesses and their employees. As the Community Board representing this vital arts cluster, attracting visitors locally, city-wide, regionally, nationally, and internationally, Community Board 3 calls for the building of coalitions among arts and cultural organizations, other not-for-profit organizations, community centers, elected officials, and government agencies to identify the conditions ideal for artists and arts organizations, the instability or loss of which cannot be contemplated, to take their place at the table as vital resources of and contributors to the community.



Dominic Pisciotta
Board Chair



Susan Stetzer
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