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# COMMUNITY BOARD NO. 8

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## STATEMENT OF COMMUNITY DISTRICT NEEDS Fiscal Year 2014

### District Overview

Community Board No. 8 encompasses the neighborhoods of Prospect Heights, north Crown Heights, and Weeksville. The community is bounded by Atlantic Avenue on the north, Ralph Avenue on the east, Eastern Parkway on the south and Flatbush Avenue on the west.

Despite a small decrease in population according to results of the 2010 Census, District 8 is one of the fastest growing neighborhoods in Brooklyn and remains one of the most populated according to land mass. Furthermore, the population is dynamically changing. Once an economically and culturally diverse community, there are noticeable shifts in economic status as well as ethnic and cultural make-up. An increased number of luxury condominium development and other large-scale development projects such as the Atlantic Yards Development Project, are lending to shifting dynamics of the community, as is the historical designation of much of the District. With these endeavors, the racial make-up of the District is bound to further rapidly change as well.

Regardless, District 8 has become the new hot destination in Brooklyn. The number of new businesses has tripled in the last five years and business patronage is also at an all time high. Competition for housing is also contributing to the rapidly changing demographic, but is a testament of the beauty and pride in a wonderful neighborhood. Drive or take a stroll down any street, and you are bound to see some type of new development project, renovation work, or some other beautification project ongoing.

While the landmarking of Prospect Heights is complete as well as Phases I and II of the North Crown Heights landmark district, Phase III is presently underway. The Crow Hill Community Association has been successful in their quest to get the Landmarks Preservation Commission to consider a small portion of Park Place between Bedford and Franklin Avenues for historical designation. Many wonder about the reasoning behind these landmarks endeavors, but one merely has to stroll down any of the blocks

in the District to understand that the architectural integrity of many of the buildings is in need of preservation. Modern architecture threatens to destroy the classic and prominent designs from Romanesque Revival and Queen Anne to Renaissance Revival and Art Deco. In addition to the historical designation attempting to preserve the housing stock, the District is presently working with the NYC Dept. of City Planning to determine the best way to preserve the integrity of land and manufacturing space by undergoing localized comprehensive zoning studies for small portions of the District not currently landmarked. We are hopeful that rezoning will protect the integrity of the District from unscrupulous developers who wish to construct massive buildings that cannot be supported by the current infrastructure, and that also are not consistent with current architectural designs.

Overall, the neighborhood has a solid housing foundation, good transportation connections, and easy access to a number of cultural facilities such as Brooklyn Botanic Garden, the Brooklyn Children's Museum, Brooklyn Museum of Art, the Brooklyn Public Library at Grand Army Plaza, Jewish Children's Museum, and Weeksville Heritage Center, all of which have recently undergone or will undergo capital expansion and/or renovation projects.

Despite the many positives within the District, there are many blaring challenges that must be faced and overcome. Included in these challenges are the enormously high poverty rate amongst minority and foreign born residents; the glaring unemployment rate of adult minority males; the alarming discomfort of residents because of police and safety uncertainties; a dearth of affordable housing for seniors and low and middle-income residents; lack of medical services and hospital coverage; and overcrowded schools. These issues require special consideration and priority from government officials, and Community Board No. 8 is committed to participating in the formulation of plans to address the service delivery, housing, and infrastructure needs of our residents.

The strategy detailed below will facilitate achievement of Community Board No. 8's goals for Fiscal Year 2014 and beyond, despite the city's fiscal constraints.

## **POLICE**

Community Board No. 8 applauds the efforts of the 77<sup>th</sup> Precinct and PSA#2 and urges the NYPD to assign additional police officers to cover these precincts once recruits graduate from the academy.

There are a number of large apartment buildings clustered within a small space, especially toward the eastern end of the District. This high density creates the potential for tension among the residents of the area as well as a potential cloak for illegal activity. It is a known fact that tension can cause crime to escalate unless monitored and pre-

empted by effective and visible policing. Additional patrol officers are required to intercede on behalf of our residents and keep them safe by curtailing illegal drug rings and gang activity. Residents still complain of a tremendous increase in violent crime and drug activity. The need for additional coverage is evident and pressing.

Moreover, despite the dearth of officers to patrol the area, there are other tools that can be utilized to partially dispel the negative effects of lack of police protection. For instance, ARGUS cameras have proven to be an effective tactic in fighting crime. Additional cameras on St. John's Place, Nostrand, Buffalo, Schenectady, Kingston, and Franklin Avenues would be valuable to the command. As per other areas such as the large housing developments like Kingsboro Houses, closed circuit video cameras would be an asset to fighting crime in the development, as they have been in Albany Houses.

Community Board 8 supports Community Policing and believes that the Impact Zone should be expanded to the eastern end of the District to help curtail drug activity and gang violence in addition to the increasingly alarming rate of grand theft auto, rape, and other crimes.

We strongly urge land acquisition for a parking facility to garage police vehicles. Currently, NYPD personnel over-take the streets around the local precinct houses (77<sup>th</sup> on St. Marks Avenue between Schenectady and Rochester Avenues, Dean Street between Utica and Rochester Avenues, and the 78<sup>th</sup> Precinct on Bergen and Dean Streets between 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue and Carlton Avenue) with personal vehicles, police cruisers, trucks, and other equipment. They double park and park on the sidewalk, thus forcing community residents to navigate around these vehicles. A major concern raised with this is that the streets around the precinct houses do not get cleaned during Alternate Street Parking (ASP) because the vehicles are not moved during ASP hours to allow the mechanical broom to sweep the street. Consequently, we urge the Department to identify property suitable for parking police vehicles. Such a facility for each precinct will help alleviate congestion in the area of the two precincts and foster a better relationship between the officers and community residents.

## **FIRE**

Community Board 8 is displeased that the FDNY has been slated for numerous reductions to their budget, including the elimination of the fifth crew member on Engine companies and the partial closure of an even greater number of fire houses. The fifth firefighter is essential to Engine Companies because they help decrease the time it takes to dispel a fire's wrath. In addition, we urge the Department to hire additional fire marshals to investigate fires.

Also, the number of firefighters lost through attrition must be replaced in a timely fashion. It takes valuable time for probationary firefighters to gain the necessary

experience in order to effectively fight fires. We need seasoned and experienced firefighters to aid them in this task. It is also imperative that the Department continue to replenish the ranks by hiring additional personnel.

Home fire safety training for our children and adult residents has proven to be an effective tool for educating residents in what to do in the event of a fire. Unfortunately, with the spate of lives lost because residents did not have access to this information, we urge the continued, if not increased funding for fire safety and prevention programs. These programs have been proven to be valuable life saving tools and also reduce the amount of damage and loss resulting from fires. We also recommend additional life-saving training in the area of Cardio-Pulmonary Resuscitation (CPR). In a district where obesity and as a result, heart disease is at a high level, it is imperative that residents know how to respond in emergency situations to perform life-saving techniques prior to the arrival of emergency medical technicians. Additional CPR kits are required to train residents more effectively in this life-saving procedure. The kits also provide a more sanitary means of training and can be given to class members for practice and for them to train their family and neighbors.

Smoke and Carbon Monoxide Detectors have been proven by the FDNY to save lives. Unfortunately, many residents fail to maintain their devices by changing batteries regularly. We urge the Department to continue and expand the smoke detector and carbon monoxide detector distribution program so that at risk tenants can receive their benefits.

We encourage the Fire Department and City Council to consider the adverse effects that dilapidated engine companies can have on our firefighters' morale and productivity. The firehouse buildings are extremely old and require new roofs, window replacement, waterproofing, pointing, electrical upgrades, apparatus floor replacement, and new kitchens and bathrooms. We urge the provision of funding to make necessary repairs to the City's firehouses.

## **SOCIAL SERVICE FACILITIES**

The residents of Community Board 8 believe that the District is over-saturated with alcohol and drug treatment centers, homeless shelters, and transitional and/or permanent housing for individuals with mental illness and other social ills. While we sympathize with the City's addicted, homeless, and mentally affected populations, this over-saturation of such facilities has begun to decimate a community that is on the rise with multiple phases of landmarking in progress or recently completed. Presently, we have eleven (11) transitional homeless facilities, seven (7) residential children's facilities, eight (8) residential alcohol and substance abuse treatment facilities, seven (7) non-residential substance abuse treatment centers, and sixteen (16) residential supportive housing facilities or housing for people with mental disabilities. Our residents and

Board members feel so strongly opposed to more such facilities being opened in the community that a moratorium has been enacted against any additional social service facilities being opened in the District.

In view of these concerns, we urge social service agencies to reconsider the placement of social service facilities in District 8 until other less affected Districts have reached parity with the number of facilities already present within our Board. If a shelter is considered blight on one community on the rise, then it is similarly unfair for the Dept. of Homeless Services to force this same shelter on another community that is also on the rise.

### **ADMINISTRATION FOR CHILDREN'S SERVICES**

Community Board 8 recommends and supports an increase in funding for Headstart programs as this program has been proven to provide the stimulating atmosphere necessary to instill in our youth a thirst for knowledge and better social capabilities.

In addition to Headstart programs, there is a growing need for group and family Daycare services in District 8, spurred by the growing population of working parents moving into the community as well as the number of working parents already in the community. Additional daycare slots for all work shifts, not just the traditional shifts of 8:00 AM to 6:00 PM need to be created to accommodate this growing trend of working parents and their need for services. In addition, child care slots for home-based and center-based programs should be restored.

ACS must be staffed with knowledgeable employees capable of handling the everyday stresses of the job, including interaction with families from different backgrounds. Training for employees in the protective services division is essential to ACS employees effectively doing their jobs. Abuse and neglect detection skills must be fortified to assist protective services staff members in carrying out their duties. Funding must be provided for these training services.

As the number of children in the foster care system rises, allowances must be made for resources for kinship care and foster parent training and recruitment services. The family reunification processes must be immediately instituted to counterbalance the effects of intervention by Protection Services. As the number of children presently in the foster care system greatly exceeds the number of homes available, increased efforts must be made to provide the proper mental health care to prevent children from further losing a sense of self-image and self-worth. Efforts must be made to assure children that their presence is warranted despite a lack of parental and familial influences.

In addition, programs for youth who are aging out of the foster care system are needed. These programs assist in the critical adjustment and transition period for youth who are

forced to live and survive on their own with minimal to no supervision. In order to assure that these individuals are able to live successfully without resorting to crime, programs must be instituted to assist them with job training and placement, money management, higher learning, and the like.

## **HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES**

Quality healthcare is not something that should only be provided to certain communities. All of New York City's residents should have access to quality healthcare close to their home. The current situation is far from reaching this ideal, unfortunately. There is a major healthcare crisis affecting the residents of Central Brooklyn. Due to budget cuts on various levels, the healthcare system in New York City has been decimated. The Central Brooklyn area, which covers Community Board No. 8 and other low to moderate income communities, has been especially damaged by cuts and subsequent service provider closures.

Central Brooklyn is still considered the epicenter for HIV/AIDS infections and other health ailments including diabetes, heart disease, asthma, stroke, obesity, and many other conditions that require substantial medical care for those afflicted. Unfortunately, this area is victimized by hospital closings, overall poor health coverage, poverty, and a general lack of both adequate health care and health education. Each year, more health facilities are closing or reducing operations. WIC centers are also closing, thus making it more difficult for mothers to provide adequate nutrition to their children; this will only lead to further inevitable health issues for already afflicted and underserved residents.

The closure of St. Mary's Hospital many years ago has left our District devoid of a major medical institution. Our residents are now forced to travel outside of their community to receive medical assistance. The potential closing of Interfaith Hospital just outside of our borders is a frightening prospect. Many people rely on Interfaith for healthcare services and are either unable or unwilling to travel further and subsequently will go without medical care or receive insufficient care. Additional funding is essential to keep the clinics and treatment centers open and functioning at the highest level possible.

Out-patient health clinics that cater to women's health are scarce in the community. Sufficient gynecological, prenatal and postnatal care, cancer screening, and other women's health issues are not provided and women are forced to wait longer than should be necessary for care, and in many cases, this prolongs treatment. Ample health provisions and treatment centers for women in each neighborhood are crucial.

As the number of dementia and Alzheimer's disease cases grow in the community, additional funds to maintain services for dementia and Alzheimer's cases are required.

Asthma education and care programs are still needed. Conditions within the community (i.e. massive construction projects, demolition, and renovation efforts) have created harsh breathing conditions for current asthma patients and are increasing the number of individuals that suffer from the malady. Therefore, longer clinic hours need to be initiated so that patients do not have to go to the hospital for treatment.

Obesity continues to plague residents of our community. Children especially are suffering the horrendous effects of being overweight as they suffer stigmatization from their peers, low self-esteem, poor self-confidence and a slew of early-onset health concerns. Programs stressing proper nutrition should be provided for families and students should also have health and nutrition studies added to their educational curriculum to inform them of the dangers of poor health practices. Emphasis should be placed on education describing the dangers of obesity such as diabetes, high blood pressure, heart attack, stroke, asthma, and other illnesses. With education comes prevention, and our residents need to be made aware that they are at risk for many preventable diseases and illnesses. Fitness programs should also be provided not only for adults, but also for youth to foster a healthy lifestyle. These programs are essential to helping combat many of the aforementioned diseases and can reduce the cost of future health care.

There is a growing need for mental health services among children and adults alike. These services are essential to maintaining the well-being of our citizens regardless of age. Services geared toward assistance coping with mental stresses from a myriad of sources should be instituted. These services should include treatment and counseling for grief and bereavement issues, societal stress, sexual abuse recovery, depression, low-self esteem, anger problems, and other areas of concern.

With an increase in new construction, home improvement projects, and dirty vacant lots, our community has become infested with rodents. These conditions have created serious health issues for the community. We urge the city to provide adequate funding for pest control to curtail this growing problem.

## **HUMAN RESOURCES ADMINISTRATION**

It is extremely important that we protect our families' welfare and well-being from destructive forces within the community, regardless of whether it comes from the home or local environment. Preventive, protective, and counseling services for families must be provided in order to maintain the health and security of our youth and family structure. The Board supports expanded funding for existing Domestic Violence Victim and Intervention Programs.

Funding should be provided for preventative services to educate women and men of *all ages* on the telltale signs of all forms of abuse—physical, emotional, sexual, and

psychological—and how to exit a situation that could be potentially life threatening, not only for her- or him-self, but for any children in the home as well. This will provide pre-emptive services and prevent further destruction of familial ties and bonds.

We must keep in mind that our elderly population is at risk for abuse as well from family members and home health aides seeking to take advantage of their frail emotional and physical states. The elderly population—the most vulnerable and often forgotten—requires considerable attention to maintain their safety and well-being, thus preventing them from being subject to unnecessary hardship, pain, and mental aggravation in the form of fear.

Additional services are also needed for the homebound elderly to limit the burdens placed on kindhearted friends, significant others, spouses, and other relatives who are forced to accept complete responsibility for the care of their loved ones. Support services must be provided to these individuals who do an invaluable service to the community. These additional services will reduce the stress of having to care for semi-incapacitated individuals and can also reduce the risk of abuse by overworked and anxious relatives and friends encumbered with the financial and mental cost of care. We urge the Department to restore funding for the Kinship and Caretaker care programs.

## **EDUCATION**

We urge the Dept. of Education to provide funds to upgrade the interior and exterior of our schools so that dilapidation will not preoccupy our students. Regular maintenance of our schools is essential. Interior environments are not conducive to learning as children are often forced to assemble in crowded and cramped spaces with insufficient ventilation (especially in the warmer months), and also in spaces that have not been renovated in many years.

We encourage smaller class sizes for all grades as they are necessary to give each student an equal and ample amount of individual attention and one-on-one interaction with his/her instructor. Also, smaller class sizes would alleviate some of the strain and pressure on the instructor and allow her/him to conduct lessons more efficiently as well as evaluate and assess student learning and comprehension more effectively. We also recommend the continuance of the Universal Pre-K program as studies have proven that the earlier children receive educational stimulation, the less likely they will be to fall behind in their later school years.

Our children require a well-rounded education that includes not only the fundamentals of math, language arts, and reading comprehension, but also science, social studies, art, dance, and music. Each area of instruction should be assimilated in the curriculum of New York City's schools as this would greatly enhance our students' active desire to participate in their learning and instruction. Furthermore, a well-rounded education will



enhance our children's ability to excel in the future. We support academic enrichment through creative expression. The creative expression maybe literary, crafts, dance, music or fine arts. This blend uses all parts of the brain and deepens learning. Furthermore, a broadened curriculum for foreign languages should be implemented in public schools to provide exposure for the myriad of cultures that will be encountered in the workforce.

In order to be effective, teachers must have at their disposal necessary tools to properly instruct students. Funding should be provided to stock each classroom with modern instructional aides. Our teachers need additional staff development days to better assist them not only with traditional lesson planning and classroom management, but also to assist them with using modern technology in their lesson planning so that our youth are able to incorporate that which they learn into their every-day activities.

Programs geared toward fostering parental involvement should be implemented. Formal education is an extension of the home and parents must be reminded how best to assist the education of their children by reinforcing what teachers do in a classroom setting. Therefore, programs geared toward increasing parental involvement, thus making them further involved in educational activities must be initiated for the benefit of our school-age children. Furthermore, as there are numerous immigrant children in the NYC public school system, programs need to be implemented that will assist these parents in learning the function of school agendas and protocol. Programs of these natures will assist in bridging the communication gap between parents and educators. It is a widespread belief that more parental involvement with education will curb the high school drop-out rate and lead to a wide-spread increase in test scores.

### **YOUTH, FAMILY SERVICES, AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT**

Services provided to youth are limited despite the high number of individuals under the age of 18 living in the District. With the exception of the over-crowded St. John's Recreation Center, there are few activities available for youth to participate in to keep them out of the path of urban risks. Structured athletic events should be organized to build discipline, responsibility, leadership qualities, social and group skills, and self-esteem. It is essential that either another recreational center be opened within the borders of District 8 to service our youth as well as adult residents, or that the St. John's Recreation Center be expanded to accommodate the growing demand. Also, additional funding for youth oriented programs operated by not-for profit organizations is needed as well.

Early intervention is the key to saving the future of our District's youth. It is well documented that inner-city children have a higher risk for crime, dropping out of school and other educational deficits, gang involvement, drug use, and incarceration. We urge funding for activities that target at risk youth. Funding for youth development and delinquency and prevention programs is necessary to serve our youth and quell the

growing trend toward life-ruining activities.

We urge the Mayor and City Council to allocate funds for after-school programs that will reinforce what students are learning in school and provide supplemental tutorials for struggling students. Out of school time programs require additional funding to occupy our youth during those segments of the year when they do not have an educational facility to attend. Programs that will enhance our youth's technical and computer skills, make them aware of job and leisure opportunities outside of New York City and the United States, and that will train and prepare them for the workforce are also direly needed.

Historically the focus has been on at risk young males and more attention is required for our young women. Since women are the primary nurturers for the future, it is imperative that they be given the skills needed to participate in this function fully and adequately. In addition, parenting programs for young mothers (as well as fathers) need to be implemented to instill family values in individuals that may not have been reared in a stable family home so that the cycle does not continue to propagate.

The Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP) has proven to be invaluable to our youth in terms of the job experience, training, and responsibility given to its participants. Jobs, along with participation in the arts, music, dance, theater, and sport help foster higher self-esteem, positive self-motivation, and elevated levels of self-confidence. It is our firm belief that our youth will excel as a result of their experience with the SYEP. Therefore, we recommend that funding be allocated for these types of activities in our District, as well as the maintenance of the expanded age interval of SYEP. Baseline funding should be adjusted annually to allow for inflation.

### **DEPARTMENT OF JUVENILE JUSTICE**

We support the Safe at Home program for juvenile offenders. The current detention centers located Upstate, NY, are temporary shifts out of youth offenders' normal environment. It is better that the youth learn how to adapt and function effectively in their community rather than be detained upstate. Having offenders detained in NYC will probably increase family engagement and bridge the gap between being punished for their crimes and merging back into the community. An added benefit of this would be that funding and economic development will stay downstate rather than support local upstate economies. Therefore, alternatives to youth incarceration should be considered so that the population of at risk youth does not broaden.

The Dept. of Juvenile Justice, in conjunction with other city agencies pertaining to youth development, should devise programs geared toward increasing gang awareness and the dangers of gang involvement. As more and more youth are participating in illegal and gang activity at an earlier age, it is imperative that this information be

provided along the same basic outline as actual involvement. Education in this field, along with knowledge of the consequences of gang involvement, will assuredly lead to fewer children becoming involved in illegal activity.

### **DEPARTMENT FOR THE AGING**

As a growing population, the elderly require special services and care that should come automatically to a well-deserving and vocal class of citizens. We need to recognize and reward the efforts and hard work of our senior population by providing them the fundamental means of existing above the median poverty line. As proponents of elderly care and in recognition of the special needs of the elderly in District 8, we appeal to a course of action that will make this goal possible. More services focused on improving the quality of life, residential opportunities, home-care and health-care need to be provided by City-operated and neighborhood based agencies. The home-care emphasis will help reduce costly institutional care and the burdens placed upon kin and will also provide additional freedom to relatively self-sufficient individuals. Services should include innovative senior centers, easily accessible and reliable transportation, truly affordable housing, prescription drug coverage and assistance, and other social and recreational activities.

The Home delivered meals program has proven to be a success. To make sure the program continues, funds for car insurance and additional vehicles to deliver the meals are needed. Also, diabetic and Long Term Care Resources for seniors should be expanded as should Alzheimer's Prevention and Treatment programs.

### **PARKS & RECREATION**

The need for safe and well-maintained parks and playgrounds is a high priority for District 8. A regular maintenance program with adequate manpower is essential. Currently, maintenance staff needs to be increased for all of our Parks and Playgrounds, malls along Eastern Parkway, and the St. John's Recreation Center. Additional Playground Associates, Park Enforcement Officers, and other personnel are required to keep children at play free from harassment from dangerous elements that lurk in unguarded areas. It has been proven that with personnel in our parks, they are cleaner and safer for those that utilize them.

In addition, sports and exercise programs in our parks should be strongly considered not only for youth, but also for adults. Organized sports activities will not only keep our youth grounded and occupied and they will also contribute to a structured nurturing environment and a healthier lifestyle. Funding should be provided for organized activities in some of our larger parks such as Brower Park and Lincoln Terrace Park. We press upon our elected officials to give special consideration to the playground equipment at Lincoln Terrace Park and Stroud Playground. Presently, outdated

playground equipment and faulty groundwork and drainage systems mar Lincoln Terrace Park. In addition, the playground equipment at Stroud Playground and the fitness equipment in Lincoln Terrace Park are old and outdated, posing health hazards for the individuals that utilize them. Furthermore, our residents complain of the overall lack of cleanliness of our parks and playgrounds resulting from a lack of Park Enforcement Personnel (or PEP officers) to enforce no littering and dogs in the park rules. Funding must be provided in order to rectify these problems and make our parks and playgrounds safe and enjoyable for all.

With the numerous benefits of trees, we are appreciative of the Million Trees Initiative, which will increase the number of trees planted throughout the City. Unfortunately, there are problems with existing trees. A good portion of trees in the residential areas and parks of District 8 are in dire need of pruning and care. We urge the City to provide adequate funding for the pruning of trees so that they can be pruned and maintained on a more frequent basis.

## **SANITATION**

Community Board No. 8 supports and urges the city to restore Dept. of Sanitation Section Supervisors as this assists in identifying problem areas while also ensuring proper service delivery for residents.

The cleanliness of the streets and sidewalks of the District is a matter of great concern to us. The Department must have sufficient personnel and equipment to keep the streets clean. As our District is one of the most populous in the City, it is mandatory that Motorized Litter Patrol and street cleaners be provided on a daily basis to assist with street cleaning.

Undercover Sanitation Police officers are required to conduct surveillance of known dumping grounds and apprehend those responsible for the illegal dumping. With undercover officers, our streets and lots will not be subject to as much illegal dumping and other infractions as they currently are. In addition to vacant lots, vacant and open and unguarded buildings and construction sites are also the scene of illegal dumping. For instance, the building that used to house St. Mary's Hospital has blighted the community. The loading dock of the hospital is now a haven for illegal dumping and abandoned vehicles. It is our firm belief that additional undercover officers will help to dispel and deter these types of detrimental activities.

The District office has received numerous complaints of dog feces strewn about the streets. It is imperative that pooper scooper laws be enforced and that signs alerting dog owners that it is their responsibility to clean up after their dogs are installed. As a result, we are asking that funding to re-instate the signage unit be provided so that we may have the signs at our disposal when they are requested.

In addition, funding for litter instruction in schools is direly needed. Our streets would remain cleaner longer and we would require fewer cleaners to maintain cleanliness if our children are taught at a young age (with constant reinforcement) the dangers of littering. Additional Sanitation Police Officers are also needed to summons god owner who do not clean up after their dogs.

## **HOUSING**

The need for permanent affordable housing in District 8 is one of our highest priorities. Both low and middle income single individuals and families, seniors, and disabled alike, require additional resources for housing.

Homeowners in District 8 and the adjacent areas have been seriously affected by the foreclosure crisis. In order to re-stabilize our community, funding above the current level is needed to provide an array of services to mitigate this problem. Services needed to better assist homeowners and potential homeowners are: credit counseling, loan packaging, mortgage/grant organization assistance, and housing court assistance. Furthermore, anti-abandonment services need to be provided and HPD's Pro-Active Preservation Program should be expanded. This will help stem the number of abandoned properties that blight the community.

Community Board #8 urges continued funding for capital improvement to city owned properties. We also support continuance and expansion of HPD's basic loan programs—home improvement, small homes private, participation loan, owner services, article 8-A, and senior citizen housing assistant programs. We also urge continued funding for the seal-up and demolition program as well as the third party transfer program.

## **DEPARTMENT OF CULTURAL AFFAIRS**

We urge the City to increase its financial support for the renovation of our cultural institutions. The Brooklyn Children's Museum (BCM) is one of New York City's unique educational and cultural treasures. Since its inception in 1899, it has been recognized for educational excellence and innovation and has had strong local and national impact while attendance continues to grow. Funding is required to complete necessary repairs and upgrades, funding is also needed to maintain staffing levels at a livable wage and hours of operation for the museum.

We also recommend continued funding for the construction of a new education and cultural center for the Weeksville Heritage Center, as this will allow them to expand their services to children, families, and tourists.

Funding for the Brooklyn Public Library (Brower Park Branch) is also necessary as

many students utilize the library's resources for school projects, term papers, and supplementary education means. Additional hours of operation are necessary to allow students and other residents to utilize the library's resources. Funds should be allocated for land and building acquisition for the Brower Park Branch Library. The building is presently being leased by the city and it is essential that the City purchase the building to make the necessary amendments to the site to make it compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act and meet all accessibility guidelines.

## **ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION**

Recently, a number of streets in District 8 underwent sewer and trench replacement work. Some projects continue. Unfortunately, there are still some streets in dire need of such repair. The lack of an adequate on-going water- and sewer-main inspection program has created and contributed to the acute sewer and water problems in District 8 that is beginning to affect our housing stock. Our residents have brought to our attention many locations where the sewer lines are too narrow to handle the output of water during heavy rainfall, and this defect leads to the influx of water into many homes. Also, a number of streets are severely in need of reconstruction as a result of the horrendous number of sewer, trench, and water main defects. Subsequently, it is imperative that funding be increased for trench restoration, sewer maintenance, reconstruction, and expansion in the District.

## **TRANSPORTATION**

Community Board No. 8 is fortunate to have had a large portion of the District resurfaced in the last two fiscal years. However, many of our streets still require resurfacing or reconstruction due to deep and hazardous defects. We request that funds be allocated in District 8 for street reconstruction and resurfacing. Potholes should be handled promptly and properly, thus minimizing the damage to vehicles and the out of pocket costs for vehicle owners.

Street lights are a major deterrent to crime in the District as they illuminate our streets and provide residents with visibility in the dark to avoid potential hazards as well as identify illegal activity. However, there are a number of malfunctioning street lights as well as burned out lights in the District. Funding is necessary to maintain street lighting crews and speed up the repair process when a malfunctioning or burned out street light is reported to DOT.

Speed humps are an effective deterrent for drivers that speed. Additional funding should be considered to enhance the speed hump investigation unit so that they can be installed at a faster rate.

We urge DOT to expand the Sidewalk Repair Program. Many of our streets have

broken sidewalks due to large street trees uprooting the sidewalk from its foundation. Homeowners should not be held liable for defective sidewalks and damage caused by City street trees.

Over the last few years, District 8 has had several traffic calming studies performed that have proven to be an effective tool in slowing vehicular traffic, thus making our district safer for its residents. Traffic calming measures were implemented along Eastern Parkway at the Grand Army Plaza Circle, and Vanderbilt, Washington, and Classon Avenues. We recommend the continued performance of traffic calming studies and their implementation on streets that have not had a survey done. We also support the installation of countdown traffic signals at high-traffic intersections to improve pedestrian safety.

### **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND SMALL BUSINESS**

The revitalization of our commercial strips is one of our top priorities. We request that Small Business Services and the Brooklyn Chamber of Commerce continue to work with District 8 for the revitalization of Utica Avenue, Kingston Avenue and Nostrand Avenue, each between Atlantic Avenue and Eastern Parkway.

Funding is important for the development of active and successful merchants associations in the District. Funding is needed to assist the associations in formalizing their structures for targeting larger commercial centers and enhancing economic development by providing expense monies to facilitate development into legal entities. Our greatest recommendations are perhaps, that capital funds be directed toward business development on the under-developed commercial strips of Utica Avenue, Kingston Avenue, Washington Avenue, and Nostrand Avenue. The aforementioned strips have a large number of vacant properties or a lack of diversity in the types of property usage. Moreover, funding is required for the retention and expansion of business development programs for small businesses in District 8. Funding for the establishment of a retail incubator in the District should be provided, as this will aid in the development of small businesses, provide local employment, promote economic development, and assist minority contractors and vendors in the area.

### **ZONING**

Presently, many of our former manufacturing sites are being utilized for housing. We appreciate housing initiatives in our District, but we would prefer to maintain some of our manufacturing sites for manufacturing purposes so that there can be a supply of jobs for residents. One of the goals of our continued partnership with the Dept. of City Planning is to determine the feasibility of contextual zoning, as well as to ascertain the best possible uses of our manufacturing district.

## COMMUNITY BOARDS

Community Board 8 is the first advocate for community residents facing issues with other city agencies. It is our charter mandated duty to interface with community residents and city municipalities to ensure service delivery in a timely and proper fashion. 311 is not an adequate substitution for the interaction of community boards and community residents. Residents increasingly complain about the difficulty of obtaining useful and accurate information from the 311 system concerning resolution of complaints submitted via the central hotline and other general questions. The net result of the 311 hotline has been stagnation in service delivery and complaint resolution.

Community Boards in general lack adequate operational funding. The meager budget provided for each of the fifty-nine boards citywide does not keep up with inflation and any increased operating costs. Community Boards possess the only budget that has not seen an increase in the past two decades despite increases in operation costs. We operate on a miniscule budget yet perform a valuable service to the community and city. We urge the Mayor and the City Council to consider a much needed increase for operating costs and staff maintenance for all Community Boards. We hope the City Council and Borough President's office will continue to battle with us to keep the voice of local government alive in every community.

## CONCLUSION

Community Board No. 8 is committed to maintaining and enhancing the quality of life for the residents of our community. We are asking that the Mayor and our elected officials reconsider proposals to cut operating budgets of agencies that provide vital services to our residents. Due diligence is required to bring the needs and requests in this Statement to fruition.

Sincerely,



Nizjoni Granville  
Chairperson



Michelle George  
District Manager