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The City of New York Brooklyn Community Board 15



MICHAEL R. BLOOMBERG
MAYOR

PEARL BURG
DISTRICT MANAGER

STATEMENT OF COMMUNITY DISTRICT NEEDS FISCAL YEAR 2011



District Overview

Brooklyn Community Board 15 is a local governmental body in the New York City Borough of Brooklyn. The District encompasses the neighborhoods of Sheepshead Bay, Manhattan Beach, Kings Bay, Gerritsen Beach, Kings Highway, East Gravesend, Madison, Homecrest and Plumb Beach. The area is delimited by Corbin Place, Coney Island Avenue, Avenue Y, 86th Street, Avenue U and McDonald Avenue on the West, Avenue P and Kings Highway on the North, Nostrand Avenue and Marine Park on the East and the Atlantic Ocean on the South.

This District has seen a continuous increase in population density, economic resurgence and ever-changing demographics.

It is the policy of Community Board 15 to see to the needs of the local residents it serves and ensure the delivery of services to the District. Open communication between residents and the Community Board is an essential part of maintaining public safety, development and prosperity for all.

LAND USE

The District has a land area of 3166.9 acres or 4.9 sq. miles. According to the Department of City Planning (2008), the District includes: one and two-family residential units (51.1%), multi-family residential units (18%) and mixed residential-commercial units (3%). Non-residential land use in the District includes: commercial-and-office units (6.1%), industrial regions (0.5%), transportation/facility (2.7%), institutions (8.0%), open-space recreation (2.8%), parking facilities (1%) and vacant land (6.5%).

POPULATION

As of the U.S. Census, 2000, the Community Board has a population of 160,319 up from 143,477 in 1990 and 149,570 in 1980. Of them (as of 2000), 121,052 (75.5%) white, non-Hispanic, 4,823 (3.0%) African American, 20,229 (12.6%) Asian or Pacific Islander, 123 (0.1%) American Indian or Native Alaskan, 340 (0.2%) of some other race, 3,506 (2.2%) of 2 or more race, 10,246 (6.4%) of Hispanic Origins.

In the decade, birth-rate remained almost constant, death-rate dropped slightly and infant mortality dropped drastically. The largest percentage change occurred in the District population receiving income support either by Social Security or Medicaid. 26.6 % of the population benefit from Public Assistance as of 2004, up from 16.1% in 2000.

The District is ethnically diverse including but not limited to: African, Chinese, Hispanic, Irish, Italian, Israeli, Japanese, Korean, Pakistani, Russian and Turkish.

Economic Development and Business Services

COMMERCIAL STRIPS

During these hard economic times, Community Board 15's many commercial areas (Kings Highway, Avenue U, Sheepshead Bay Road, Nostrand Avenue, Coney Island Avenue, McDonald Avenue, Avenue X, Emmons Ave and Gerritsen Avenue) are showing more vacancies than in years gone by. These commercial areas are crucial to the economic vitality of Community Board 15, yet each shares similar problems (parking, sanitation issues and the high cost of conducting business in the City of New York.)

PARKING

The District is mainly comprised of one and two family homes. Each household maintains at least 2-4 cars. The available parking throughout the District is stressed both on our commercial strips as well as residential streets.

Many of our main commercial strips are serviced by major train lines and bus lines compounding the already traffic congested areas of Community Board 15. Blocked bus-stops and blocked fire hydrants are chronic problems in this District. Double parking is an additional annoyance that greatly interferes with the constant flow of heavy traffic. Many two-lane Avenues are reduced to one lane by the proliferation of illegal parking.

The 61st Precinct has been attentive but does not have the manpower to police all of these areas. It is the feeling of Community Board 15 that, Traffic Enforcement Agents should be given the authority to issue summonses for any of the illegal parking infractions as well as certain moving violations.

SANITATION

The District is comprised of mostly residential units. A major problem is the inordinate amount of violations issued to homeowners for what is termed a "dirty area" in front of their homes. Many homeowners are unaware of the rules governing the cleanliness of one's property. More educational material is needed for residents to understand proper cleaning procedures.

A well-manicured shopping area is both an excellent advertisement for both buyers and sellers alike. Department of Sanitation through enforcement must insist on storefront cleaning by merchants and should also implement crews of street-sweepers to further enhance the cleaning of our City streets. Trash receptacles must be strategically placed and regularly emptied along these commercial avenues. In heavily congested areas such as Avenue U and Kings Highway where both residential and business owners are utilizing these corner trash receptacles, enforcement and emptying should be further enhanced.

INTERFERENCE WITH QUALITY OF LIFE

Many new establishments in the District have opened in recent years. The overwhelming majority of these establishments serve alcoholic beverages, offer music and must not be allowed to disturb the Quality of Life of the area residents. Similar situations exist throughout the District with blocked sidewalks, unlicensed cafes, loud disturbing noise from both within the establishments and outside on the sidewalks by the hordes of people congregating smoking. Community Board 15 believes a compromise can be achieved by designating well ventilated smoking areas in these establishments. It is also the feeling of this Board that Consumer Affairs should conduct periodical, evening patrols of these known problematic areas to enforce regulations.

With major crime at an all time low, residents turn their attention to many of the Quality of Life issues such as barking dogs, construction noise, horn honking and graffiti.

NON-COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Our District has seen a surge in recent years of residential development. Although in today's economic climate sales have slowed. These units are still drawing new residents to our District. A problem beginning to evolve, along many of the commercial strips throughout Community Board 15, is the development of residential units along many of the commercial corridors. On Avenue U, what once was a supermarket today stands as a 6-story condo development. The community's future economic development is dependent on new businesses coming to the area as opposed to more residential units being erected, killing our economy.

SIDEWALK CAFES

Along many streets in the District, “al fresco” dining is noted. Many of these sidewalk eateries are legal, yet many have unilaterally usurped the sidewalks as their own. The Community Board should have a greater voice in the approval process of Sidewalk Café Licenses. Who better than the area residents to know the harmful effects of blocked sidewalks in one’s own community? The Department of Consumer Affairs seems to unilaterally approve Sidewalk Café Licenses (enclosed/unenclosed) even with the objection of the Community Board. Business establishments known to disrespect our community should not be considered for a Sidewalk Café License.

LIQUOR LICENSES

With a proliferation of Liquor Licenses, whether new or renewals, the Community Board must have more than an advisory role in the decision making process. For the Community Board to receive notification of a renewal of a license or a first application is not sufficient enough information to make an informed decision. The Community Board should be given the authority to delay, deny or question any application before the Liquor Authority. Community Boards work closely with NYPD and if an establishment is known for unlawful activities the Community Board, in conjunction with the NYPD should have the right to deny any application.

Environmental Issues

DEPARTMENT OF SANITATION

The long awaited Sanitation garage at the old Keyspan location is still a top priority on our list and completion should be a priority of the city. Although, they are working out of the temporary Knapp Street location, Community Board 15 appreciates the consistent service received throughout the District by the Department of Sanitation.

With the increase in the number of homes and businesses in the District, we expect sufficient funding to be made available to maintain the personnel and equipment needed to service our area.

Enforcement along commercial strips should be maintained and additional enforcement should be placed in known illegal dumping areas. Several locations in this District have seen high incidents of illegal dumping. These locations should be red-flagged and patrolled to violate these illegal dumpers.

Community Board 15 supports legislation that would fine, deter or prohibit the distribution of flyers placed on all motor vehicles, residential gates, hung on street poles, thrown into yards or placed on steps, etc. The neighborhood is inundated with unsolicited flyers which end up on our sidewalks and streets.

DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Community Board 15 has one of the highest numbers of 311 sewer backup complaints in the city. The response time to these complaints is not acceptable. The Department of Environmental Protection needs the manpower to clean these sewer lines periodically and make repairs in a timely fashion.

Within the District, severe sink holes are reported constantly. These sinkholes pose a major safety issue for vehicular as well as pedestrian traffic.

Within the District there is an overwhelming amount of waterways. These waterways are enjoyed by residents and tourists alike. The District needs a skimmer boat to maintain the beauty and cleanliness of our waterfront haven. If maintenance is performed periodically visible floatables would be non-existent.

CONEY ISLAND WATER TREATMENT PLANT

The Treatment Plant is not the type of facility that would be welcomed in other communities. We have been chosen as home for this Treatment Plant and have had to deal with the many problems associated with it. The Plant emits odors on a regular basis, contaminates the air and has become a quality of life issue for residents in the area. Although the Board is aware that routine maintenance is necessary, improper notification to the Board and residents is not acceptable. An open dialogue must be reached to alleviate the issues associated with this Plant.

Health and Human Services

DEPARTMENT FOR THE AGING

In recent years, Medicaid subscribers in this District tripled. This is indicative of the increase of our aging population. This district is in need of Affordable Assisted Living Residences.

Programs must be implemented to educate our seniors as to what services are available for them.

With a large immigrant population, translators should be available at all Senior Centers to help them maneuver the bureaucratic system of New York.

To ensure the Mental Health of our seniors we must foster both, educational and social skills.

Volunteer Mentor Programs can be formed between local senior centers and local schools. This will allow our seniors the opportunity to give back to their Community with their vast wisdom.

CONEY ISLAND HOSPITAL

On the border of our District lies Coney Island Hospital located on Ocean Parkway. It sits adjacent to the Belt Parkway on the westbound side. Due to its physical location it would be the Hospital of choice for accident victims. But with the lack of a trauma center, severe medical emergencies are forced to be transported to Hospitals many miles away.

The residents of our District utilize this facility and adequate funding must be allocated to ensure Coney Island Hospital remains a valuable Health Care Provider and becomes a complete care facility.

Housing and Land Use

DEPARTMENT OF BUILDINGS

With the economy on a downturn, construction in the community has slowed. Although, the problems created from years of overdevelopment persist throughout the community.

Many locations where a single family home once stood are now occupied by multi-family dwellings. A severe strain has been put on an already burdened infrastructure and because of the lack of parking spaces many homeowners have resorted to illegal parking pads in front of their homes. These illegal parking pads have created less green space in our Community and violations should be strictly enforced.

Due to the desirability of this neighborhood, developers have used every open lot and spot of green space for more and more construction.

The Department of Buildings must have an adequate amount of Plan Examiners with the advent of the new Zoning Compliance Public Challenge. In addition, Field Inspectors are needed for the follow up on issues. These Inspectors must have the equipment and the clerical support needed to carry out their duties. Funding must be made available for evening and weekend inspectors. Community Board 15 has seen a surge in complaints and violations issued. With added personnel each issue could be handled more expediently.

The Department of Buildings must be given the ability to criminally charge these violators who chronically ignore Zoning ordinances. This Community Board will be working closely with the City Council to try to enact legislation to give Department of Buildings inspectors entrée to any construction site in question.

Community Board 15 is urging a change in the uses allowed in Residential Districts. We are trying to prevent medical facilities from being “as of right” in these areas. Our residential communities are inundated with medical facilities opening adjacent to private homes. These facilities are destroying the character of our Community. Narrow one way streets are congested with ambulettes creating obstacles beyond tolerance.

HOUSING COMPLEXES

Community Board 15 is home to 2 housing complexes; the Nostrand apartment buildings and the Sheepshead apartment buildings. They are both publicly built and operated housing developments. These housing complexes are located on an already congested Avenue. To compound the congestion there is a Junior High School and High School (Shell Bank and Sheepshead Bay High School) directly across the street. Adequate funding must be allocated for the maintenance and security of these residential units.

Housing Police must have the funding needed to patrol these complexes in our District.

Parks and Recreation



Department of Parks and Recreation acquired the Marina of Sheepshead Bay many years ago. During these years the Parks Department has done little to revitalize the Sheepshead Bay Waterfront. New innovative ideas are needed to bring back the vitality the Bay once had.

The Sheepshead Bay Marina, a popular fishing and boating local, has in recent years experienced a severe change in water depth. This reduction in depth poses many navigational issues. Dredging of this waterway is imperative to maintain this historical, landmarked area and the only way possible to maintain the natural character of the Bay. The dredging would also ensure the safety of our boaters.

Ranking as third lowest in green space throughout the City, Community Board 15 needs to develop Brigham Street Park, located at Brigham Street and Emmons Avenue. This barren land could be an oasis for the many seniors who live in the Nursing Homes surrounding the property. The nearest green space is Plumb Beach located off the Belt Parkway and is a far walk and does not offer a park setting.

Funding must be allocated for the existing parks through the community to preserve the limited amount of green space in the District. Parks such as, Millet Playground, Kelly Park, Little Kelly Park and Bill Brown Park are in need of major renovation. Years of neglect have left our Parks old and tired.

Department of Parks and Recreation is in need of additional personnel to shorten the tree pruning cycle, to make repairs necessitated by uprooted trees, to adequately handle repairs to benches and other equipment in parks and playgrounds and maintaining the parks across our District on a daily basis.

On several open ball fields in the District, the replacement of existing grass by artificial turf would make it ideal for both baseball and soccer games, alleviating the problem of soccer players uprooting grass on ball fields. Also, the artificial turf would not require expensive maintenance.

An integral part of Manhattan Beach is the Art-Deco Manhattan Beach Bathhouse, which is in disrepair and unused. This building is reminiscent of times gone by. The rehabilitation should be a priority of the Parks Department. With the sky-rocketing cost of construction today this building could be renovated at a fraction of the cost of erecting a new building.

Public Safety, NYPD/ FDNY

61st POLICE PRECINCT

The statistics within the seven major crime areas have declined steadily over the last several years. With major crime at an all time low, Quality of Life issues have become a priority in this District. Noise complaints, double parking, blocked driveways, loitering and commercial vehicles parking on residential streets have become important issues to the area residents. With the increase of the Quality of Life complaints from area residents the need for sympathetic and competent Community Affairs Officers are necessary.

In order for the 61st Precinct to carry out their responsibilities effectively, our Police Officers need the proper equipment and vehicles. The 61st Precinct must be provided with all terrain vehicles (ATV's) to aid in patrolling our beaches and parks. Due to the large area of the Precinct additional sector cars and unmarked cars should be designated for the Officers.

The Precinct Station House is in need of major renovation. The building's interior is not suited to accommodate the day to day operations of a large Metropolitan Police Station.

With the many beaches in the 61st Precinct's District, additional Officers should be assigned to this Precinct, during the summer months, to accommodate the many beach-goers in the District.

The 61st Precinct is home to the largest Auxiliary Force in the City. Funding is needed for the equipment for these brave volunteers.

TRAFFIC ENFORCEMENT

In addition to patrols by 61st Precinct Officers, Community Board 15 should have a detail of Traffic Enforcement Agents assigned to the District to patrol the commercial strips, the major thoroughway Avenues and in the summer months the "No Parking" zone of Manhattan Beach. Strict enforcement would help alleviate traffic back-ups on major cross streets. With a proliferation of forged parking permits, agents must be educated to recognize these forgeries.

FIRE DEPARTMENT OF NEW YORK

Fire companies and battalions should not be removed from our neighborhood for training purposes. In doing so, this leaves our community without the best possible fire protection available. It requires personnel and apparatus from outside of our area to respond to a fire or other emergency in an area that they may not be familiar with.

With a large immigrant population, the Fire Department should help ensure their safety with educational information, translators and Fire Marshalls to inspect the many illegal apartments housing this immigrant population.

Transportation

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

With a marked increase in population in Community Board 15 comes additional vehicular traffic. The additional traffic moving through our streets has caused traffic back-ups on major Avenues and parking problems throughout the entire District.

Several intersections in our community are in need of traffic turning signals. A recent study performed by DOT called the Coney Island Gravesend Sustainable Transportation Project proposed several solutions to our traffic problems. The solutions presented were rejected unanimously by the community. The Board believes that the installation of turning signals at Kings Highway and Coney Island Avenue & Guider Avenue and Coney Island Avenue would be the first step in alleviating some of this congestion as well as safety issues.

Additional traffic signals are warranted on East 9th and Avenue U, Gerritsen Avenue and Gotham Avenue. The change of the flashing yellow signal on Ocean Avenue and Oriental Boulevard to a traditional signal light would resolve the confusion witnessed at this anomole.

Also, Community Board 15 believes that with all the additional moving traffic DOT should not consider the addition of any bike lanes in the District.

Community Board 15 believes the process of repairing street light outages, missing signs and pothole repairs should be streamlined. The length of time needed for these minor repairs causes frustration to the area residents.

Many of the major streets in this community are in dire need of reconstruction. The Courts in the Old Section of Gerritsen Beach are in major disrepair and should be addressed to alleviate the ponding and flooding created during minor rain storms.

A priority of DOT should also be to find parking solution alternatives to ease the congestion in this District.



Community Board 15 has been part of the “Adopt A Highway” program for the past 3 years to help beautify and maintain areas in which DOT does not have the man power.

With the reconstruction of the seven bridges on the Belt Parkway about to begin. DOT must ensure that residents of the Community have easy access to the Belt Parkway and do not face hours of grueling traffic snarls due to this reconstruction project.

MTA

The reconstruction of Avenue U and Gravesend Neck Road on the B and Q Train Lines has begun. It should be a priority of MTA to complete these projects as soon as possible and in the interim help commuters maneuver the system easily. The newly rennovated Train Stations will feature Mosaic Murals and Community Board 15 thanks Arts For Transit for beautifying our District Transit Stations.

Community Board 15 is opposed to the proposed Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) for Nostrand Avenue. The Board believes that such a change would take away much needed parking spaces, complicate the already busy street and not produce the expected outcome.

The antiquated buses being used to service this District must be replaced. Many of the older buses were used for express service. They make it extremely difficult for users to get on and off the bus and they must be replaced with more modern, energy efficient vehicles.

Youth Services and Education

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Within the confines of the District there are 27 Elementary Schools, 4 Junior High Schools, 11 High Schools and 1 College. Improvements to our schools physical conditions and updating technology is vital to our communities future success. Therefore, we request the necessary modernization of all schools within our District.

Kingsborough Community College continues its reputation as a premier institution of higher learning in the District and a leading provider of higher education for all New Yorkers. Over the years, Kingsborough has also served residents by hosting numerous community events. Kingsborough needs support in it's Capital and Expense Budget in order to keep pace with the continuing growth of the community it serves.



DEPARTMENT OF YOUTH AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

With the current state of the economy and children coming from homes where both parents work, it is essential for funding to be supplied to maintain after school programs in this area.

Conclusion

Community Board 15 is a thriving and diverse community. With the joint effort of residents and City Agencies working hand in hand the quality of life in this District can be heightened. It is the goal of Community Board 15 to make our Community a safe haven where life runs smoothly.



Theresa Scavo

Theresa Scavo
Chairperson

Pearl Burg

Pearl Burg
District Manager

* Photography credit courtesy of Butch Moran.