



BROOKLYN COMMUNITY BOARD 13

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DISTRICT NEED STATEMENT - FY 2016 **COMMUNITY BOARD 13 – BROOKLYN**



A 2014 TREASURE ISLAND?: The Community Board 13 peninsula, once an actual island, has taken many positive steps out of the footprint left by the furious on-land thrust of Superstorm Sandy. But that tide of destruction has not been forgotten and its post traumatic issues may not all have been alleviated. Pride must be taken by the fact that the neighborhoods of C.B. 13 have rallied in formidable and life-affirming fashion. Nothing has stopped the throngs of visitors and tourists who team into the busy avenues of the district, along with its beach, its Boardwalk,, its amusement attractions. Restaurants have reopened, with new ones still being added to the roster of eateries, both fine cuisine and fast food. Spine tingling hew rides have joined the time-honored thrill amusements of the amusement area's past. A brand-new YMCA, with wonderful amenities, has opened its doors to a Coney Island fanfare. Established civic groups have grown stronger to work on solving

persistent enigmas and to develop exciting new programs. Storefronts of all kinds are thriving. Plans are afoot for a possible amphitheater, for new housing, for new businesses, and for other magnets that have made the communities of C.B. 13 famous the world over...but...

No one has yet been able to forget the relentless rage of Sandy and that storm's warfare on Brooklyn's southern shores. A free-floating anxiety is present – What will happen 'if' and 'when' another angry storm sends its destructive arm onto the area? Are we ready? We see that the visiting crowds, perhaps the largest since the end of World War II, have strengthened economic health. Nevertheless, this success carries with it the problem of gridlocked streets in and out of the peninsula. There are residents and shop owners still awaiting the financial aid that had been promised by a slew of agencies and organizations. High-rise structures, notably those of the City's Housing Authority, still evince signs of the storm's devastation – the smell of mold, the shattered and still non-usable community centers, abandoned homes, empty stores and civic facilities. Emergency generators, brought in after Sandy hit, are still in place at some buildings and schools, and they cannot provide the need for residents when temperatures fall below 40-degrees. Thus, winters have been difficult for the populace. Homes still stand half-demolished along portions of the shorefront. Some may now have been abandoned or turned over to banks. Trees, hurtled against Sandy's powerful winds, withstood the onslaught but are now threatened by the salt-water inundated soil that surrounds them. No visible work has yet to be started along the shores of the Atlantic Ocean, Gravesend Bay, and Coney Island Creek in order to attempt to stem future flooding. And so the forward movements experienced by Coney Island, by Brighton Beach, by Sea Gate, and by Gravesend still have clouds of concern hovering over them. It is a time for thought, for action, and for greater communication to foster the protection of one of the City's most time-honored neighborhoods.

THE BOARD

Brooklyn's Community Board 13 serves the neighborhoods of the borough's southern peninsula (Brighton Beach, Coney Island, Sea Gate) as well as portions of those north of the Highway and Coney Island Creek (Gravesend with part of Homecrest and Bensonhurst). On the east, C.B. 13 is made up of the Atlantic Ocean on the south; Gravesend Bay and the Narrows on the west. The north is marked by Gravesend Bay, 26th Avenue, 86th Street, and Ave. Y, and the east is mapped by Corbin Place (separating Brighton Beach from Manhattan Beach). C.B.'s neighborhoods have been part of the city's history, with their use as a summer escape site. It has drawn city residents who flee hot streets and seek cool waters during the summer months. Its history includes many bungalow colonies, hotels, amusement zones, theaters, and restaurants of all kinds. Ferry service was common even as the rails finally made their way down to the oceanfront. The 'island' of Coney was altered as new roads were added for trolleys, trains, and autos.

Although the conclusion of World War II began a long quasi-decline of the beach areas. There still were crowds, though a smaller number, arriving on a daily basis. Over time, people moved into year-round structures. The amusement zone never stopped bustling with activity. Still, the area did lose theaters, hotels, summer bungalow colonies, spas, stores, and many amusement attractions (including Steeplechase and the remaining portions of the fire-ravaged original Luna Park). But the spirit of the areas remained, and it thrived despite these sad losses. Apartment houses and other high-and-low-rise buildings appeared on the scene. Today, C.B. 13 covers all sections of this southern area, with the Board's fifty members representing all of its disparate parts. The Board has stayed

active and vital, thriving on determination to better the way-of-life for all. There are long, deeply-involved and investigated discussions on all issues, and its General Board Meeting is held at Coney Island Hospital, while committee sessions and district cabinet meetings are generally held in the C.B. 13 office on Surf Avenue.

GRAVESEND/HOMECREST

History surrounds Gravesend, first visited in 1609 when Henry Hudson's *Half Moon* sailed into the Harbor, and, by 1643, land was granted to Lady Deborah Moody, an English expatriot. Today, it remains a generally quiet area where one and two family homes can be seen along such avenues as Bath, Benson, Harway, and Cropsey. Side streets house a large middle class. The population of Gravesend has been estimated as somewhere just under 5,000. There are some high-rise developments, largely co-ops, including Contello Towers and Waterview on Cropsey Avenue, and Harway Houses. Construction of other co-ops and new homes now have dotted many of the side streets. Mom-and-pop stores still are evident. Little Dreier-Offerman Park, on Cropsey at the Contello development, is an oasis for children, families, and seniors – it even has a bocce court, though that amenity may need a fix-up. A fence has been constructed to halt nighttime use and to keep young people safe from the busy thoroughfares that surround it. The western side of this area, separated by the Parkway, had once been a lonely stretch that served for many as a dumping ground.

With the creation of the Verrazano Bridge, a ton of landfill, removed from that construction site, was brought here, and the result was expansion of a larger stretch of land. Today, that former dumping ground land has been developed into **Calvert Vaux Park** (nee Large Dreier). This greensward, which had largely been used for soccer teams, now boasts opportunities for larger segments of the population, and work continues on its recreation facilities, its park house, and its ecological environment and study. The entrance to the Park is on Shore Parkway, with uses that include egress from that roadbed to the peninsula. Just north of C.B.13, Shore Parkway handles traffic from the Caesar's Bay shopping area on Bay Parkway and, now, a new BJ's. Shore traffic is apt to grow, but the largest concern of residents is the impact of a Waste Transfer Station planned for a site just north of the C.B. terminus at 26th Avenue. Are there possible dangers that can harm the southern shores? What if garbage and toxic water leakage from the Station area floats down to the beaches of the south, as well as its surrounding homes? Are there health risks? Are homeowners safe? Are bathers safe? Is the fragile new economic status of this shorefront area threatened in any way? What are the safeguards?

Transit is a concern. Residents must walk several blocks to the elevated train; others may use the B-82 and/or B-64 buses. The latter, though, has no protective areas where seniors and others riders may wait, during inclement weather, until a bus arrives. The B-64 had been dropped from its southbound route, but legislators and civic leaders led the crusade for its restoration which has since taken place. Automobile use is strong along Cropsey Avenue. A pedestrian bridge, over the Highway links the Contello area from the Calvert Vaux vicinity on the west. It is set for reconstruction, a situation that will make access to the 'new' park easier for those in the Cropsey Avenue side.

The **Ulmer Park** branch of the Brooklyn Public Library stands on Bath Avenue, and serves, among others, students from the nearby John Dewey High School and the Lafayette campus (formerly Lafayette HS and now a multi-academic center). There are other schools nearby. Some construction work is needed, particularly on its leaky roof. Shore Parkway Jewish Center and Most Precious Blood Church serve vital needs. Young residents find a home away from home at the Grace-Gravesend Athletic Assn., which also uses the Gil Hodges Field on Shell Road.

The area also is home to **Marlboro Houses**, a NYCHA development, and its residents long have sought greater police surveillance. Its Marlboro Senior/Youth provides an outlet for many, and is supported, in part, by the very involved and active Jewish Community Center of Coney Island. The Marlboro Playgrounds have undergone improvement over the last few years, with Marlboro Park gaining aid from the Parks Department, although no funds have yet been found for its needed park house. Residents hope for more programming availability for seniors and for the large youth population.

The City's Railroad Yards separate this part of C.B. 13 from its eastern sector, the home of the well-maintained Beach Haven development, in an area from the Belt (south) to Ave. Z (north), from Ocean Parkway (east) to Shell Road (west). National Grid (nee Brooklyn Union and KeySpan) long had utilized a large area from Neptune south to Coney Island Creek. Under a State mandate, KeySpan has remediated the portion of the Creek, from Shell to Stillwell Avenues, of toxic materials, along with the land around it. National Grid's major building on the site, at Shell & Neptune has now been razed, and the utility has sold the property. Fences, around the enclosed area, note that a storage facility will be constructed on the land. But this still fenced-in area is extensive, and it is not yet known how large such a storage structure would rise. Will there be a potential for a needed parking area somewhere in this emptied zone? A new Sanitation Garage has long been planned for the area on the western portion of this former KeySpan/BUG land, near Stillwell Avenue. The wait for the construction has now gone on for decades.

BRIGHTON BEACH

Brighton Beach has undergone many changes since its summertime escape use before the end of the 19th century. Bungalow colonies and a large hotel were then magnets for people, as was its beachfront. Trolleys and trains brought crowds to the neighborhood. A race track, music halls, restaurants, theaters all dotted the streets. Today, Brighton Beach is a year-round home to many (the combined population of Brighton Beach and Coney Island is estimated at 111,063 with somewhere around 3,000 households). The Brighton Beach area is only 0.450 square miles, and it had become known as 'Little Odessa' or 'Little Russia' because of the vast immigration from the former Soviet Union. Fifty different countries of origin are represented with the majority from the Ukraine (25.2 %) or Russia (21.2%), with others from China, Hong Kong, and Belarus. The northern sector of the neighborhood (Neptune Ave. and northward to the Highway) also sees residents from Puerto Rico, Mexico, South America, Pakistan, India and those of African-American heritage. There are temples, mosques, and churches within the district. Senior centers and medical establishments also dot the streets. The number of apartment houses, many of them standing for decades and housing a great many senior citizens, had been numbered at 36 only a few years ago. Since that time, however, developers have bought up some of the one-and-two family homes on the Brighton side streets and constructed co-ops, some of them still unfinished and uninhabited. In addition, the aging population strongly indicates needs for senior centers and nursing homes.

Other sites along these same side streets, and along Oceanview Avenue, are fenced-in, either abandoned or awaiting future decisions by developers.

Brighton Beach Avenue thrives, when, only some 20 years ago it had appeared to be in trouble with many empty storefronts. Now, the ever-widening population has brought economic power to the

shopping stretch, where one finds many fruit stores, confectionaries, clothing shops, banking enterprises, among others. The Brighton Business Improvement District is strong but has to deal with many problems endemic to this street – the overhead elevated train, illegal vendors on the sidewalks, stoop license violations, double and triple parking and deliveries, clogged traffic as motorists look for hard-to-find parking spots. Some of the establishments along the street have been known to dump grease and/or decayed fruit into the sewers, a situation that may create odors and clogged sewers. Another important local group is the Brighton Neighborhood Assn., which has worked with housing issues and the newer populations. BNA's ***Brighton Jubilee*** is the end-of-summer street festival that aids that organization in its funding.

The Riegelmann bungalow area has undergone many changes. Some bungalows have been altered into year-round, pleasant homes. Some, damaged by Superstorm Sandy, also have been restored. Other bungalows, though, were already abandoned or severely damaged. Many of these historic bungalows are on unmapped and/or narrow lanes, and services are difficult i.e. sanitation and sewer/catch basin issues. The largest change in the area occurred when the iconic Brighton Beach Baths, located from the Boardwalk-Brighton Beach Ave.-Coney Island Ave., shuttered and became the site for the giant Oceana development of high-rise, modern structures. Amenities during its construction included Parks Department-maintained sitting areas on its Brighton Beach Ave. side. Across from these open areas is the building that once housed the Oceana Theater. After a variance, some years ago, the building became the **Millenium**, with a catering/restaurant on the ground floor, and a theater/open space on the upper level, once the site of the balcony. As of this writing, the building's entire operation seems to have been undergoing a change, with stores added on its Brighton 11th Street side, and a supermarket(?) to be opened on the first floor. The Buildings Department has had problems with the work, but construction continues. The building fronts on a very busy conglomeration of intersections (Br. 11th St.-Brighton Beach Ave.- Coney Island Ave.). Motorists and pedestrians often are trapped at this corner, where the overhead transit structure turns from Coney Island Ave. onto Brighton Beach Ave. Concerns have been raised as to the impact of the Millenium's new usage, and whether or not that the changes are legal in the first place.

Traffic issues dominate daily discussions. The area around Neptune-Guider-Coney Island Ave. and the entrance to the Parkway needs correction and signage. There are others to be discussed later in this document. Remaining is a large parking lot on Brightwater Court at Brighton 2nd St., but its future is a question mark since the City has gotten out of the parking lot business. Half of this important parking area is reserved for local residents who pay a rate for its use; the other half is for the beachgoers and shoppers who need a place to leave cars. There have been problems when one-day users usurp the permanent residents' sites, and when residents don't file for their spaces early enough. These residents are largely seniors who require spots closer to their homes.

CONEY ISLAND

Within its area of 0.691 square miles, a world of history – past and present – Coney Island has taken its place in the annals of fun and frolic. The Native American population vanished as the new settlers found the seaside as a perfect escape from the bustle of New Netherlands and New Amsterdam. The world may know Coney Island as the first amusement capitol in the New World, but it was always much more. Summer residences were common from the onset; warm weather bungalow use became common along with two-story rooming houses. Over time, more and more people found the western part of the peninsula as a perfect year-round residence, and the population grew. World War II

ended, and changes once again were evident. The bungalows and rooming houses disappeared, replaced by high-rise residential units, some now part of the NYCHA system. Television, air-conditioning, and an exodus to the suburbs curtailed some of the busy lifestyles. Movie theater and live theater bit the dust, along with pools and scores of Boardwalk attractions. The years saw the final demise of Steeplechase Park, which was the remaining big amusement attraction after the demise of the previous brightly-lit but doomed wonders of the original Luna Park, and earlier, Dreamland. But there were ‘constants’ as well – the most important involving the Riegelmann Boardwalk, named for Edward J. Riegelmann, that runs 2.51 miles from West 37th at the border of Sea Gate and Coney Island down to Brighton 14th Street in Brighton Beach. Adjacent to it is the great beach that continues to attract millions every year.

The **Boardwalk** is the major link connecting Brighton Beach and Coney Island. Built in 1923, it has a steel and concrete foundation that supports wood planking. Beach replenishment work, well over a decade ago, brought the height of the sand right up to the Boardwalk steps, and the result saw the loss of bathrooms beneath the wooden walkway, along with shops to rent umbrellas and beach chairs. The sand, staying wet after a rain, eventually eroded much of the structure’s underside; work is now needed to correct much of the trip-hazards and other eroded spots on the Boardwalk. But the beach, the Boardwalk, and the amusements remain formidable attractions.

The amusement area has undergone changes since the advent of the Coney Island Development Corp.(CIDC) and, now, the amalgam of area enterprises as the **Alliance for Coney Island**. The city plan seeks to ascertain that Coney Island becomes more of a year-round use. The older entities had vanished, and Thor Equities had bought the acreage of Astroland, and, subsequently, the land returned to the city and is now home to the giant ‘**Luna Park**’ (there had been an interim ‘Dreamland’ which drew little attention and disappeared). The new Luna has widened with a chill-thrill area called the **Scream Zone**, which lives up to its title with rides that leave customers screaming or gasping for breath. The public loves these rides! A new **Thunderbolt** roller coaster, on the site of the famed one of the same name that stood there in the past, has proved a key lure to the adventurous. Deno’s **Wonder Wheel Park** remains a formidable draw for visitors of all ages. There are dozens more visitors’ delights e.g. **Nathan’s** on Stillwell-Surf as well as on the Boardwalk; the **B&B Carousell**, now moved to the wooden walkway; MCU Park, the home for the **Brooklyn Cyclones** baseball team – a minor league entity of the Mets; The Abe Stark Ice Skating Rink; and such eateries as Applebee’s Grimaldi’s on Surf; Tototonno’s on Neptune Ave.; Tom’s, also on the Boardwalk; to name a few. One also finds **Coney Island U.S.A.**, underscoring the past carnival-like, freak show atmosphere. But there are empty lots, still unused by Thor Equities, in the middle of this 12-acre center. To add to the needs of the community, the Alliance has fostered employment for young people of the area during the busy summer months. Job training and other plans are either underway or in-the-works.

The west end of the Coney peninsula finds a large population. The median household income in the area is approximately \$22,000. The area was hard hit by Superstorm Sandy, and there are many civic elements that have not been restored. Homeowners still await promised funding to restore their houses; businesses have faced similar problems. The NYCHA structures, and similar high-rise buildings, long in need of apartment and building assistance, still await aid for issues present long before ‘Sandy’! Its population indicates the imperative need for a renaissance of the **Mermaid Avenue** shopping strip, where many consumer goods simply are not available. After years in the planning, the brand new **Coney Island YMCA** has opened to serve the residents of the west end. It

has two pools, a large basketball arena; scores of exercise equipment; other services as well as space already used by the community for important meetings on local issues! Next door is the new Coney Island Commons, a mixed-uses development that includes some 196 rental apartments (studios, and one and two-bedroom units for low-and middle-income families. Upcoming is the anticipated **Ocean Dreams**, of which more information will be in the pages following.

The predominate group of residents, according to studies, is Afro-American, with other numbers that include Hispanic, Asian, Mexican, South American, and White. This part of the shorefront area has now seen a movement of many of Soviet backgrounds. It is stated that the health care and social assistance sector are the area's biggest employer, accounting for 30-percent of jobs. The large area of employers involve such as Coney Island Hospital, Shorefront Jewish Geriatric Center, Sea Crest Health Care Center, and Saints Joachim and Anne Nursing and Rehabilitation Center.

Following the collision with Sandy, many civic groups linked arms to deal with the many issues that the storm created, and matters that long were needed in Coney Island. Churches, housing developments, the JCC of Greater Coney, with input and involvement of the Alliance for Coney Island and effective political leadership, have dealt with job training, area jobs in the amusement district and construction, crime, parks, et al. Some of these successful ventures include the **Coney Island Generation Gap** (with programs that include young people welcoming visitors to the island), **United Neighborhood Services** (working on such issues as reaching out to young people to curb acts of violence), **Amethyst Women** (working with battered women as well as with AIDS/HIV threats), **Friends of Kaiser Park & Calvert Vaux Park** (coordinating events in those two widely-used expanses), NY Rising (working on funding for local groups), among many others. All are directly involved with the men and women of the 60th Precinct, and most will be involved in the annual *National Night Out* festivals and information evenings. Block parties and park events bring people together; Green Thumb lots, one seemingly lost to the plans for the amphitheater, are nonetheless very much a part of the civic enterprises and with large civic input.

SEA GATE

Sea Gate, at the tip of the peninsula, is a private gated community that underwent severe damages from 'Sandy'. The area is 0.263 square miles, with a population estimated at 3,300. The Sea Gate Association manages the area with a majority of white residents, along with those with Russian, Hispanic, Asian, and African-American heritages. Large attractive one-family homes, as well as civic centers, a beach club, synagogues, the Sea Gate police offices, the Board office, and others were awash in the wind-swept waters from the surrounding ocean and the bay. There are residents still waiting to rebuild or to finish work on their homes. The sands of the beaches have been washed away, but the latest Army Corps' plans may well mean the restoration of these sandy areas. The one shorefront park was completely destroyed. The beach club managed to open by the next season, but residents may still be waiting for FEMA/Build-It-Back, insurance companies, and other similar funders.

Most Sea Gate residents have opted to stay in spite of any potential future 'Irene' and 'Sandy'. But the infrastructure of this part of southern Brooklyn is ancient and needs work for the health and safety of the community. The Army Corps has promised to start work on the long-anticipated T-Groin work that would prove helpful against the thrust of storms and would see, as almost a byproduct, the restoration of the beaches. An elongated rock groin at W. 37 St., separating Sea Gate

and Coney, had been affirmed as part of the reason why Sea Gate's sand washed northward and landing on Coney's north shore to **Bayview** Park and Bayview Avenue where dunes and 'beach' loomed. Sand is still being removed from Bayview, where it has menaced residents of that community with sand encroachment into their homes, and with streets covered with sand, a situation made dangerous for motorists.

GENERAL TRENDS: It is obvious that C.B. 13's neighborhoods, still gaining renewed strength, have enormous future potential. But they are still gripped by the threats of any new storm. Nonetheless, these same communities show vitality. In recent years, it was estimated that the private sector's employment rate in C.B. 13 had grown by almost 30-percent. It was further noted that most of the gains in jobs related to transportation and education services. Employment seems to have stabilized in the health care and social assistance areas. The unemployment rate, though, has gone up 11%. The senior population of all sections rises each year, and the population aged 65 and older amounts to almost 23%. The amusement area of Coney Island continues to expand, leading people to wonder whether hotels might rise as was indicated in the City's plans for the shorefront. But these plans hide the anxiety related to the additional traffic. Infrastructure improvements are now underway, but how long will it take for full fruition? Will new developments strain the extant infrastructure even further? Such fears abound all along the peninsula.

It is natural that residents hope that the work on new water and sewer lines are completed before any new housing construction. There is concern over lands still owned, and unused, by Thor Equities e.g. on the east and west sides of Stillwell Ave., between Surf and Boardwalk; as well as on W. 12th St. and Surf. There is added concern for lands still owned by the Bullard family, including the landmarked Shore Theatre building, Surf & Stillwell. Hopes are still high that the Bullard family will work out problems with the city so that that structure can be used for a multiple of uses e.g. movie and live action theater; galleries and restaurants; art spaces; rehearsal and meeting halls; and other uses that will help turn the area into its desired year-round economic upswing. At the present time, it has been discovered that homeless and others have managed to break into the **Shore Theater** structure; windows are now smashed, and piping has been stripped! Further destruction inside the building can create hazards to future plans and, particularly, to the people who have entered it. Development continues in Brighton Beach where new high-rise architecture seems at war with the current landscape. Senior-used facilities and nursing homes must deal with increased usage; day care centers, some of which had been severely storm-damaged, need to be expanded with a growing family use. Schools may well be overcrowded and some still waiting for remediation from the storm. John Dewey High School had been threatened by plans to turn it into a multi-use campus, as was done at the nearby Lafayette High School. Such a change in use for John Dewey High School has drawn considerable negative reaction from community, families, students, legislators. As of now, the school remains in its present usage.

LAND USE: Space is at a premium in the crowded areas but future development of all kinds seems unavoidable. The obvious needs include a mercantile renaissance on Mermaid Ave. for area residents. There are sites for new construction, one of which is the anticipated **Ocean Dreams**, a 500,000 sq. ft., mixed oceanfront development, at the west end of the Boardwalk between W. 34 and 36 Streets. Three residential towers are discussed with 400 market rate condos, 25,000 sq. ft. of retail, and 400 parking spaces. Discussions have involved the creation of a much-needed supermarket on the Surf Avenue side, and a restaurant on the Boardwalk. The latter could lead the way to more Boardwalk facilities, as they had been until the end of World War II. People feel that

the many unused, private lots throughout Coney Island, as a few in Brighton Beach, should be discussed for possible multi-level parking structures. Land owners could be given some stimulus to see this development. Soothing the impact of more automobile jam-ups on Surf, Neptune, Brighton Beach, and Mermaid Avenues would mitigate increased traffic concerns. Residents of the west end should not have to spend one-hour to go ten blocks in order to turn into Cropsey Ave. to go north or onto the Highway.

TRANSPORATION: With success may come increased problems, and traffic is one of the key worries for the peninsula. Motorists coming in and out of Coney Island, Brighton Beach, Sea Gate and Gravesend find themselves trapped in bumper-to-bumper traffic. It is a sad fact for residents of Coney's west and Sea Gate to find themselves stuck in gridlock for an hour in order to leave the vicinity; some simply turn back home. But emergency vehicles of Fire, Police, ambulances, EMS may have difficulties as well.

Some of the most tricky areas:

- Neptune Ave., from W. 37 St. eastward – particularly after major egress from special events (the **Mermaid Parade, Nathan's Hot Dog Eating Contest, Road Runners' Half-Marathon, concerts, and ballgames**). Motorists have been urged to go several blocks to the west to ten head north to Neptune Ave. where they find a gridlocked situation. West 19th Street has been restored to a southbound street as it had been in the past. When it was changed to a north direction, the West 19th St. right and left turns led to an auto/traffic chaos. The move was thus reversed, with alterations --- cars can no longer turn right into W. 19th St. after they reach Neptune from Cropsey. This entire area proves difficult to pedestrians, homeowners, businesses, motorists, and bikers alike. Years ago, the W. 19th Street passageway to Canal Street was a possibility for traffic remediation, but that street's possible use became out of the question when it was closed off for utility use. Might it be restored to release some of the traffic-pedestrian crisis at Neptune-Cropsey?
- The intersection of Brighton Beach and Coney Island Aves.; the odd Brighton 11 St.-Brighton Beach Ave.-Coney Island Ave. turn lanes.
- Coney Island Ave.-Guider-Belt Parkway entrance and bridge over the Belt.
- Stillwell-Surf Avenues. This intersection unites those using the Stillwell Terminal with drivers seeking spots, people criss-crossing the street, beachgoers, amusement visitors, Nathan's' patrons, among scores more. To add to the problem, buses, on the south side of Surf, release passengers in mid-block, and the travelers cross Surf in a section where there is no light and where motorists may well be traveling at higher speeds.
- Shell Road and Shore: The turn into eastbound Parkway use collides with traffic along Shell Road and West 6th Street.
- Ocean Pkwy. and Neptune: Difficult for seniors in particular as cars have made turns from one busy street to another busy street. DOT has changed traffic patterns recently, and a constant study should be underway to see that the new road turn actions are successful.
- Cropsey Ave.-Home Depot area-Highway-Shore. Automobiles turn south into Cropsey from the Parkway as well as north onto Cropsey. Drivers, perhaps in a hurry to leave the Parkway area, have been known to jump curbs and crash into homes on Bay 52nd Street. In addition, a

truck route had been set up for deliveries to Home Depot, but some drivers to that destination ignore that turn and move onto Cropsey Avenue, where they can easily disrupt traffic.

- Neptune-Stillwell-Cropsey Avenues: Auto shops on Cropsey utilize at least one lane designated for traffic where they park cars. Two lane traffic from Neptune, thus, may wind up squeezing into one lane. Similarly, Neptune and Stillwell are replete with cars parked into bike lanes and/or turn lanes. Patrons of eateries and businesses on the street have no place to park their cars --- would parking meters help? Or the removal of bike lanes in this area?

When events break at MCU Park, for example, Traffic Enforcement agents must 'shovel' cars into appropriate streets so that they can go north to Neptune and onto Cropsey, BUT the three lane set-up of Neptune is unclear to motorists, and a seldom-used bike path is used more for parking and vehicular by-passing for motorists to get to the turn lane. Cars might well be urged to go east on Surf to Ocean Parkway where they can move north and/or get onto the Belt with greater ease.

Traffic is the most urgent complaint, especially in a decade when people have learned about storms and floods, and when the omnipresent threat of terrorism is on everyone's lips. To add to the traffic problem in and around Neptune-Cropsey, the auto shops along Cropsey (as well as adjacent Neptune and Stillwell) place cars into the thoroughfare, often causing two lane traffic forced into one lane. Longer delays are the result, along with the potential of collisions as motorists try to circumvent the cars that jut into the traffic lane.

TRANSIT: The city, borough, and community all urge people to use public transportation, and, in the case of summertime Coney Island and Brighton Beach, it is the wisest move, but Transit uses weekend hours to alter its subway lines for needed rail and station work. The resultant shifts in movement of F, Q, and other lines prove delays and confusion. The result: people may use cars. Bus use is often slow on weekends, and even often during weekdays when people, even on southbound Cropsey, find undue waits for B68 and others. Residents of the west end also report delays in early morning and rush hour buses to take them to and from the Stillwell Terminal. As a result, there is a large presence of 'dollar cabs' waiting for fares at the Terminal on its Stillwell Avenue side. Increased populations and increased economic enterprises underscore the need for better Transit-Board coordination. Many local people work into late hours, and the dollar cabs spell some kind of relief as they try to get home.

Express trains should be considered for shorefront residents! It is possible. Residents of the C.B. 13 areas travel from 30-45 minutes into Manhattan, if everything is working properly. To add to the future problems, The 'F' train will be unavailable for an indeterminable future while work is done on the line. Information on new methods, not involving the 'F', will have to be given widespread communication to riders. Will the 'F' users find it too difficult to come to the southern shore, during the most busy summer months, and, thus, use their cars which will add to the jam-up of vehicles in C.B. 13? Will studies continue on the possible use of ferries once again to reach the shore communities? Along with a new pier? Added to the Steeplechase Pier? Using the one-time sites of the Dreamland and/or Iron Pier? The Coney Island Creek? Have studies revealed a possibility of a bridge over the Creek, and, if so, would it be for walking or for a combination of walking and driving? What would it do to the ecological plans for the Creek and its shore areas? Birding? Fishing? Kayaking?

PUBLIC FACILITIES: As has been noted previously in this document, there are important

community facilities that have not resumed normal uses since SuperStorm Sandy, and corrective work must be done on these sites, notably in community rooms of high-rise buildings, day care and senior centers, etc. Young people have fewer places to explore their abilities. The now-unused FEGS Building, on Surf Avenue, is no longer used for social services since the storm. It had once been a YM-YWHA; it could offer another indoor site for the young. The new Coney Island 'Y' is an enormous success, but it cannot be the only facility for residents.

The Shorefront Y, in Brighton Beach, fulfills many needs, and other meeting sites are available, but the largest segment of residents are in the senior range. NYCHA community rooms may still be reeking with the odors of mold along with painting and floor replacement needs. There should be a site for cultural activities, one of the most famous in the past being The Everyman Company of Coney Island, which involved localites, most of them in the teens. The work of this now-lost cultural group resulted in Coney Island-ers being the first ever to perform at the Fountain at Lincoln Center. After that, the Coney Island teens appeared at Alice Tully Hall, The Brooklyn Museum, and off-Broadway. This important project was video taped for a film that was regularly shown on Channel 13.

PUBLIC SAFETY: C.B. 13 is home to: the 60th Police Precinct and the next door Fire Station on W. 8th St.; the Mounted Troop E on Brighton 3rd St; Transit District 34 in the Stillwell Terminal Bldg.; Housing PSA #1 on W. 23 St. & Mermaid; Engine 318, Ladder 166 on Neptune Ave.; EMS Station 32 at 2601 Ocean Parkway; Brooklyn South Narcotics; and other units. A summer detail is made available for the 60th Precinct, but the growing crowds indicate that added personnel is needed. Traffic Enforcement is stretched to the limit, and PEP workers are minimal. Transit and Housing Police are constantly busy. After-midnight shifts must cover a wide range of difficult sites e.g. parks, Boardwalk, Brighton Beach Ave., the high-rise districts, and the amusement area (especially on Friday and Saturday late nights).

Civic leaders are working with programs to attempt to reach-out to young people, especially since the sounds of gunfire are heard on many a night. Major crime numbers are down thanks to the vigilant watch of the forces, but the neighborhoods know that more police presence is needed to keep those numbers low. Beachgoers have to watch their possessions carefully when they enter the surf, because snatching of personal goods have occurred. Parks police units should be increased. Work should be done on the Neptune Ave. Ladder Co. structure, which is old and which is often flooded from back-ups after rainstorms and waters from Coney Island Creek.

ENVIRONMENT: Work has finally gotten underway on renovation of the aged infrastructure in Coney Island. The NYC Dept. of Design & Construction now works on the West 15th Street parcel, from the outfall at Coney Island, down W. 15 St. to Neptune and Mermaid. Instructions are sent weekly to building management, storeowners, homeowners and tenants. C.B. 13's office receives all of the data as well, and is, thus able to keep people in the involved area informed of the work. Residents are advised to shut off main water valves when water supply is being affected. Other instructions are given. Important eateries and businesses are informed, especially since they rely heavily upon visitors e.g. Gargiulo's and Tototonno's Pizza. The progress seems to be moving along in spite of its long-delayed start. However, there are only enough funds to continue the work to approximately West 21 Street. This funding lack does not solve the longtime flooding issues of all points westward on the peninsula, which include the high-rise structures, the NYCHA and Mitchell Lama buildings, the Mermaid Avenue corridor, the one and two family homes that have already

suffered enormously from flooding. Back-ups of sewers and catch basins are regularly reported to the Board office from all areas of Coney Island, Brighton Beach, Sea Gate, and Gravesend. DEP usually is on the scene quickly after the reports are recovered from the Board office (Residents may first call '311' and attempt to get a complaint number).

Outfall cleaning work at the Creek at W. 33 and W. 35 Streets recently caused considerable concern when cleaning was begun. Reports came in that sludge was being dumped directly into the Creek. Other agency reports said that the Coast Guard and agencies were on board and that a tarp had been placed atop the Creek-affected portion to prevent toxins being dumped into the water. Communication as to the work that was to be done had not reached the public or the Community Board. The results were numerous concerns. Answers were sought by a neighborhood that understands the need for the work, but also understands the important role of the Creek in the development of the peninsula's activities.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT: It has been stated that the city "...has moved to stimulate economic growth and revive the area's traditional role as an urban amusement destination. After several years of discussion (the work of CIDC and EDC with the community), the City rezoned the neighborhood in 2009 to create a 27-acre Coney Island amusement and entertainment district." The plan indicates additional housing and retail development. "As part of these efforts," it was stated, "the City is also investing heavily in infrastructure improvements to help stimulate private development." SuperStorm Sandy, hurricaining through the peninsula, created concern for the methods of adding to the stretch of land. Where will housing ultimately be constructed? Will there be enough space, within the new buildings, for parking? Will the vitally important MCU field parking lot be affected, as had been detailed in the plan? If so, what will happen to the motorists looking for spaces in an area of beaches, Boardwalk use, ballpark, amusements (with new ones added), an ice skating rink, a possible amphitheater (with a stage that can be partially enclosed, during cold weather, in the adjacent landmarked Child's Building where a restaurant may well be opened)? The dilapidated bridge over West 8th Street, connecting the West 8th Street TA facility with Surf Avenue, the Aquarium, and the Boardwalk, has been removed. No agency would assume responsibility for its maintenance and for any new bridge that might be considered. Work has thus been underway to create safeguard crossings here from north Surf to south Surf, and part of that scenario would be beautification of West 10th Street for straphangers on the way to the beach, for Aquarium visitors, for pedestrians. However, by summer '14, the work has not been completed, and the ramp from the above-street station is not in use. What is the timetable for its finale step (extra money was allocated by OMB)? When will work start on W. 10 Street's esplanade? The south end of W. 12 St. became a sitting area with tables, and a small stage had been envisioned. One year later, water surrounds this sitting zone because, it was reported, two catch basins at the Boardwalk end, were not handled properly during the work. There is no stage; cars still park in the sitting area despite illegalities; and only a scant few tables are visible. If further such street ending plans are on the table, the planning must include all aspects and possibilities.

Additions, though, have proven crowd-pleasing throughout the amusement zone. Luna Park with its Scream Zone and the new Thunderbolt roller coaster captures visitors' attention. In addition, visitors flock to the lure of the great older **Cyclone** roller coaster; the multi-color lighting of the **Parachute Jump**; the **B&B Carousell** (sic) on the Boardwalk; new eateries, big and small; new work on the ageless Nathan's structure; Tom's Restaurant; Coney Cones et al. Importantly, flood-resultant renovation continues at the **Aquarium** as it also starts work on a giant new Shark center attraction.

In the area, one also finds a grand mix of the newer and the older e.g. the Eldorado bumper cars and arcade; the Nets' center on the Bowery; Lola's Boutique, fortune tellers, ice cream and pizza parlors, taco stands, Rubys' on the Boardwalk, Paul's Daughter with its franks and burgers, spook-rides, and more. Will the future see the return of a wax museum? How about a water park? One can only hope for the 'return' of those sorely missed Steeplechase Horses, and the return-to-operation of the actual Parachute Jump. Additional carousels along Surf and The Boardwalk? The hopes are endless.

As has been noted, job placement, especially during the summer, is important to young Coney Island residents, and hundreds apply every year. But the Thor lots are still unused as are the Bullard lots. But even more obvious is the long-shuttered **Shore Theater** building, which can have one of largest positive impacts on the economic powerhouse into which Coney Island can become. This building was constructed in 1925 as the Loew's Coney Island Theater Building. In 2010, the Landmark Preservation Commission found the exterior worthy of designation as a landmark. The building truly is one of the great remaining seven-story multi-use structures in Coney Island. It has outlived other theater buildings of happy memories – the RKO Tilyou, the Tuxedo, the Surf, and the Brighton (which also served as one of the Subway Circuit theater centers with Broadway productions with stars like Bert Lahr, Mae West, Susan Peters, Betty Hutton, et al). The small Mermaid Theater is now home to a church. BUT the Shore remains endangered by the invasion of homeless, drug addicts, and vandals!! In the past ethnic theaters also abounded in C.B. 13. The turn-of-the-century Boston Theater almost became the home of the Brooklyn Arts and Culture Assn., with the Boardwalk Arts Center, but it was deemed too expensive to renovate. Today, the site of the Boston is a building that serves as the home for C.B. 13!

What is the role for the Shore, assuming it can eventually be obtained for seaside use? The beautiful theater still can be restored. But time and vandalism are taking their toll – there is a point at which the building might be so jeopardized as to threaten its very existence! The seven stories offer much opportunities for galleries, eating spaces, rehearsal halls, meeting spaces, dance studios, theater studies and spaces, recoding studios, Coney history centers, social services, etc. And, no, contrary to the popular urban myth, the Shore building was never used as a hotel! A recent visit inside the structure (DOB, Police, District Manager) indicated recent vandalism. While a great deal of work would have to be done for the use of the building, it appears to be structurally very sound. The closest 'hotels' on the Island were across Surf Avenue in the wonderful elongated building that was recently razed by Thor Equities (that building also housed restaurants and, more recently, the popular Velocity dance club).

Of course, the C.B. 13 area offers its residents in many interesting new and potentially important additions – the exciting prospects for Calvert Vaux Park, a new indoor sports center on Shell Road, activities and construction on the now-abandoned Rose Cover which juts into Gravesend Bay from the north side abutting Calvert Vaux – along with a renovated diner (now the Parkview) on Cropsey Ave., the drive-through Starbucks, also on Cropsey across from the large Home Depot; the aforementioned Ocean Dreams...well, it is endless in its possibilities for all neighborhoods. And...Johnny Rockets should be ready for the next warm weather season. What has to be dealt with? The Surf Avenue furniture stores and flea markets are almost gone – all of them illegal in the C-7 zone. A pedestrian is embarrassed to see mattresses on the sidewalk in front of these establishments, the last of which still stands midway on north Surf Avenue across from Luna Park. The Department of Consumer Affairs must continue a vigilant look at the amusement area, and, even more important, the Brighton Beach Ave. storefronts which sometimes violate their permits and

stoop licenses.

RESILIENCY: There is little doubt, among most, that weather patterns are dramatically entering a century of change. Ocean depths will change and the waters may well offer a challenge to the stability of seaside construction, businesses and homes. Hurricane Irene, three years ago, caused havoc elsewhere but missed the peninsula. Nevertheless, people had been evacuated with the help of all agencies with the Police, OEM, neighborhood groups, and CERT volunteers. Sadly, when Sandy was predicted, people recalled the apparent ‘futility’ of the Irene removal. Few left the menaced areas of the shore zones, and the results were near catastrophic to their way of life. Hopefully, all residents have learned from the disaster, and communication re evacuation sites, etc. will be easily transmitted to all. But the recovery of destroyed or semi-ruined buildings and businesses have created new looks at sustainability and resiliency.

In addition, one hopes that the City has learned much more, along with agencies. OEM reports are monitored hour-by-hour now. Homes, in the process of rebuilding, however, face a slew of misinformation as to structure and longevity. There are cases of homeowners who rebuilt only to find that their first floor should have been a carport, at most, while the building should have been raised or an additional floor added! Mixed signals came from insurance companies, from FEMA, from Building Back, and the rest. All information should and must be clear and easy to follow. No two agencies – on any level of government – should be giving alternate instructions. Lives must not be lost; homes and shorelines must be protected as much as is humanly possible. For the beaches, questions must be answered quickly – should dunes be created at the shorefront – or should protective shields/walls be built near the Boardwalk? It is noted that the Boardwalk did not disappear under the furious shape. It stood firm – including its rotted wood areas, its new concrete areas, or its benches and wood walkway shops. Coney Island Creek, on the other hand, proved a monster as it carried the torrents of Gravesend Bay and mounted its waters onto the peninsula, destroying much in its wake.

What will we do with the Creekside in terms of storm protection, especially with many homes – large and one-family – along Bayview Avenue and Coney Island side streets? Will the infrastructure – its sewers and catch basins be able to absorb the watery mess and not cascade, and debilitate, Coney Island Hospital. That health facility suffered enormous damage and took a year to really begin working again. It is of vital urgency to tens of thousands and must not face a death akin to a loss like that of Long Island College Hospital. A hospital is an imperative, period! The outreach Ida Israel health Center, on Neptune, died into a watery grave and cannot be rebuilt at that spot. A new Ida Israel Center is now earmarked for construction at W. 19 St. and Surf. The largest resiliency of C.B. 13 is the people who live in the neighborhoods --- they have not wavered. They have been involved in the work for the future, formed strong committees, and are attend sessions to learn about Go-Bags and other necessities with the assistance of the Office of Emergency Management and the CERT group.

PARKS: Budget cuts, over the years, have made life difficult for many agencies. C.B. 13 is home to many facilities that rely on Parks Department workers. Maintenance and an overall watch is needed 24/7. Personnel is responsible for, among others, the following:

- **THE BEACH** – This famed long sandy stretch must be cleaned daily (during the night in spite of some noise complaints). Parks police are needed day and night; illegal

vending is evident; people find their valuable stolen; millions of people use the beach – one of the most famous in the world.

- **THE BOARDWALK:** Various factors have created hazardous stretches on the Walkway and maintenance is needed to prevent trip hazards. New work on the boards seem to deteriorate quickly, as has been the case, in 2014, in front of Deno's Wonder Wheel Park entrance. The west end has been in need of work for years. The fight over wood vs. concrete must be settled and the Boardwalk work must continue.
- **BOARDWALK/BEACH BATHROOMS:** Only one bathroom remains open throughout the year; others are closed except for summer months. Funds are lacking. The new and high bathrooms save them from future storms, but the one near Coney Island Ave. and the Oceana development remains stalled despite its need. Maintenance of bathrooms is urgent. Hours of operation, during the summer, should be considered. To close them when the bathing hours are over may not solve the needs of crowds.
- **KAISER PARK & CALVERT VAUX PARK:** The former has undergone extensive work to the benefit of all, but the eastern end's needs are not yet solved. Teachers at Mark Twain still use the old handball court area for parking. The community needs this area and the Circle next to it. The Friends of Kaiser and Calvert Vaux must be commended for their careful watch over the activities at Kaiser, working hand-in-hand with the personnel in the park, groups that use it, and police and parks personnel. Calvert Vaux has started to show its potential, but funds must be in place to continue turning this former dumping area into the environmental and recreational hub it can serve as.
- **ASSER LEVY PARK:** Located at the 'gateway' to Coney Island and Brighton Beach, this facility (Ocean Parkway – West 5th St.) had been the home for concerts for many years, but they have been halted. The children's playground needs updating. The flooded greensward is grassless and muddy as a result. The Sidney Jonas Bandshell now stands as a potential site for homeless. What of this park's future --- seating areas for local residents, mostly seniors? Soccer? Dog run? Special events that do not require amplification?
- **LITTLE DREIER OFFERMAN PARK & WEST 2ND STREET PARK:** Smaller and newly restored units that must be maintained for widespread use.
- **PLAYGROUNDS** – Marlboro Houses, Nautilus Playground, Surf Avenue Playground, school playgrounds – all await actions.
- **BAYVIEW PARK/CONEY ISLAND CREEK PARK:** Is this stretch along Bayview Ave., from Kaiser Park to its end at Sea Gate, really a park? Sand has accumulated along this area, much of it from movement away from Sea Gate's land. There is no fencing. Late night and middle-of-the-night 'activities' along this park may well be illegal and do indeed frighten residents. One finds broken liquor bottles, embers of nighttime fires, and debris every morning. What can be done with this sand stretch? How much surveillance can be 'upp-ed' to protect the park and the neighborhood?

The importance of these facilities, and others, cannot be underestimated. Their uses are manifold. The current personnel are at work, diligently, every day, but they need additional workers to ensure cleanliness, safety, and satisfactory escape centers for children, teens, and seniors alike. All of the needs in C.B. 13 can be helped with greater **COMMUNICATION and CLARITY OF COMMUNICATION between all involved agencies and active groups.** Too often confusion between agency action and the community can muddle important input and implementation. This document can only touch upon the multitude of needs and corrective action. Communication and understanding of all of the problems – in the present and for the future – will help to propel positive steps into the future.

Stephen Moran
Chairman

Chuck Reichenthal
District Manager