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## **FY 2009 DISTRICT NEEDS STATEMENT OF BRONX COMMUNITY BOARD # Four**

**WELCOME TO THE CAPITOL....** the Capitol District of Bronx County, that is.

Community District # Four is made up of many traditional, strong neighborhoods encompassing East 149th Street on the South, East 174th Street on the North, Harlem River on the West and Webster Avenue on the East. Community District 4 has the largest population in the South Bronx (more than 139 thousand residents). We welcome and celebrate the great mosaic of new cultures, languages, hopes and dreams of the many new Americans making this district their home, from around the globe. We celebrate their distinct and varied positive contributions.

Ours is a great place to visit, work and live. Millions come to see the New York Yankees play at the house that Ruth built, Yankee Stadium. Others take advantage of our other recreational facilities, such as, tennis courts and running track. Still others visit our borough's cultural crown jewel, the Bronx Museum of the Arts. Both public and private sector economic development opportunities are available and many others are still to come. District 4 is an ideal location to do business and reside in. We are at the very center of the metropolitan region, only minutes from Manhattan, New Jersey, Long Island, and Westchester. We are the administrative center of the County, housing the offices of the Borough President, The District Attorney, the Courts and the County Clerk. There is easy access through major rail lines, roadways, and public transit, both surface and underground. We are a community of contrasts. Sleek silhouettes of art-deco buildings are a short stroll away from lovely small homes. Acre for acre (1300 plus) we have more parks throughout our two square miles than any other district. All of our residents and guests get the "green carpet" treatment.

Community District # Four is currently experiencing a commercial, residential and economic revival, making it a very exciting time for us here. We are excited about the roster of ongoing capital improvement projects and other development projects earmarked for our district – projects we have fought long and hard for. Barring any unforeseen funding situation, we are beginning to see urban revival take place and the fruits of years of advocacy are beginning to bear. We must assess today's needs as we prepare for the outer years and the much reported and predicted growth. Many of the capital improvement projects underway or slated for development, are part of Community Board Four's effort to include budget priority items, year after year, that will benefit the district. An example of such a case is the request to rebuild the East 153rd Street Bridge, a budget priority item set by Board 4 for over twenty years. This project is funded and ready for construction beginning in the fall of 2007.

We are on a plateau of prosperity, but with that prosperity comes the pressing responsibility to ensure that everyone in our district is given an opportunity to partake in the economic and cultural renaiss-

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sance and receive the services available to them. We will continue to assume our responsibility to monitor and fast-track the delivery of city services, assure access to municipal government, and inform the public on job opportunities, and the string of economic development projects slated for District # Four.

We will remain vigilant that Community District # Four receive its "fair share" of charter-mandated resources. The service demands each neighborhood and constituency in our district has needs to be matched with the appropriate response from the government for all categories of service and resources to create the right kind of conditions in this fast-growing community. We have a responsibility to care and plan for every segment represented in our district, including the young, the elderly, the native born, the foreign born, the poor, the disabled and the illiterate. Community Boards must continue to be a voice for the voiceless and a strong advocate for every constituency. It is the responsibility of municipal government to provide the services and resources to the community districts in this city that will enable them to thrive and meet their goals.

**EDUCATION:** Technology marches on in a "head spinning" mode. Yet, today, our children lack classroom space, sufficient books, paper, pencils and other basic needs, including a great need for additional highly skilled educators. It is for the sake of the children and their future that we must continue to focus our attention on improving the quality of instruction and academic achievement across New York City's 1,200 schools. The next generation of New Yorkers must receive the kind of educational tools that would prepare them to participate in our free and democratic society as fully engaged citizens.

We are hopeful that with a change of name, The DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION, and under Mayor Bloomberg's leadership, we will see a newly transformed educational system. We commend Chancellor Joel Klein for taking on this huge challenge and for striving to make a difference in our children's future. We certainly wish him well and much success in this undertaking.

The problems of our educational system are well known, they include: high enrollment rates, class overcrowding conditions (the issue of size becomes extremely important since our school system is responsible for educating 1.1 million students in 1,200 schools), students with special needs, high drop out rates, at-risk youth, and issues with academic under performance in reading and math. We were very pleased that Governor Pataki and the Legislators have seen fit to provide additional funding to meet the need emanating from the renewal of our educational system. The state could no longer continue to shortchange the NYC Public Schools; rather they had to rectify their funding inequity in order to give the children a quality education.

We believe that any formula for educational excellence would necessitate the Mayor's continued support and focus in the following areas: upgrading teacher quality standards, reforming high schools and middle schools, reinforcing math and science achievement goals, implementing major reforms for English Language Learners, providing better "customer service" to parents, enhancing safety in and around the schools, improving the physical and social climate of our schools and cutting unnecessary bureaucracy and administrative costs. We must create appropriate conditions, and provide an attractive compensation package to recruit the best and the brightest teachers in to city's schools.

The Pre-Kindergarten program should be re-evaluated. Our four year-olds need to get on a tract of love for learning, early on, therefore, we need full-day Pre-Kindergarten classes. **When we commit ourselves to providing adequate school facilities, adequate educational tools and resources and attract the best educators, then we can say that we have "done the right thing" by our children. They certainly deserve no less.**

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Chancellor Klein has repeatedly stated that he wants to “hear from advocacy groups, parent groups, community groups and business groups.” We urge him to engage us as partners in the educational reform planning process to address some of the school reform issues we referenced earlier. This open and inclusive process will afford the community the opportunity to contribute to the renewal process. Now that Community School Boards are outdated, the Department of Education must be accountable to parents and community residents by allowing them to play a meaningful role in deciding the future of our educational system. In addition, we need the Department of Education to engage the community boards more fully and to send a permanent liaison to its District Services Cabinet Meetings and Education Committee Meetings.

While the issue of overcrowding still exists, the public safety enhancements in and around our schools must be reviewed to heighten safety measures and to ensure an adequate number of School Safety Officers that provide safety to our city schools, particularly impact schools. We look forward to the creation of the High School for Sports Medicine Careers in Community District Four. While there is a need for more schools in the district, we have a concern with the siting of schools over brownfield areas. The addition of four new schools over the Old Mott Haven Rail yard, poses a real concern to the surrounding neighborhood. Some of these concerns are health and environmental safety, traffic congestion and the need for additional transportation service. We are particularly concerned with an already congested area that cannot safely accommodate over two thousand students and support staff that will come to this school campus.

**TRANSPORTATION:** Traffic along the East 161st Street corridor has reached an unbearable saturation point. With the advent of the new Bronx Criminal Court House, the on-going Lou Gehrig Plaza and East 161 Street Underpass renovation project, the up coming East 153 Street Bridge project, the up coming new Yankee Stadium project, the up coming new Metro North Station, and the great number of businesses and schools in the immediate area, the situation could only worsen. Transportation and traffic are of particular importance to us since aside from being the “Capitol District” of this County, Community District # Four is also the geographic center of the metropolitan region. We are extremely pleased that after twenty years of advocacy, construction for the East 153rd Street Bridge is scheduled to commence in 2007. We congratulate DOT for having received the Art Commission Award for Excellence in Design for this project and on their inter-agency coordinating efforts for this project. The proposed bridge is a single tower cable stayed bridge, located over the Old Mott Haven Rail yard, connecting Concourse Village West at the west end and Park Avenue at the east end. This will be the first new bridge built in 50 years and it will be the first cable-stayed vehicular bridge in New York City. We believe that when the bridge is completed the traffic congestion along 149th and 161st Streets, as well as the local streets in this neighborhood, will be alleviated. The residents of this community district long ago voiced their anxieties and concerns about today’s traffic conditions.

No one listened then, and the situation has grown evermore harrowing each day. Consequently, this community is calling for clarity on a traffic reconfiguration plan for the “Court Corridor,” which will incorporate the new projects for that area (under construction or proposed), and which will be instituted at the conclusion of said projects. The City needs to place permanent traffic control agents in the “Court Corridor” area for traffic relief assistance. Moreover, the City needs to appropriate funds to include artwork on the eastern portal of the East 161 Street Underpass and put together a cogent maintenance agreement in advance of the completion of the Lou Gehrig Plaza Renovation Project. We applaud the heroic efforts of Bronx Borough President Carrión and Assemblywoman Aurelia Green for allocating funds to complete the artwork on the eastern portal of the 161 Street

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Viaduct. However, we need the City to make up the difference in the event of a budget shortfall to complete the artwork for both portals of the 161 Street Viaduct.

We continue to urge the expenditure of increased funds for sidewalk repair for property adjacent to city or federally funded housing, as well as privately owned property that has been abandoned and as a result negatively impacts the surrounding community. Said repairs should occur every two years, as opposed to the current four-year schedule. Funds for sidewalk repair and street repaving are severely restricted, even as the cost of lawsuits increases dramatically the city's need for additional funds to cover that expense. Someone should re-do the arithmetic and start allocating the money as a cost preventive measure, if for no other reason. Because of the many requests for immediate sidewalk repair needs, we want to know the status of the established protocol for "Emergency" sidewalk repairs, with a specific time frame for the completion of such repairs.

Community Board # Four fully supports the increase of additional Highway Repairers for maintenance in general and for pothole and cave-in repairs specifically. The quality of materials and work should be more consistent, thereby eliminating the immediate reoccurrence of poor road conditions. We request the funding for milling work to support the agency's current in-house resurfacing program. There has been marked improvements to our individual requests for replacement of traffic signs.

However, we would be remiss if we failed to note that our requests for replacement of traffic signals, traffic device maintainers, trailblazer signs and streetlights repair continue to receive the same lethargic response: "at this time the availability of funds is uncertain." We are requesting that additional funds be allocated to increase these much needed services to better preserve a key element of city infrastructure.

A major concern of this community is the lack of adequate parking throughout our commercial districts. We urge that this agency undertake a joint effort to evaluate the crisis being brought about by the ever decreasing parking space, causing a surge in parking fees for motorists, resulting in illegal parking because of the city's failure to put in place a comprehensive plan that addresses both private and commercial parking needs. In many communities, such as Community District # Four, the City's failure in this regard, results in the loss of residents and businesses due to the economic hardship they have to endure.

Our Municipal Services Committee has been charged with the monitoring of transportation issues/concerns within our community district. One of the major concerns they have encountered is the lack of maintenance of the Safety Pilot Project area on the Grand Concourse between East 165 Street and East 170 Street. Maintenance of The Safety Pilot Project on the Grand Concourse has not been continuously monitored by DOT. Loose and broken concrete slabs, debris, dead shrubbery and broken planters are just some of the problems this community has to contend with. Since the Grand Concourse is our community's major thoroughfare, we urge DOT to review their maintenance procedures for this area and to come up with a mutually acceptable solution. Funding should be provided for improvements in both safety components and aesthetics, to maintain continuity with the proposed Grand Concourse Restoration project, which is slated for the Grand Concourse, between 161st and 171st Streets. We thank Congressman Jose Serrano for providing 10 million dollars for this project that will dramatically restore and reconstruct this portion of the Grand Concourse.

There are sixteen "Step Streets" in Community District # Four. As a result, repeated requests concerning maintenance and repairs are received at the district office. With no clear agency

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jurisdiction, we are faced with the onerous task of having to “beg and plead” in order to have a given agency address the problem. Accordingly, we are still waiting for the results/recommendations from a NYCDOT funded Engineering Survey & Analysis on the district’s Step Streets, to determine the need for rehabilitation. Additionally, we need to revisit the outdated “Leventhal Agreement,” so that a clear determination can be made as to what city agency has jurisdiction over what area and for respective agencies to allocate the appropriate funds and resources to get the job done. In addition, we are making a firm appeal to NYCDOT to fund a traffic study to ease heavy and unsafe traffic conditions in the areas leading to the westbound and eastbound I-95 N/S egress/ingress ramps @ Jerome Avenue and the surrounding area. A bridge or overpass could connect Townsend Avenue South and North and Inwood Avenue South and North over the Cross Bronx Expressway.

**MTA-NYC TRANSIT:** We urge that special consideration be given to restoring the number of buses that were eliminated on specific bus routes. Community Board # Four, through their Municipal Services Committee, has requested the expansion of service on the BX32 and BX13 buses. This request is because of the increased rider demand to and from three major hospitals; Lincoln, Bronx Lebanon and the Veteran’s Hospital at Kingsbridge, and to the Highbridge area. It is considered that any level of expansion on these routes would go a long way to enhance commuter service not only to hospital personnel but also to consumers of health services at these facilities. The response from the MTA is that they do not see a need at this time. We are hopeful that they will look at our request again and take into account the increased ridership demand along these routes.

We celebrate that after so many years, MTA NYC Transit, has finally completed an extensive rehabilitation project on the Jerome Avenue Line. The \$42.5 M project included 167th and 170th Streets, Mt. Eden and the 176th Street stations. The scope of work included the elimination of structural deficiencies, providing new lighting, ventilation, public address system, signage throughout the station, artwork and new platform edge safety tiles.

At last, these improved amenities would afford community residents not feeling as though they were second class citizens by having to walk into dark, dreaded and unsafe stations in their travel experience. Added to all of this wonderful work an allocation of adequate funding must be allocated for ongoing maintenance and repair work to the subway station’s platforms and tracks. The “outer-boroughs” should receive the same services that are provided in Manhattan because commuters come from all parts of the city to contribute to Manhattan’s stability and eventually they must travel back to their particular borough. It is at this time that many of our community residents notice the disparity in the services provided. This fact has been confirmed by the recent cleanliness survey performed on subway stations. The survey indicated that four of the five dirtiest stations are in the Bronx. It is true that people contribute to the litter and debris in our subway stations, but the blame must be shared equally between the rider and the service provider. The difference being that we are not paying the riders to clean the stations. Our community is still very much opposed to the proposed closing of the subway token booth located at East 167th Street. As stated in a letter to the MTA on July 2001, “we fear that this ill advised action will create a devastating impact on the station and the surrounding community, resulting in occurrences of criminal activities and a decrease in rider usage at that site.” We were predicting that the closing of this subway booth would create criminal activity and it actually happened.

**DEPARTMENT OF BUILDINGS:** Community Board # Four supports funding requests for this agency to maintain and increase safety inspection personnel, improve inspector training and recruitment, with continued expansion of the database and computerization records. The agency’s in-

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spection and enforcement process is an essential support function to local community preservation efforts. The proliferation of illegal construction/parking lots within our community can be directly linked to the sporadic and delayed inspections as well as the fiscally limited enforcement resources and follow-up by the agency.

**HOUSING PRESERVATION & DEVELOPMENT:** Our community in the past decade has undergone substantive rehabilitation of its housing stock and new housing growth. With this housing boom, we have experienced an influx of new residents to the area. Many of these new residents were either in the low-income range, formerly homeless families or new immigrants. With the influx of new residents is the need to expand services that include access to healthcare, social service delivery, transportation service, classroom space and other community-based resources. These needs will require HPD to carefully monitor all properties falling under their jurisdiction, either directly or indirectly. A comprehensive strategy for the care and disposition of city owned property would strengthen our future stability as a community and protect the significant public investment in housing in Community District # Four.

Accordingly, Community Board # Four has prepared and submitted a Position Paper on vacant land disposition and use, which includes the community's concern for open/green spaces in our community. **THE RATIONALE:** Community Board # Four has very little vacant land left, thereby creating a scarcity of land now and in the near future. Therefore, it is incumbent upon us to take care of the development of this land in order to meet the needs of a growing and changing community.

The new century and changes in technology warrants careful stewardship of our land for the present and future generations. We must not only meet the economic and development needs of Community District # Four residents, but we must protect our environment and ecology as well. In doing so, we provide protection to our children's health.

**THE PROBLEM:** The disposition of vacant land is not being planned, nor consideration given to the effect on the community's economy and quality of life issues. We must now think of open spaces as key to a healthful environment and economy. The lack of green trees and spaces has affected negatively on our environment and health, as witnessed by the high rates of asthma in Community District # Four, affecting all age groups. We should make mention that an 8000 tree planting program is underway in the district, and for that, we are most appreciative to this Administration. We must rethink our tradition that every vacant lot must be filled with concrete and mortar. The value of Mother Earth cannot always be measured in dollars and cents. No money can buy the price of humans having the pleasure of open land for aesthetics and recreational use.

We support the development of affordable housing for moderate and middle-income individuals and families. The lack of affordable housing is contributing to the flight of moderate and middle-income people from our district. It is in the interest of our Community District to promote economic diversity within our community. The development of the Bronx Civic Center should go hand in hand with the development of moderate and middle-income housing, which will also provide housing for workers in the Civic Center. We are strongly advocating for city and state funds for the middle-income new construction program. We are calling for new codes for new construction and new codes for existing buildings all for sustainable housing development. Community Board Four is a long term and strong supporter of greening efforts. As such, we request funds for HPD to adequately address the greening and sustainability of in place housing and funds are also needed to assist greening elements to be included in all new housing projects. We are building for the outer

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years and the successful future is dependent upon our greening efforts, today.

We are specifically focusing on multi-dwellings in the form of rentals, condominiums and cooperatives. Our Housing and Land Use Committee recommends the following sites: the vacant lands at the west side of Grant Avenue, between E. 167th and E. 169th Streets; University Avenue, between W. 167th and W. 170th Streets (including the privately owned vacant land); and Concourse Village West, between E. 153rd and E. 156th Streets. Mayor Bloomberg's Housing Plan calls for \$1 billion dollars to be targeted to the new initiatives that will place a greater emphasis on units affordable to middle-income households. We have yet to hear how much of said funding has been earmarked for moderate middle-income housing for the District 4 area. The vacant land along District # Four's Waterfront provides an excellent opportunity for the development of new middle to moderate-income condos and/or co-op apartments along district 4's waterfront. This area is primed for housing development particularly adjacent to the upcoming Gateway Center and new Yankee Stadium. We urge NYC HPD to aggressively pursue the possibility of building this type of housing along the waterfront. This area represents a unique opportunity for the development of middle-income housing as outlined in the Mayor's Housing Plan.

Community District # Four has the largest stock of Art Deco buildings in the nation outside of Miami, and we should make it our obligation to preserve them for historical and artistic reasons. Accordingly, we urge NYC HPD to employ the adequate resources available under the Anti-Abandonment Program to preserve and improve the Art Deco buildings in district 4.

We also urge HPD to develop an outreach program to the owners of these buildings to encourage them to participate in the varied Rehabilitation Loan Programs. We cannot emphasize enough the need for continued and increased funding for preservation activities and for NYC HPD's active involvement with the Grand Concourse Historical District Initiative.

**DEPARTMENT OF YOUTH AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT:** We continue to advocate for the increase in funding of Community District # Four's youth programs. However, funding alone will not be sufficient. Adequate monitoring of funded programs is most essential. This agency was created as an adjunct to the other agencies (Education, Parks, etc.) to more specifically zero in on our youth's needs. DYCD's record shows that it falls short of meeting its mission and goals. In fact, youth-related concerns continue to go unabated and at times are compounded by new challenges. The current formula determining the Community Share allocation is not adequately addressed. The need for a substantive review of DYCD's outdated and inappropriate dollar allocation process does not meet today's needs. This agency's "Youth Fair Share" and Community Development allocations are not sufficient to meet our community's needs for after-school, youth educational, recreational, and cultural enrichment programs. In order to meet current demands for these youth services, we must begin to equitably distribute appropriate dollars to those agencies providing youth services in Community District # Four.

We strongly urge this Administration to take the necessary steps both to assure that DYCD complies with the spirit as well as the letter of the Charter by consulting with Community Boards on budgetary matters. Vocational (Job Training) Programs are often funded with limited or no monitoring. Few of these programs have proven to be successful and even fewer programs are assessed on their record of accomplishment or failure. In some cases, our youth are being trained for jobs that no longer exist or will not exist in the next century. It cannot be stated that our youth are our future and at the same time because of government's persistent failure to our youth they are not

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providing them with the economic, educational and social opportunities they need to compete in an ever-changing global market and to remain productive, fully engaged participants in society. The east side of the district is grossly neglected in services and programs for the youth. We need a youth center or a beacon school in the area.

With the increase in population, we are experiencing an influx of youth coming into our district. It becomes our obligation to provide them with the life skills they need to mature into adulthood. Consequently, the lack of adequate funding for the Summer Youth Employment Program is a continual concern for the youth of our district. Year after year, summer job opportunities become less and less, which makes it very difficult to assure teens the life and work experience skills they need to enhance their development. Without these opportunities, our young people will be relegated to hanging out in the streets causing disruption to the quality of life of our community residents.

In the end, the cost of addressing problems associated with at-risk youth will be far greater than providing them with the resources they need to enhance their productive growth.

**DEPARTMENT FOR THE AGING:** Our community is very concerned with the limited resources available to our seniors and the ever-increasing needs for programs and services they have a need of. This district has a high concentration of seniors and we believe that DFTA should aggressively seek and appropriate funding to begin addressing the critical programs our elderly necessitate. The older adults need to be treated with dignity and afforded the opportunities to lead healthy and productive lives. As such, they need senior center programs, lunch programs, home-bound nutrition programs, day-care services, recreational programs, transportation services, home care, housing, and caregiver services, to be enhanced and not diminished. It is in the best interest of society to provide for our seniors and to honor them in the winter of their lives. These seniors are the one single segment of our population who have nothing to prove since they have already earned respect and admiration through their hard work. It is now our opportunity to provide optimal services to them for their contributions to society.

One of the areas DFTA is responsible for is to ensure that seniors receive equitable and quality services. What are DFTA's short and long-term strategies to better meet the needs of the elderly population, in a changing environment? We kindly request that DFTA formulate and execute a plan to build stronger partnerships with consumers, community partners, advocates, private and public organizations. Sufficient funding must be allocated to service providers to adequately address service demands and to renovate senior service centers, where appropriate. Accordingly, we want DFTA to support all of Community Board # Four's Budget Priority Requests for senior services.

**POLICE DEPARTMENT:** We applaud the efforts of the Officers and Leadership of the 44th Precinct, who have been a vital part of the crime reduction efforts. As one of the most populous Bronx districts, we continue to urge that our need for Public Safety be measured against our service area and high-density population. It remains a priority of the Board to request funds to keep the maximum number of Police Officers serving, reducing crime and illegal activities and protecting the residents in the Community District # Four area. Particularly, because of our unique status as the "Capitol District," we house Yankee Stadium, the Civic Center, several commercial strips, and more, which adds to an unusual and extensive drain on city resources. It is imperative that sufficient funding be provided to place additional School Safety Officers to serve our District's schools. We also need to ensure that all of the School Crossing Guard slots are filled and we need to look at schools that do not have School Crossing Guards.



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We continue to support a state-of-the-art new Police Academy in the District # Four area.

We commend 44th Precinct Commanding Officer, Inspector James Essig for responding to our community's repeated appeals for Community Policing, thereby providing a heightened safety factor for our community residents. This action will serve to enhance the partnership between the community and the police. This is what is most needed now and what has proven to be the most effective "weapon" that NYPD has. This community is "alive" with activities, events and programs that take place on an almost daily basis. As a result, the burden placed on our 44th Precinct Community Affairs Unit has increased as our population continues to grow.

To improve communication between our agencies and to provide better outreach to our community residents, we ask that this agency continue to provide funding for technological and other upgrades for improved operational efficiency in the 44th Precinct Community Affairs unit. We also urge Inspector Essig to assign at least one additional officer to the Community Affairs Unit and to increase the number of Youth Officers now serving that unit. Additionally, we are requesting funding to support the Cadets and other youth-oriented programs.

**FIRE DEPARTMENT:** We continue to strongly support an appropriate increase in NYFD & EMS personnel as well as additional equipment and protective clothing (smart coats, etc.). It has often been said that because of the inadequate communications equipment during the 9/11 tragedy, this failure resulted in the loss of a great number of Fire Department personnel. These men cannot have died in vain, rather, we must learn from the mistakes that contributed to their demise. Thus, we urge and support the upgrade of the Fire Department's communications system citywide that includes Radio Repeater Systems to enhance radio communication in high-rise buildings. We are also requesting adequate funding for terrorism training. We wholeheartedly support funding to the NYFD for the equipment needs they are demanding from the City, i.e., a second defibrillator for engine units, gas detectors for ladder companies, etc., to improve service delivery to our community. In questioning as to why people still die today for the same reason they died 60 years ago, the response that has been given, is the lack of proper fire education. People need to know how to recognize fire hazards and how to eliminate them.

F.E.M.A. reports that there is an absolute correlation between public education and fires. More recently, we were advised that there are only 35 staff members involved in education for the entire city. In Municipalities with higher percentages of their budgets dedicated towards education, deaths by fire are less. Community Board #4, through its Municipal Services Committee, concurs that funding is needed to expand fire safety education and to duplicate additional learning centers for our borough. We call on the City to allocate adequate funding for FDNY public education programs that includes CPR training and to purchase smoke and carbon monoxide detectors to distribute yearly to the public. Accordingly, we request the establishment of a "Fire Safety Learning Center" for the Bronx, to be located within Community District # 4's Civic Center.

In January 2003, the Bureau of Fire Investigations Bronx-based Office was closed. All Fire Marshals and investigations were moved/transferred to the Queens Base. We subsequently learned that the intent was to close the BFI Queens Command and move all operations to the Brooklyn Base. The ability of Fire Marshals to investigate fires in the Bronx, already jeopardized by the initial move, will now be further impaired. We sense that initial response will be slower and follow up investigations will be more difficult. As a result, we request that this agency provide us with a full statistical account on the impact these actions have had on Fire Marshal operations here in our dis-

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trict, with a view towards increasing Fire Marshal personnel to our community.

**DEPARTMENT OF CULTURAL AFFAIRS:** Community Board # Four has always been in the forefront of advocating and supporting the enhancement of cultural and community programs. The Bronx Museum of the Arts is one of the great assets of our district as well as of our entire Borough. We continue to urge a review and revitalization of all of their cultural programs by DCA to enhance the cultural life of our community and develop a broader and more varied outreach.

**DEPARTMENT OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS:** We are pleased to see that this agency is no longer the “invisible” agency. Their current efforts on behalf of our district must be noted. However, they must return to their stated responsibilities, such as complaint mediation, education, and agency wide initiatives, which are not evident in this district. We request an enhancement of their programs with expanded outreach to our community residents.

**DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION:** This agency has been unable to reach a highly successful level of water conservation through its Hydro-Lock program. This summer, we witnessed and learned of DEP’s efforts to curtail open fire hydrant abuse in the District through its HEAT Initiative, an educational partnership with Alianza Dominicana and youth “street teams.” We applaud DEP’s efforts in its creative approach to engage the youth by educating them about the dangers of open fire hydrants. We would like this program to be enhanced and for a broader and earlier outreach to take place in District # Four. We eagerly anticipate for this new program to help with water conservation. Moreover, we continue to advocate for the local police precinct (44th) to be in possession of the “special” wrenches so that they may expeditiously close all open hydrants. In the past, when contacting the agency we were advised that the agency’s policy is to distribute these wrenches ONLY to the Fire Department. NYC DEP has acquiesced to our wishes and allowed a mere two wrenches to be placed at each Bronx Police precinct. This does not make sense since there is a far greater presence of Police Officers that can handle this issue. We recently learned that the Police Department had wrenches but that they had received orders from 1 Police Plaza not to engage in the process of closing open fire hydrants but to leave that responsibility to DEP and the Fire Department. We need clarity on this issue and will like to know what steps DEP will take to prevent the public from opening fire hydrants. Improved technology is needed with the installed hydro locks, they are not working. The effective closure of these fire hydrants can assist in water waste and water pressure preservation, critical to putting out fires.

Community Board # Four urges an increase in field operations personnel in order to meet the current need for service delivery. We also ask that DEP be provided with additional equipment for the Bureau of Water Supply and Wastewater collection related to the delivery of service to district 4, including: jet flushers, catch basin machines and degreaser trucks. We request for at least one additional inspector to respond to noise complaints emanating from discos, bars, grocery stores and rowdy neighbors. We are requesting that adequate funds be allocated to hire additional Enforcement personnel to identify and initiate action against violators of the air pollution code. There is a need for additional inspectors to provide weekend enforcement of noise codes, as well.

**DEPARTMENT OF SANITATION:** We are pleased to observe that our Scorecard ratings have significantly increased. Yet, in order to maintain our current standing and to upgrade our cleanliness level, we continue to strongly advocate for the restoration of the “Clean Team” as a permanent addition to Community District # Four. After all, the cleanliness level, or lack of in our streets, characterizes our district. We want to ensure that our image is a clean one.

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As such, we urge the restoration of D.O.S. personnel, including “hand” cleaners, to adequately maintain our streets and sidewalks.

We are pleased with the restoration of the recycling program and we commend the agency for their outreach efforts and public education campaign highlighting the benefits of recycling. Yet, we need DOS to continue reminding city residents and property owners about the recycling program in effect, through a sustained public education campaign.

Community Board # Four experiences difficulties having no regular cleaning and maintenance schedules for the extraordinary number of underpasses, step streets and sitting areas. The problem is the need for clarity in agency jurisdiction. Our repeated requests have been that DOS revisit the “Leventhal Agreement”, which is ambiguous at best, so that a clear determination can be made and funding allocated accordingly. Additionally, we request the funding for additional Sanitation Enforcement Personnel and Sanitation Police.

**DEPARTMENT OF BUSINESS SERVICES/ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CORP.:** Our community has a good number of small businesses but those numbers are dwindling. We strongly believe that those city agencies responsible for business development need to provide the kind of leadership, technical assistance and funding sources to improve the commercial landscape in our district and to assure the success of our merchants with their businesses. We are hopeful and optimistic that an up and running BID at 161 Street would enhance municipal services and create economic activity and stability in the Civic Center area. The City needs to do all it can to make this a reality, sooner rather than later.

We are delighted that the Bronx Terminal Market property has been acquired by the Related Companies. We consider that Community Board # Four can be instrumental in the success of this project. However, we believe that the following concerns must continued to be addressed to assure the success of this project:

- The Community Board’s role needs to be enhanced for the on-going success of this project.
- Job opportunities needs to be secured for our community residents.
- The Department of Business Services needs to do more with respect to advocating for minority and women owned businesses in this project.

The upcoming development of this area into a regional retail center will generate hundreds of jobs for Bronx residents. Community Board # Four believes that the development of the Bronx Terminal Market will result in the following benefits and opportunities:

- An excellent opportunity to create an accessible market for outlets and other retailers
- Construction of a Waterfront mall with restaurants and shops to attract tourists
- Creation of a harbor district for tourists to travel via ferries and boats
- Genesis of the Borough President’s Yankee Neighborhood Vision Plan
- Availability of business opportunities for all Bronx residents
- Will promote the development of a major hotel to compliment the newly developed waterfront area
- Generate new tourism for the area in the form of Bronx tours as well as tours of the immediately adjacent Yankee Stadium complex
- Promote Yankee Stadium as a National Landmark

## **FY '09 DISTRICT NEEDS STATEMENT OF BX. COMMUNITY BOARD # FOUR (Contd.)**

Community Board # Four, through its Economic Development Committee, has long advocated for and will strongly support waterfront development in District # Four. We believe that such a project could be implemented in conjunction with the Borough President's Yankee Neighborhood Vision Plan, which addresses many of the concerns expressed by Community Board # Four.

There is very little vacant land remaining in this community district and as a result, it becomes crucial to use any available remaining space to its fullest capacity. Economic Development is a priority for this district; therefore, we recommend that agencies supporting economic development in partnership with the Bronx Borough President's Office and local development corporations, such as, B.O.E.D.C. and S.O.B.R.O., initiate a search for potential developers for a Waterfront project in Community District # Four. We conclude that a Waterfront project, with the indicated amenities, will strengthen and highlight not only this community, but the Borough of the Bronx as well.

EDC is currently spearheading the Sherman Creek project, which will enhance the Waterfront along Bronx Community District's # 5 and 7. For the sake of continuity, as well as for accessibility, we request that the study area be expanded to include up to Depot Place in District # Four. This will make Waterfront access available to our community residents and will generate the "birth" of our Waterfront development.

We are hopeful that the Economic Development Corporation will work in conjunction with the Department of Business Services, and provide the needed funding for the development of a retail "incubator" building in our district that could serve as a catalyst for increased development and local entrepreneurship, resulting in job creation and business development opportunities and services to our community residents. Has there been any consideration given to the planning and funding for this type of project?

Community Board # Four has also discussed plans centered on the need for a technology industrial complex and how it could enhance a growing and economically viable community. This complex would have all the amenities of telecommunications, satellite hook-up and coaxial cables. Corporations such as IBM, Microsoft, Hewlett-Packard, etc., would see this as an opportunity to sponsor and to connect clients or students to jobs. This complex would also serve high school and college students by providing them job training and career development opportunities. We believe that business and job development agencies should play a pivotal role in the planning and implementation of such a project.

Unemployment is at an all time high. These individuals are now faced with the difficult task of seeking non-existing employment. Our ultimate goal should be to provide an avenue for those in need of jobs. These agencies should be funded in order to assess and evaluate the job market needs, reach out to the private sector to develop a job bank and provide relevant programs to assure employment opportunities. If this initiative is not spearheaded, the government will have no choice but to become the employer of last resort. Government will be forced to pick-up the slack if there are insufficient job opportunities in the public sector to provide those who are ill trained. Training and referral programs should also be funded to better prepare those who seek work. It is critical that this agency begin planning today...tomorrow may be too late.

**HUMAN RESOURCES ADMINISTRATION:** A key concern of Community Board # Four is the limited daycare and head start programs that provide quality care for an already highly populated district. Early childhood programs not only provide for a strong educational foundation for our children, but also provide for the economic stability of our district. HRA must be mandated to monitor and regulate the impact of sanctions, welfare case closings and benefit reductions on children's well-being, by collecting all relevant data on children and families affected by the new

## **FY '09 DISTRICT NEEDS STATEMENT OF BX. COMMUNITY BOARD # FOUR (Contd.)**

law and on the impact the new law has on community programs. Demand for services such as emergency food, medical care, shelter and foster care must also be measured in relation to the implementation of the Welfare Reform Act. The status of the Pilot Program that was started a few years back as it relates to on-site childcare providers has yet to be provided.

While the number of AIDS related deaths appear to have stabilized, there has been a strong increase in the number of infected women and young heterosexual adults. As a result, more and more children are left as orphans as their young parents die. Very often, these children are also infected. We request that an adequate portion of this agency's budget be allocated to serve victims of HIV and AIDS.

Abuse impacts all ages and genders. In addition to child and elder abuse, those most vulnerable (battered women) are increasing in numbers. We have continuously expressed this concern to HRA. Now more than ever, as domestic violence is on the rise, this agency should be mandated to focus on the needs of these women and provide the services they so desperately need. Because of the rise in domestic violence cases and those who are HIV positive, funding should be increased and services enhanced to meet these needs.

**AGENCY FOR CHILDREN'S SERVICES:** We are pleased to note that this agency has achieved a significant level of success since their mission is to assure the safety and well being of all New York City children. The agency's restructuring has brought about a new goal, to work with members of the community, with an emphasis placed on service integration and service networking. It would appear that the Neighborhood Based Services strategy has provided substantive and timely assistance for children who are victims of their parents' abuse. However, to date, we have not received any up to date information or report neither on the effectiveness/efficiency of Preventive Service providers nor on the monitoring process ACS implements to keep track of the progress of these providers.

Child abuse continues to be a serious concern for our community. It has been reported that ACS reviews approximately 54,000 cases of abuse and neglect annually and that the cases of child abuse and neglect reported, is on the rise in District # Four. Accordingly, we reiterate the need to adequately compensate ACS caseworkers and increase staff levels to ensure optimal service, continuity of service and service enhancement. We urge the Mayor, through this agency, to save the integral core services that protect children and that contribute to their holistic success.

We have long advocated for the establishment of a respite group home, where parents who are under pressure or over stressed can drop off their children for a few hours. Now that we have newly appointed preventive services/foster care agencies, we urge them to include the establishment of such a program/facility in their mission statement.

**DEPARTMENT OF HOMELESS SERVICES:** A popular phrase came into prominence several years ago, which was interpreted in a variety of ways and often misinterpreted. It is called "Fair Share." It was created on the assumption that it would assure that communities would get a reasonable amount of the "goodies" and an equitable (limited) amount of the "Bad (NIMBY) stuff". Despite good intentions, it has not benefited most Bronx districts. It certainly has not made District 4 community residents happy. On the contrary, we continue to receive far more than our fair share of facilities serving the homeless. This agency's policy continues to be "One City, One E.A.U." This policy places an unduly heavy burden on the people it serves as well as the district it is located in. It is unfair to both and it is deeply resented by both. We believe that ideally there should be a minimum of four (4) EAU's for the city, but certainly no less than two.

## **FY '09 DISTRICT NEEDS STATEMENT OF BX. COMMUNITY BOARD # FOUR (Contd.)**

The placement of the EAU facility in our district and the plans to build a new EAU facility at this site, is the single most spectacularly negative impact to our community. This EAU has been a magnet, attracting homeless from all boroughs and other states to our district, at all hours of the night. This dynamic creates the opportunity for homeless encampments in different parts of the district, including underpasses, step streets and commercial strips, when they are ineligible for homeless services and are rejected by EAU. This detracts from the overall quality of life of our community. The presence of homeless on the streets poses a serious health threat to themselves and to the residents of the community. The continued failure to correct this problem leaves the city poorer, both in fiscal and in human resources. After several years of having this community request that the Department of Homeless Services remedy this situation (at the EAU), the apparent solution was to use privately owned buildings as transitional shelters, with Landlords receiving high-priced rents for the use of those apartments. Community residents are irate at the prospect of having Landlords look to vacate apartments in order to use them for the homeless, thereby securing very high profits. We believe that this community has already done its "fair share". We strongly believe that the hope of a better tomorrow has been a false hope and now is the time for review and re-evaluation. We ask for nothing more, we deserve nothing less. This city, which has overcome so many challenges, is adamant in their position not to consider an additional EAU in another borough, even though they project an increase in homelessness because of the current downtrend in our economy and the many lay-offs being faced by NYC residents. Thus, our cry for HELP continues unheard and unanswered. We categorically reject this Administrations plans to build a new multi-million dollar facility on the current East 151 Street EAU site. A larger EAU facility will only drain an already limited police force in District # Four.

This area will soon be blooming and booming with new doors opening to greater tourist attractions, i.e., new Yankee Stadium, Gateway Center Mall, access to the waterfront, etc., which is in the midst of our civic and cultural centers. We are appealing to the Mayor to rescind the plans to invest millions of dollars in building a new EAU site and instead consider revitalizing this facility for mixed use multi-dwelling housing for artists, for instance.

Moreover, we commend the Citizens Advice Bureau's Homeless Outreach Team for their timely response to the homeless issues occurring within our district and for their attempts to provide alternative solutions to homeless individuals living on the streets. However, as hard as they work to remedy this situation, the number of homeless individuals living underneath highways, underpasses, parks and step streets continues to go unabated.

**DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND MENTAL HYGIENE:** We recognize and appreciate the efforts undertaken by this agency to inform the public and to mitigate the West Nile Virus situation. Now, with a projected increase in West Nile Virus cases and SARS, we strongly urge that additional funding be provided in order to meet such future challenges. We continue to be deeply concerned over the failure to allocate sufficient funds to this agency to move an agenda that will assist in meeting their mandated mission. Specifically, to mitigate the impact of health problems affecting minority groups, deal with inadequate pest control services, and to provide educational outreach services, i.e., HIV/AIDS prevention program, school health services, and regulatory and environmental health services (including Pest Control). Funding must also be provided for improved health screening measures for client entry into shelter residences as well as drug/alcohol counseling services. Additional "Field Inspectors" are needed in order to meet a multiplicity of service delivery demands.

Asthma, which has spiraled into a potentially deadly crisis, has rapidly become one of the lead-

## **FY '09 DISTRICT NEEDS STATEMENT OF BX. COMMUNITY BOARD # FOUR (Contd.)**

ing threats to the well-being and lives of South Bronx residents, particularly the children who are most vulnerable. Asthma-related emergencies are occurring at an alarming rate in city schools, yet, the causes of this disease for the most part are not known. What we do know is that asthma can be treated if managed properly with preventative measures and medication; however, many of our community residents do not have access to quality health care, neither a primary health physician nor visit asthma specialists. Funding must be provided to ensure that the proper health care is provided to those suffering from this malady.

Health education need be a key component of the efforts to prevent, manage and treat asthma. We are equally concerned about the rise of undiscovered diabetes, as well as the increase in Juvenile Diabetes, which often leads to many other serious illnesses such as Glaucoma, Amputation, Heart Disease and death. We are pleased that this agency understood our message and put a proper mechanism in place in order to continue the level of communication achieved by our mutual agencies, i.e., representation on the Board's District Service Cabinet meetings, etc., or else, all their good deeds will go unnoticed. This dynamic partnership affords us the ability to better inform the public on health-related concerns and at a faster rate. It is critical that funding be available to enhance AIDS services specifically targeted for teens/pre-teens before they become infected with any sexually transmitted disease. As more and more children are left orphaned as their young parents die of AIDS, they too are becoming infected. A proportionate share of funding needs to be allocated to better serve victims of HIV and AIDS. There is a shortage of suitable housing for people with HIV/AIDS. It should be noted that a significant effort has been made to provide supportive services to victims of HIV/AIDS and the goal should continue to be independent living. Yet, there is still a need to provide people living with HIV/AIDS with medically appropriate transitional and permanent housing.

**PARKS DEPARTMENT:** We thank Commissioner Adrian Benepe, Borough Commissioner Aponte and their agency, as well as Borough President Adolfo Carrion, Jr. and our local Council Members for their continued support of the Joyce Kilmer Park Renovation Project. The Heinrich Heine Fountain has been rededicated at its original location on the Grand Concourse. We continue to request for the completion of Joyce Kilmer's perimeter fencing work, to preserve the natural beauty and add to the security of this newly renovated centerpiece park. The Grant Avenue Park will provide much needed and essential open space and it will enable children to play in a secure and attractive surrounding. We urge the fast-tracking of Grant Park and for the appropriation of adequate funds for the continuation of the Grand Avenue Park Master Plan for completion by April 2008. With the advent of the new Yankee Stadium and the replacement parkland program, we strongly urge for the fast-tracking of such program and other key park construction projects in District # Four. The re-seeding of grass, tree and bush pruning as well as park bench and other equipment repair continues to be a concern in our district. We continue to be distressed at progressive financial cuts suffered by this agency limiting both its capital and expense budget. We particularly deplore the losses experienced re: Parks Enforcement Patrol. Providing adequate Parks Enforcement personnel is essential to the entire Park program, coupled with an appropriate amount of funding for public safety enhancement. It makes no difference how beautiful and well maintained the parks are if people are afraid to go into the park and enjoy its beauty. Money spent on maintenance upgrades should be matched with an equal amount spent on safety enhancements. They both go hand and hand. Community Board # Four strongly supports adequate funding for street tree maintenance, for the placement of additional trees and to replace dead trees, for additional maintenance personnel, assistant gardeners, climbers and pruners, PEP Officers, city park workers, and for additional equipment for improved service delivery efforts.

## FY '09 DISTRICT NEEDS STATEMENT OF BX. COMMUNITY BOARD # FOUR (Contd.)

**COMMUNITY BOARDS:** The City Charter states with vigor the importance and obligations mandated to Community Boards. Experience has taught us that intended programs are without meaning when they are without funds. We are currently operating on an internal budget of under \$200,000 for a district with over 139,000 residents. Actually, the financial figure is far less than that since much of the Board's budget is pre-allocated for fixed expenses. Community Boards provide direct and almost immediate access between community residents and city government. That link must be strengthened. Instead, we are being weakened because as many city agencies are reducing services, we are being called upon with greater urgency to fill the gap produced by the reduction of services from other agencies but without the adequate financial resources. We recognize existing difficulties but we believe that Community Boards are the best thing that has happened for NYC.

We are gratified that Mayor Bloomberg spared Community Boards from budget cuts, but while we have regained an inch, we are still miles behind when it comes to an equitable allocation of city funding. Let me conclude this portion of our commentary by saying that with the adequate fiscal support, Community Boards can provide the proverbial "ounce of prevention" that makes it unnecessary for the city to pay dearly for the "pound of cure" often needed. We recommend that each agency provide Community Boards with a quarterly progress report on our requests expressed in the District Needs Statement, which continues to receive no attention or consideration. The community should have a clear understanding of what resources we have, what we do not have and why.

**IN CONCLUSION...** As always, we take this moment to reflect on the past year and even the years preceding. All too often, we find ourselves in an adversarial position with agencies' policies, but we have never considered their representatives as our adversaries. On the contrary, we have often found the agency representatives to be cooperative, responsive and helpful. We could never achieve our successes alone...It has always been a joint effort of New York's best and brightest and for that the people of Community District # Four are most grateful.

As we encounter new challenges, I believe that together we can succeed and come up with creative solutions that will improve the quality of life of our residents. **MAY OUR PURPOSE CONTINUE TO BE THE WELL-BEING OF OUR CITY'S INHABITANTS!**

***David Mojica***

Submitted by: \_\_\_\_\_  
David Mojica, District Manager

**In collaboration with:**

Ms. D. Lee Ezell, Board Chair

Ms. Martha Reyes, Economic Development Committee Chair

Mr. George T. Robinson, Sr., Health & Human Services Committee Chair

Rev. Earl McKay, Housing & Land Use Committee Chair

Ms. Kathleen Saunders, Municipal Services Committee Chair

Mr. Robert Garmendiz, Parks Committee Chair

Ms. Gloria Jean Benfield, Youth & Education Services Committee Chair