



BROOKLYN COMMUNITY BOARD 13

1201 Surf Avenue – 3rd Fl., Brooklyn, NY 11224

(718) 266-3001

FAX (718) 266-3920

MARTY MARKOWITZ
Borough President

MARION CLEAVER
Chairperson

CHUCK REICHENTHAL
District Manager

DISTRICT NEEDS STATEMENT COMMUNITY BOARD 13 – SUMMER 2009

'Tis a Puzzlement!! And where do we go from here? It has been a busy year for the residents and businesses in Brooklyn's Community Board 13, a 2008-09 filled with debate over grandiose plans for the future as well as smaller-scale projects also considered for upcoming years. It, thus, has been a year-long, almost non-stop barrage of large meetings and smaller sessions, covering a seeming avalanche of questions and answers. A CinemaScopic kaleidoscope has filled the local scene with casts that have included key names from Albany, from City Hall, from Brooklyn Borough Hall, from City agencies...and from the omnipresent media. The steady watch of the Fourth Estate resulted in a steady stream of headlines, editorials, interviews and features. There were countless interpretations of plans as well as misinterpretations. Confusion between rumor and fact left a vast population wondering about the next step...and the one after that.

And yet the disparate neighborhood that make up C.B. 13 survived the year well, supported by knowledgeable legislators, careful analyses of all proposals by its residents, and an overall steadfast belief in the positive potentials for one of the most dynamic and ever-changing sections of the City of New York. The public has been deluged by data on websites, blogs, facebook, twitters, and infinitum, all filled with concern, hope, and strong support for the C.B. 13 neighborhoods' future. Still, the vast horizons of the media and Internet jointly have created an informational puzzlement for all involved in varied proposals for C.B. 13's busy communities.

Nonetheless, there is no doubt that very positive things are on the horizon for this southern section of Brooklyn. As of this writing, all involved parties are seeking the last pieces to be placed in a mammoth jigsaw puzzle of projects and plans. The completion of that finished picture will be one that has been painted with an historic backdrop, one that is all the more obvious in this year marking the exploits of Henry Hudson and his trip down the river that now bears his name into the landscape that would, despite its up and downs, become the most famous City in the world.

And what a phantasmagoria of exciting growth has evolved from those days of Dutch and English settlements, and of the landscape that had been the pride of its original Native American inhabitants. Here was a geographic entity that eventually became five boroughs and harbor making up a City that defined centuries of historic growth. In fact the neighborhoods that make up C.B. 13 were not just a small piece of the giant tornado of New World enterprise. They paved the way for innovation. For example, it did not take long for the settlers to discover the ocean-washed lands that make up the southern part of what became the City of Brooklyn. Within short spans of time,

the shore become the ‘Hamptons’ of its day, with boats carrying vacationers to the Brighton Beach Hotel and to other warm-weather retreats that sprung up. This advent was followed by rail traffic that brought forth a vast new population of dwellers, some using its new bungalows for the warm months, others eventually settling in the areas with yearlong homes. Along with them came the amusement entrepreneurs who could see the value of the area for fun and frolic, for swimming and sunning, for daredevil rides and large-scale amusement parks. The history tells the tales of Dreamland, Steeplechase, Luna Park, and other crowd-pleasing magnets. On the western tip of the peninsula at Sea Gate, millionaires built beautiful homes for their own escapes from the already bustling Manhattan. Soon, the lands east of Sea Gate would be filled with people of all walks of life discovering the zany wonders of roller coasters and other chilling rides like the Cyclone, the Thunderbolt, the Tornado, and the Shoot-the-Shoots. The Elephant Hotel loomed over carousels and ‘switch baths’, pools and lockers, penny arcades, restaurants, theaters of all kinds, and freak shows. Performers found the seashore a welcome home. There was a stilt-walker named Archie Leach (eventually Cary Grant) and a dance ‘escort’ named Rudolph Valentino. There also were the Durante’s, the Mae West’s, along with the song-and-dance teams trying out new material from Tin Pan Alley. Sounds of oom-pah-pah melodies filled the Bowery and walkways. To add to the magic came the hot dog, the cotton candy, and the corn covered with melted butter. Wearing bathing outfits that covered the entire body, thousands splashed around in the salt water. Eventually, this popular beachfront led to the construction of a great wooden walkway called the Boardwalk.

The arrival of more and more immigrants to this country meant the increase in permanent residences constructed throughout the coastal neighborhoods. Apartment houses were built alongside the bungalows in Brighton Beach, in Coney Island, in Gravesend. New roads, new transit systems evolved. This seaside combination of resort-and-residences meant the arrival of throngs that filled the sandy stretch, swam in the salty surf, crowded the Boardwalk with their interests in foods of all kinds, and enjoyment of every imaginable fashion. Nothing lasts forever though. Sad changes occurred. Fires took their tolls on Dreamland, Luna Park (which survived, at least in part, until the 1940’s), and Steeplechase (which was rebuilt and lasted until the 60’s). The post-World War II era meant even a more pronounced swerve in the city’s lifestyle. Television kept people home; air conditioning meant that people need not rush to hot subways to reach the beach on a sweltering August day; and the lure of the suburbs beckoned to returning veterans and their families. Then, too, ‘modern’ autos, with the exception of the Edsel, carried the carefree on out-of-town jaunts to the latest elaborate theme-based amusement haunts inspired by the Disney’s who replaced the Tilyou’s. The areas of C.B. 13 were swept up in this tidal wave of change. Some attractions simply folded on the Boardwalk and Bowery. The shrieks from Parachute Jump riders ceased, as did the squeals from those on the Steeplechase Horses. It would take years of this quasi-malaise before an upturn occurred and throngs began to return to this shorefront wonderland. Many of the intrepid amusement operators had stayed – pleasing new generations. Throughout the years, the lure of the hot dogs, the wave-washed beach, the zany and oftentimes goofy games remained. But the years had taken a distinct toll, and, today, the contemporary scene, though revived for hordes of an eager and excited new populace, has scores of needs that MUST be met in order to keep its residents, business people, and visitors safe and content in this 21st Century ‘New World’ of C.B. 13.

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COMMUNITY BOARD 13 comprises the peninsula areas of Brighton Beach, Coney Island, West Brighton, and Sea Gate, along with locations that are north of the Belt Parkway and Coney Island Creek i.e. Gravesend, Bath Beach, along with portions of Bensonhurst and Homecrest. The air still is wafted by the surrounding waterways – the Atlantic Ocean, Gravesend Bay and the Narrows, and Coney Island Creek. The zig zag boundaries of C.B. 13, co-terminus with that of the

60th Police Precinct, follow the Ocean on the south; the west and north by Gravesend Bay; the east and north by Corbin Place, 26th Avenue, 86th Street, Avenue Y, Coney Island Avenue, and Cass Place. With the advent of deep concern over global warming and the oddities of weather patterns, much of this area is vulnerable to flood zone problems, and C.B. 13 and the C.B. 13 CERT Team work closely with the Office of Emergency Management on the preparation for potential floods and the possibility for storm-producing evacuations. There is concern about the means by

which peninsula residents would leave to go to safer areas of the borough, and careful planning is still evolving. This planning must entail the areas' numerous nursing homes and high-rise buildings. CERT has worked with OEM and Coney Island Hospital on the needs that that facility would be facing should there be storm problems. The fragility of the peninsula and its aged infrastructure, has produced working scenarios with the Hospital and the communities on such possible problems as brown-outs, blackouts, and the ominous spectre of terrorist actions. It must be noted that such supporters of the CERT team have included Councilman Recchia and Assemblyman Brook-Krasny.

The issues that confronted C.B. 13's neighborhoods last year have escalated during recent months, with meetings, decision deadlines, and residential concerns in the forefront. Southern Brooklyn, as in the rest of the City, does not exist unto itself, and events elsewhere create impact situations. One of these is the ongoing, still-unsettled plans for a Waste Transfer Station (WTS) within yards of the Board's northern terminus at 26th Avenue. Posers remain on several fronts: is there any threat of toxins being released into the waterways of the adjacent Gravesend Bay? This question is of urgency in that the waters, if contaminated, will wash onto the shores of C.B. 13's seashore. The economic health of C.B. 13 is vastly dependent upon the cleanliness of the waters that wash onto its shoreline. With proposals of major consequence on the table for Coney Island et al, it is critical to safeguard the ocean and bay waters that mean a great deal to the expected economic and environmental health of southern Brooklyn. People are concerned about the possibility of raw garbage accidentally being released in the waters at the WTS, and there is equal concern about the already-busy streets that will have to carry more trucks than they have at this moment. The road that takes vehicles to WTS are used by drivers going to and from a Bay Parkway shopping center, an amusement park (both in CB 11), and Calvert Vaux Park and the route to Coney Island (in CB 13). The recently revamped Gravesend Traffic Study may well have to address these critical issues of additional transportation usage. The water quality gains even greater concern since the completion of the cleansing of Coney Island Creek by National Grid from Shell Road on the east to Stillwell Avenue on the west. This project was a mammoth undertaking involving removing dangerous compounds and toxins from the surrounding land area and from the water bed. It is now hoped that the rest of the Creek from Stillwell westward to Gravesend Bay can be cleansed in the near future. Environmental and recreational activities, of course, are paramount in this area of beach and park use. We note the City plans for Calvert Vaux Park (nee Large Dreier-Offerman Park) Bayview Park and Kaiser Park, all abutting the waters of the Creek and Bay. Environmental refuges are also on the agenda for the shorelines of the Creek and Calvert Vaux. Years of waiting and large budgets, have been used to clean up these areas for the use of local residents and uncountable visitors from all over the City and beyond. The resultant uses should not be endangered by pollutants from the WTS. Assurances must be made. Athletes, kayakers, fishermen, botanists, and ecology-minded citizens see this area as one of the last refuges in the city for their needs and for the health of migratory birds and fish of many varieties. It must also be noted that porpoises have often been seen off the shores of southern Brooklyn in the Bay. The sightings indicate only a fraction of the environmental importance of the C.B. 13 areas of Brooklyn.

Part of the cleansed land by National Grid (nee Brooklyn Union/BUG/Brooklyn Union Gas) is slated for the long-delayed move of the C.B. 13 Sanitation Garage from its current, inappropriate long-term site on Neptune Ave. to part of the land that is now cleared.

Community Board 13's office is located at 1201 Surf Avenue where staff and Board members can watch the actions taking place throughout the amusement area. The giddy events (The Mermaid Parade, Siren Festival, Fireworks, etc.) are all watched with smiles. The now-empty and dirt-filled lots, the result of removal of attractions (the Batting Cage Center, the Miniature Golf site, rides, and arcade goofiness) are unattractive to visitors, and it is hoped by all that the blueprints for the coming years will mean the use of these lots for the giddy attractions that are part of the Coney's annals.

The Board office receives public complaints and concerns on a daily basis, and the range is wide. Some are being corrected with diligent speed e.g. the correction of trip hazards on the Boardwalk. But there are other prominent matters of concern e.g. backup of sewer lines and flooding, treacherous street potholes, illegal construction, business operating without appropriate permits, an overabundance of illegal street vending, trash-dumping on unused lots, and seemingly abandoned buildings or empty structures that provide space for homeless, drug addicts, the mentally ill, and vandals. An entire development at Rose Cove, which juts into Gravesend Bay across from Sea Gate, had been nearly completed before its developers had problems. The constructed condos, the boat docks, the private roadway, and more were immediately invaded. Fires ravaged this spit of land, and the buildings had to be taken down by the City before anyone had actually lived in them. Developers have tried to do work on the site since that time, but the current recession may have halted further progress. A deep trench had been dug to start work to connect the area to the streets. It is now blocked off, and the guard booth is empty.

The new arrangement of educational processes have confused many, and there is particular anxiety at the starts of the terms in September. Lafayette High School is now the Lafayette Campus with some six charter schools using its famed structure, including the industrious High School of Sports Management (HSSM) with its assist from the New York Mets' organization. Other charter schools in the C.B. 13 area are in operation or in the planning stages, and not all have been operating with the same high expectations of the aforementioned HSSM. On another front, there have been some major positive changes during '09, and the communities are ecstatic that the roster of lifeguards has been increased resulting in more bays open at more hours and days. Alas, as of this writing, the rains of summer '09 have put the proverbial 'damper' on this swimming season. Councilman Recchia has been in the forefront of fighting for lifeguard improvement, and he has led his aim with arranging for swimming instruction classes at Abraham Lincoln High School. He has also brought the Abe Stark Skating Rink into greater focus by sponsoring children's skating dates

The arts have taken a major 'hit' over the years in the C.B. 13 communities. Throughout the 20th Century, theaters flourished, with both film and live performances. The Brighton Beach Theater was part of the Subway Circuit, operating during the warm weather, which brought major stars (Bert Lahr, Mae West, Susan Peters, Betty Hutton, etal) down to its local stage in fully staged versions of shows only recently closed in Manhattan. Movie theaters were aplenty, some of them centered on the areas' diverse ethnic populations. There were glamour showcases like the RKO Tilyou, the Loew's Coney Island, the Oceana, the Tuxedo, and smaller houses like the Surf and the Mermaid (the latter is now the home of an important Church; the former became a bowling alley before it was finally demolished). The Loew's Coney Island became the Shore Theater where folks could see a wide range of Coney-esque shows like 'Bagels and Yox'. The building, which

also housed many offices, has long been shuttered, and it stands in a pivotal spot across from the revitalized Stillwell Terminal and Nathan's. Some would love to see it refurbished as a cultural center (live theater, film, galleries, recording studios, dance and theater classes, etc.). This kind of action would allow Coney Island to serve more of a year-round site, because people could reach the Shore via subway despite bad weather. This movement of people could spark other interests (restaurants, etc.) and plans for new housing in the area would be bolstered even further by such a development. In the 1960's, as old buildings were toppling for high-rise projects and as Steeplechase collapsed under the crane, the island became the home for street theater, led by film-stage superstar Geraldine Fitzgerald with the Brooklyn Arts & Culture Assn.. The resultant show, featuring local young people and adults, became the first outdoor show at Lincoln Center. Its power drew attention to southern Brooklyn's entertainment history. Today, there are multi-discipline groups attempting to thrive, notably the longtime valued Rob Shanta Dancers and the Brighton Ballet (the latter is now forced to work out of Kingsborough Community College for lack of a proper home in the neighborhood it wishes as its permanent home!). The Paper Moon Players have spent years seeking a C.B. 13 home. Ironically, the current home of C.B. 13 was once the site for the old Boston Theater, and, in the late 60's, it was given to BACA by Nathan's and became the home for theater, art shows, and the Bread and Puppet Theater. But the building was too shoddy and rundown to be used for long, and it was razed. Even more ironically, the site became the home of illegal flea marts rather than something that belonged in the C-7 spirit of the amusement district. For so many young people and adults, the arts are critical to interest in education and civic involvement. More programs should be encouraged, along with more attention to the areas' many athletic groups, visual arts' associations, and more!! The need is here; the talent is here, whether in Brighton Beach, Coney Island, Gravesend, etc. (The nearest live theater is the Harry Warren Theater on Bath Avenue, two blocks north of C.B. 13's terminus. Local theater-goers visit the intimate theater space. The need is there.)

GRAVESEND/HOMECREST/BATH BEACH

These communities, north of Coney Island Creek and the Belt Parkway, are lined with one-and-two family homes, part of their long-time heritage, as well as newer co-ops and condos built within the last decade. In the Gravesend-Bath Beach areas, higher-rise, well-constructed buildings rose, all becoming part of the fabric – Contello Towers, Waterview Towers, Harway Houses. All have open space and have been home to middle income families who support its many mom-and-pop stores, its restaurants, its schools, its temples and churches. These multi-dwellings dot the landscape along Cropsey Ave. as well as Stillwell Ave. Senior citizen houses and nursing homes also tower along the wide Cropsey Avenue (as they do further northward). Side streets are more apt to feature a lower landscape of one and two family homes. In recent vintage, developers have added still more one family homes in the area, some replacing land previously used for indoor-outdoor restaurants, gas stations, and large houses. Retro Diner (once the popular Nebraska Diner –and one of the last of the diners that were prominent in the neighborhood) shuttered last year in its site just south of the Cropsey Bridge over the Creek. A Burger King operates across the street from the closed eatery, and it has outlived the date of its Board-approved BSA resolution. In spite of this infraction and in spite of the fact that it has never re-applied for a BSA Application that C.B. 13 would have to approve, the Burger King remains operating. Such an incident points out some of the problems that exist with other operations also serving the public with outdated or invalid permits. (The same situations can be found with enterprises through the Board area – and, no doubt, in other areas as well. Enforcement issues must be undertaken with greater city teeth). Note – at the same time, C.B. 13 has received word that another Community Board, in a distant

neighborhood, approved a license for a taxi service in that operates in Brighton!! Communication and follow-up appears to be lacking to an alarming degree.

Little Dreier-Offerman Park serves as an oasis for young and old in the Contello complex area. Councilman Recchia has assisted the Parks in fixing up this widely-used site. There, men can be seen on the bocce court while youngsters take in the other available activities. A fence was newly created to ensure that the youngest of the park users cannot dash out of the terrain into the busy traffic lanes that surround it. A bridge links this Contello-Waterview sector to the western area of the onetime Large Dreier-Offerman Park, renamed Calvert Vaux Park. This site has been used by soccer and baseball players for years, and plans, some years ago, for its use for a golf driving range vanished. Instead, there is now a master plan that will transform this park into a new treasure for the neighborhood, uniting sports, environmental uses, park houses, and more. The park was enlarged years ago when materials dredged during the construction of the Verrazano Bridge were dumped on the site, thus expanding its acreage. What had once been a dumping ground will eventually be a valued city park.

Not far from this section of C.B. 13 stands Marlboro Houses, a NYCHA development. The situation is quite different from that of its Cropsey Ave. neighbors. The playgrounds are shoddy and in need of greater use and maintenance. One area, close to Ave. X and Stillwell, was once a roller blade area, but it is now just a blank slab of concrete, baking in the sun and in need of work so that it can serve a large populace. There is even a small platform from which concerts were once given by BACA. Across the street is the Ty Cobb Field, used for a variety of athletic activities but definitely in need of work to bring it up to date and attractive. There had long been concern over its proper owner – the Transit Authority? The Parks Dept.? Private groups? Sadly, the important field, in an area that has far too few, may seem to be surrounded by mounds of debris that remains uncleared perhaps due to non-clarified ownership. This situation can be noted, in particular, alongside the train track fences. Similarly the grassy knoll between Calvert Vaux Park and the Block Institute (school for special children) becomes a dumping turf as well, and the Parks and the Dept. of Sanitation have worked together to try to keep it clear of broken glass and tossed garbage.

Schools in the Gravesend/Bath Beach area include two of the foremost institutions in the borough. Lafayette High School, as has been noted, is now the Lafayette Campus, and it has a wonderful athletic field. Local sports groups would like the opportunity to use it when the school itself is not. Such is the wish that has not yet been satisfied. (A similar non-use by local youths can be found at Grady High School's field in the Brighton Beach section.). Not far away is John Dewey High School, with its beautiful landscaped campus. Both Lafayette and Dewey have been in the headlines for various student group disputes, some of which have spilled out of the schools into the streets and the elevated train that rises above Stillwell Ave. The difficult situation, though, has quieted down during the last two years thanks to the unified work of the school authorities, the 60th Pct., the Transit Police, and the students themselves.

There is only one library in this section of Gravesend – the Ulmer Park branch on Bath Avenue. After years of dispute over the property with the landowners, the BPL now has complete ownership and control over the structure. C.B. 13's Library Committee had worked with the branch on updating needs some years ago, but it is obvious that additional space and books vitally are needed in an area that serves two large high schools, parochial schools, and a large population. (Other C.B. 13 libraries are located in Coney Island and Brighton Beach, and their value to those communities is inestimable!)

Separated from this part of the C.B. 13 populace by the enormous city railroad yards is quite another community. There, one can see the Beach Haven Houses along with many clean blocks of

single and two-family homes. The elevated trains over Shell Road do not seem to distract from the lifestyles of the residents. As of this writing, new homes have been built right on Shell Road (with the el right overhead) and on streets serving as exit blocks for Parkway motorists. Some have become occupied, but work on others has ceased. Nevertheless, there has not been any degree of overdevelopment within this land stretch. In the future, however, Shell Road will become the entrance and exit for sanitation trucks going to and from the new facility on the aforementioned cleansed National Grid lands. Confusion may be an issue with cars exiting from the Parkway at the same area of Shell Road, a corner that also houses the widely-used Gil Hodges Baseball Field. Families going to the Field had additionally had been stressed by the fact that, for years, parking was not allowed on Shell Road. Thus, parking summonses were common. The Board office, working with DOT, has alleviated this problem, but the land underneath the Highway and abutting the field, often needed for added parking spaces, is riddled with trash and broken glass. The cleanliness of this stretch has remained an enigma. Is it the responsibility of the Dept. of Sanitation or the Highways Dept.? Motorists forced to park in this area are awarded with flat tires, a sad incident when tired parents and young ballplayers reach the cars to start their trips home. A largely middle-class neighborhood, it is one that has a low crime rate and a busy shopping strip on Avenue Z, which includes a large supermarket, pharmacy, pizza parlor, liquor store, and Laundromat. A few blocks further east on Avenue Z is the West Street Playground, essential to the health of the citizenry. The Parks Department has cleaned and revamped this site to the satisfaction of all, and a new artificial turf field is now in the works. Such a move is enormously popular.

There is a major problem in and around this community, nonetheless. The Neptune-Stillwell-Cropsey Avenues links are riddled with auto body shops, car wash operations, and similar businesses. Cars are double, and sometimes triple, parked on the streets, and they are often left on the sidewalks itself. As a result, people are forced to walk around these obstacles, often into the auto-clogged street itself. If this isn't trouble enough, trailer trucks, minus their carriages, are left parked on the Stillwell and Cropsey Bridges, with emphasis on the former. In the future, this problem will grow with more and more vehicles heading to the new amusements and condos/co-ops/hotels planned for the area. Off-street parking remains one of the key elements missing from the peninsula plans, and this clogged-up entranceway to the district becomes an even more evident problem. Bottlenecks and bumper-to-bumper gridlocks are already reported on the routes leading south off the Parkway....and northward as well. The recent Gravesend traffic study has made some interesting, and perhaps valuable, suggestions to work on this problem e.g. the one-way transformation southbound on West 17th Street, with northbound exits from the area on other side streets. Thus, the extremely difficult left turn from southbound Cropsey into the eastern roadbed will be among the issues solved. Other related twists and turns can also be corrected. One also notes that the Cropsey-Neptune-Stillwell units are also home to a giant Pathmark, Home Depot, a drive-through Starbucks, a new furniture outlet, and other newly-built stores awaiting rentals. Bus services to and from the Cropsey-Neptune corridors are often the cause of concern for the elderly heading for shopping chores. Reevaluation of bus stops should be on the slate for future needs.

BRIGHTON BEACH

The changes in Brighton Beach have been a veritable 'March of Time' reality documentary. In its earliest days, as has been noted, its lures included the huge Brighton Beach Hotel. Over the years, the Riegelmann bungalow colonies developed...and, soon, there began the construction of large apartment houses fronting the beach area, Brightwater Court, and Brighton Beach Ave., as well as eastward to Corbin Place. Many of the side streets became sites for one and two family homes, and

the population grew and grew, with elevated train service making travel to and from Manhattan and Downtown Brooklyn easy. During summer months, Brighton Beach became the lure for young people seeking the joys of the surf in much the same way the younger set headed for Coney's waters where they could also seek out amusements and the 'terrors' of the roller coasters. A large segment of this growing population consisted of Jewish families, many of them new to this country.

Then, as has happened all over, times took its change. Some bungalows became year-round residences, even though their narrow lanes were not city-mapped streets and lacked some critical environmental and sanitation needs. (As a matter of fact, the entire infrastructure of the Brighton Beach area is old and ragged and should receive immediate work. Street paving, especially the widely used Brighton Beach Ave., should be on the planning board as well.) Other bungalows sagged into disrepair, and, even later, became havens for the homeless, the druggies, the vandals. Oceanview Avenue, a lovely street, became almost synonymous, for many, as a street for prostitution pick-ups. Brighton Beach Avenue, one of the busiest streets for shopping and dining, fell into disrepute during the sixties, and empty storefronts were visible. Of course, seafront areas hardly remain static for long, and the influx of former residents of the Soviet Union found its way to these streets. Soon, Brighton Beach Avenue became a boom town, and it still is.... Every kind of store serves a vast public of older and newer residents, as well as scores of visitors. Restaurants, specializing in Russian cuisine, help to develop a new magnet for out-of-Brighton residents. The high-risers of the Oceana-Muss development rose over the memories of what had been the famed Brighton Beach Baths. The Oceana Theater, itself the remaining movie theater in this part of southern Brooklyn, was transformed into a large restaurant-catering unit on the ground floor, and a performing arts center, featuring many famed Russian performers, on the second floor (once the balcony and now extended for the full length of the building).

Today's Brighton Beach is enormously crowded and has its share of problems, many of which are handled well by the Brighton Beach Business Improvement District as well as by the Brighton Neighborhood Assn., which focuses on housing issues as a priority although it covers a wider swatch of issues. For almost a decade, legislators and C.B. 13 staffers urged the City Planning Commission to work on rezoning plans that might halt the onslaught of developers who were buying up smaller homes and building condos and co-ops that crowded the narrow streets. Last year, the rezoning plan finally reached the community, and it was not accepted. Was it a case of 'too much too late'? Whatever the reasons, Brighton Beach Avenue is streaming with neighborhood residents of all backgrounds, particularly of Russian extraction but also including populations of Mid-Eastern countries, Mexico, Puerto Rico and South America, Pakistan, and those of African-American heritage. Neptune Avenue, another shopping strip, tends to attract more of the Mid-East, Mexican, etc. residents of the booming Beach area. Temples and mosques are almost side by side, and traffic is enormously heavy, notably on Brighton Beach Avenue beneath the elevated train and crowded with delivery trucks and double-parkers. Parking is a nightmare for many, and restaurants tend to try to handle their heavy business with valet assistance. The one large parking area, maintained all these years by the City, is located on Brightwater Court, but its future omens differently. The City plans to rid itself of its responsibility for this tract. Eventually, it will be the site for parking and a housing development fronting on the Boardwalk. At present, half of the open parking lot is used for visitors to the area (bathers, etc.) while the other half is rented to those living in the nearby buildings. Sad to note, however, visitors may well take up spots belong to residents, and the result is confusion and complaints. It is thus imperative to underscore that parking facilities for this neighborhood loom as a main priority.

City Task Forces, involving CAU, several city agencies and the Community Board, often visit the

area to see that sidewalks are clear (they often are not especially with fruit stores extending too far into the sidewalks) and that permits are in order. Although summonses and advice are given to the merchants, the fees may be paid and the same problems reappear quickly. One of the key issues that 'killed' the rezoning plan involved the proposed construction of high rise buildings on Brighton Beach Avenue. People reeled at the thought of the danger it would bring in terms of the fragmentation caused by construction trucks, the overhead trains, the trucks, the pedestrian use, the double parking, and the lack of parking in general!! (The needs of the remaining bungalow colony area played a key role as well. What is left of this area should be protected for those that make it home). Construction already has been widespread, and still-empty higher-rise buildings line side streets. Empty lots can be seen where developers have not initiated work but have removed the smaller homes that had stood for decades on the blocks.

One of the most confusing and dangerous intersections may be seen at the corner of Coney Island and Brighton Beach Avenues, with added problems coming from autos turning left into Brighton Beach Avenue from Brighton 11th Street. This traffic hub is one of the most congested corners in southern Brooklyn. For years, the Barnes Dance method was used to assure the safety of pedestrians attempting to cross the street (Barnes Dance relates to a complete stoppage of car movement so that pedestrians can criss-cross the corners without the dangers of motorists attempting to make turns at the same time). The Barnes Dance has now been discontinued, much to the chagrin of many, although DOT has maintained that its disappearance makes street-crossing safer for the area. (Barnes Dance loss also bothers residents in the Trump-Warbase area intersection of West 5th St. and Neptune Ave.).

The Shorefront YM-YWHA provides large scale programming at the foot of Coney Island Ave. near the Boardwalk, but there are many other services that require attention for the myriad of nationalities now living in Brighton Beach. Youth programs are at a minimum despite the diligence of the Brighton Neighborhood Assn., one of the many organizations in the area that have been injured by constant loss of funding from the City's DYCD. After-school programming, English-as-a-Second-Language classes are needed, although it must be stated that the Brighton Beach library, for example, extends the opportunity for such projects. It cannot do it alone.

The Boardwalk begins its long stretch to Sea Gate from Corbin Place in Brighton Beach, and its importance to the area is strong. Although it has aged, work is planned to fix up the wooden framework, perhaps with artificial materials. Despite its current state, it is hugely used. In recent years, Boardwalk-entrance restaurants have opened to a wide audience e.g. Tatiana's. The result has involved some problems – sanitation issues have erupted with the needs of the eateries. Then, too, this area provides one of the few places where homeless can gain entrance to areas beneath the now fenced-in spots beneath the Boardwalk (no more time for 'Under the Boardwalk' songs!). The homeless, industrious in various ways, have lived under the wood and have been responsible, sadly, for fires that have resulted from their needs to keep warm or to cook food. As a result, the Parks Dept. and the 60th Pct. have to be vigilant in the watch for homeless in this tricky area. (Homeless are also found often in other sections of the Boardwalk length e.g. Ocean Parkway & Boardwalk; Coney Island Ave. & Boardwalk; among others). With all of the attention paid to this area's growth, some have complained that the stores that have ONLY Russian language signage should add English to the signs as well in order to allow more people to understand the services provided. (Similar concerns have been heard regarding a Russian food restaurant in the Trump Village Shopping Center.) People have also complained about the stench that are sometimes evident from local catch basins or sewers, and it is believed that a handful of unthinking fruit

merchants and restaurateurs, at the end of a business day, may actually pour grease and decaying vegetables into sewers and basins. Only after-midnight inspection can really be effective in curbing these alleged infractions. Illegal street vending is also reported, particularly involving non-veterans. Veterans, however, do have permission to sell on these zero-visibility streets. Residents also have problems with closures of streets for flea markets sans permission. C.B. 13 okays potential street closings at the end of each year and dealing with the following spring-summer seasons. Some vendor units, however, try to bypass the Board and set up closures without permits. The inconvenience on these crowded streets becomes evident, and trash may remain at day's end. An additional problem occurs when street vendors set up stands where they actually compete with the same merchandise as may be sold in a nearby store.

CONEY ISLAND/SEA GATE

2009 has been quite a year for reading about the future of Coney Island, with the print and television newscasters focusing on the plans for the peninsula. However, misinterpretation and misinformation, as has been mentioned previously in these pages, has taken its toll, and delayed movement leading to the City Council vote. Trust concerning plans, and anxiety fostered by rumors running amok, meant that the year was fogged over while the Coney Island Development Corp., the Economic Development Agency, local legislators, the City Planning Commission, City Council, and the Mayor's Office have all been bombarded with comments related to the overall plans for the amusement district and the residential sections of Coney Island. All of the materials greatly affect the private enclave of Sea Gate as well, and the result has been fractionalization of group efforts, of numerous meetings, mediation and attempts at clarification, ad infinitum. As of this writing, the City Council passed the plans for the future of the 'island' after spending a year of constant revamping, reexamination, and resolution of some of the proposals' recommendations.

Still unresolved is the fate of the walkway over Surf Avenue at West 8th Street. This structure connects the West 8th Street station with the Boardwalk, and its age is evident. Crumbling stairways are blocked off for safety sake, and other safeguards are in place. Paint is peeling as well. Who will maintain it? Who will rebuild it if that is to be the case? No one wants to step forward – not the Transit Authority or the Dept. of Traffic or the Parks Dept. or the Aquarium. An answer must be found soon in the interests of safety and appearance.

The CIDC had been created to work with EDC, the Mayor's Office, the Councilmembers, the businesses, and, most importantly, the community itself to work out plans to revitalize the amusement area, to deal with possible new housing and hotels, and to see that the Coney Island residents, in particular, are able to develop career skills and find jobs, and to assure people that they would not be ousted by developers and that affordable housing be included strongly in the finished plan. While all of this was going on, Thor Equities had bought a considerable amount of the amusement area, and the results have been numerous. Astroland was sold to Thor. It remained on the scene, nevertheless, for a year before closing shop (the Cyclone roller coaster was not affected!). Thor opened a new amusement center called 'Dreamland' on the property. They also created flea markets, under colorful roofs, on both sides of Stillwell Avenue. These marts replaced rides, a Batting Cage center, and a miniature golf range, among others. Thor had also purchased the Boardwalk properties which housed Cha-Cha's, Ruby's, among others. There were questions as to whether or not these entities could survive. (They remain open as of this report). Gregory & Paul's on Surf Ave., directly across from the Cyclone, closed to be replaced by a similar food stand. Others along the strip feared that they would lose business, or worse, force to close. Most along Surf remained

opened although interior acreage, along the Bowery, West 10th St., and others, did shutter. Their former sites remain empty lots until the plans for the future are solidified. The City plans to purchase, at least, part of the Thor/Sitt properties at this point in time. Other plus factors include funds for Coney Island Hospital and its expected greater importance as new houses are constructed and new residents move to the shorefront.

Many issues had been brought up in the wake of the initial CIDC plans and the many changes that were later made in the initial issuance of its 'strategic plan'. Public hearings were held in the community (scores of them), at City Planning, at City Hall, and even on the steps of Brooklyn Borough Hall. Appropriate acreage for outdoor amusement has caused concern, as has the project's recommended placement of hotels and new condo/housing developments. Amendments were a constant regarding the plans. The Railroad Avenue of memory, though only a few yards of two-block stretch of history, seemed to threaten plans for the future plans of Gargiulo's Restaurant. Problems appear to have been resolved. A new thoroughfare, called Wonder Wheel Way, drew criticism from many who saw it as a transit appendage that endangered the needed space for amusements and as a route that would cut the space owned by Deno's Wonder Wheel Park. The situation has now been addressed and, hopefully, solved. KeySpan Stadium, the enormously successful home of the Cyclones ball team, a minor league part of the Mets' organization, utilizes a block long parking lot, one that also proves important to beachgoers and other visitors. The plan would mean the construction of housing atop the lot, and the entire problem of traffic, parking, and needed open space exploded at meetings. Some twenty (20) issues were included as recommendations when the Community Board finally approved the plan. They were subsequently studied, in depth, by all parties and agencies involved in the decisions.

Despite all of the hue and cry, and media analyses, Coney Island continues to enjoy the smiles, the laughs, the gaiety evolving from the visits of tens of thousands of people. Young and old, from all walks of life, still find their way to the area for swimming, for strolling, for dining, for enjoying the salt water atmosphere. The Cyclone is a City landmark as is the Wonder Wheel, the Parachute Jump, and the Child's Restaurant building that fronts onto the Boardwalk. All have major roles in the future, as do some other suggested possibilities for landmarking. Nathan's remains a magnet for throngs. The Shore Theater Building, on Surf across from Nathan's, though still unused, may well be involved in important future uses. Coney Island USA and its museum and indoor shows holds forth at W. 12 St. and Surf, and the Coney Island History Project, created by Coney historian and prolific writer Charles Denson, is housed beneath the Cyclone. The summer of '09 saw the first visit to the shore area by Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey, and it was a hit. The AVP Volleyball Tournament, on the beach, drew thousands in '09 as it had done for three previous years. The Mermaid Parade maintained its hold as one of the mainstay annual attractions as did the Unity Day-Sand Sculpture attraction. The New York Aquarium still is one of the premier sites for visitors from all over the world, and its plans for the future are formidable. Other amusements hold on with strength e.g. the Polar Express and the Eldorado. What will happen around their abutting areas remains to be seen, but it is assured that its old, and new, amusements will still be synonymous with giggly fun in the City of New York.

There, of course, are many situations to be corrected in the area. Furniture stores, on the north side of Surf in the amusement area, do not conform with the C-7 district. All have received summonses over the years, but they remain in spite of them. Mattresses and furniture are still sprawled along the sidewalks, and they give a very wrong impressions of the future. Can the north side of the street eventually house some kind of parking? Or a new site for the valued Abe Stark skating rink

which may be threatened by housing plans? The north side of Surf, as well as its south, has glistered with new-ish additions e.g. restaurants and drinking sites e.g. Surf & Turf, Footprints, Peggy O'Neill's, Timulan, etc. It is hoped that they become longtime parts of this land strip. A Wall of Remembrance, commemorating the lives of those intrepid workers who lost their lives at 9/11, fills a side wall at the Stadium, and an appropriate and excellent statue of Jackie Robinson and Pee Wee Reese welcomes the thousands who come to see ballgames.

One project, fostered by Borough President Markowitz, has drawn criticism from those around Asser Levy/Seaside Park, where his Thursday night summer concerts have become almost legendary throughout the city with its star-studded roster of entertainers like Liza Minnelli, Donna Summer, Frankie Valli, Connie Francis, Debbie Reynolds, Art Garfunkel, Dionne Warwick, and scores more talents over decades. The Bandshell is also the scene for concert series on Tuesday night, hosted by Councilman Recchia, with Assemblyman Brook-Krasny and Congressman Jerrold Nadler, also with major talents. Russian concerts and special events are held there as well, along with numerous special attractions. As a result, the Borough President has proposed the construction of a new, permanent Bandshell with an overhang that would allow events to be held in spite of rain. It is not an amphitheater though, despite the fact that literature claimed it to be one. Viewers will still be on ground level from late June to the end of August. Various reasons have been cited by opponents of the structure, and the Borough President has acceded to at least some of them. He has also noted that the Park itself will be redone, including a new Children's Playground moved closer to West 5th Street and with added amenities for its users. Grassy areas, benches, and a facelift is promised. Remaining questions at this time include parking and traffic concerns as well as control over sound levels. All involved are sitting down at the conference table to solve the problems, as best as can be done, and there are many who await a positive result with problems alleviated. The Children's park would be done first, and the entire project, at the entranceway to Coney at Ocean Parkway/Brighton 5th Street, has been promised to be a gateway to the revitalized Coney Island amusements. The world-famous handball courts, at W. 5 St. and the Boardwalk, off Surf Avenue, draw the best athletes in the city, and it is proposed that the courts remain intact with some maintenance to keep it up to date and safe for players and audiences. Bleacher seating has been suggested.

Work on the Boardwalk, for its entire length, has either begun or is planned.. Added funds will come from the CIDC-approved rezoning plan and the President's stimulus package.. Various types of artificial wood, and composite compounds, are being tested for the walkway. The Steeplechase Pier has also been seen new wood replacement, and the strollers and fishermen will have less trouble traversing its length. Divers have also been involved in Pier programs, with video of the on-site underwater work shown on the Pier to students. The same divers have found pilings and other important materials from the areas of the onetime Dreamland and Iron Piers. While all of this is going on, it should be understood that meetings have taken place, and will continue to take place, regarding ferry service to southern Brooklyn. C.B. 13 sites mentioned for investigation include the extant Steeplechase Pier, Coney Island Creek, and construction atop the still existing pilings of the aforementioned Dreamland and/or Iron Piers. Budgetary problems, at this point, limit the hours of use for the Boardwalk/Beach bathrooms, a situation that proves difficult for those visiting the nighttime attractions of the amusement area.

The high-rise structures of western Coney Island, some of which are controlled by NYCHA, are home to longtime residents of the peninsula, and some feel uncertain about their roles in the development. The residents of the community, once predominantly those of African-American and Puerto Rican descent, now include sizeable populations of those from the Caribbean, South America,

Mexico, Russia, Italy, among others. It has a truly cosmopolitan and international look and flavor, and its population includes middle income resident (some in newer one-family homes constructed with the aid of Astella Development) and those earning less. Unemployment is high. Jobs are sought in the 'new' Coney, and it is hoped that various preparation training is ongoing for the many localites who will be able to work in the area...and for career development... in the growth of the peninsula. There are many living in this area who strive to make do on funds that are below poverty level. Union labor, with solid fiscal jobs, may be involved in construction, hotel and business management, and other parts of this 21st century Coney Island. Many civic groups have developed and are flourishing, but there can be no denying that drugs, gangs, and despair cast shadows over the streets, although the same can be said of countless areas across the city and country. There is a high incidence of HIV-AIDS problems that remains relatively silent. Pre-and-post natal care is also a serious problem that requires education and assistance. Coney Island Hospital maintains its outpost, on Neptune Ave., of the Ida Israel Health Center. There are other health facilities along these streets. The latest, opened this year, is the spacious Mermaid Medical Wellness facility which is currently outreaching to the population. But it is not alone in health assistance to needy residents. But there are always exceptions to the rule, and the community said a strong 'NO' to the opening of an outpatient clinic for drug users etal along a residential strip of Mermaid Avenue. There were many issues that drew powerful criticism in placing such a facility in this vicinity. Most agreed that the facility can serve an important purpose, but that site selection must be considered. This site on Mermaid Avenue does not merge well with the nearby populace, schools, and street uses. With all of the activities slated for Coney Island, the residents want it understood that they are a part of the development and not apart from it. With a projected upsurge in the population of the peninsula, Coney Island Hospital becomes even more important. The Emergency Room expansion stands out as imperative. The hospital has leaped into the 21st century with many new health space and aid, but the planned new housing for the neighborhood must be considered NOW so that the Hospital is readied for the influx of new residents and their health needs.

There are other issues, including the loss of the beachfront at Sea Gate where meetings with the Federal Corps of Engineers has indicated a plan for additional T-Groins that would prevent the movement of sands from the entire surrounding areas, and, thus, protect the beaches of this community. Tidal changes and the loss of the beach can mean extensive flooding for the neighborhood, as it has in the past. No one wants to see homes topple into the surf as has happened during one past Nor-Easter. The area is vulnerable, and egress from this western tip of the peninsula is not quite as easy as it might seem. Residents have only a couple of streets (Cropsey as the most notable) by which they may leave in the advent of a big storm. For some, the best way to and from the Stillwell Avenue Terminal is the use of the dollar cabs that are lined up on Stillwell Avenue near Mermaid Avenue.

Surf Avenue, and some other streets, are dotted with nursing homes, most notably the Shorefront Geriatric Center on W. 28 St., between Surf and the Boardwalk, in a spot once the home of the fabled Half Moon Hotel. It is widely populated as are others. Construction is ongoing for a new senior residence, and one upcoming development involves rental housing along with a long-needed YMCA-run community center, an addition to the neighborhood fostered by the CIDC with Councilman Recchia. It arrives at a time when other centers have either ceased operations or been downgraded as a result of the lack of funding.. The youth of the area are not served well, and the new 'Y' is eagerly awaited.

A relighting of the Parachute Jump proved a disappointment, and the Borough President assures the area that he will see that this landmark is relit in a spectacular multi-colored manner. The landmarked Child's Restaurant Building, on the Boardwalk, serves, for now, as a roller rink, but its future use is to

be decided by Taconic Investments. The infrastructure of the peninsula may not be able to tackle all of the needs of added housing and construction. A new pumping station had been planned and ok-ed years ago but it was scuttled. In tandem with the newest 'Coney' developments, the sewers and catch basins of the area still MUST be cleansed and brought up to contemporary needs.

CITY SERVICES – POLICE/FIRE/PUBLIC SAFETY

The widely disparate elements that create the lifestyles within C.B. 13 are dealt with in extremely capable manners by the men and women of the 60th Police Precinct, located at W. 8th St., as well as by Transit District 34 and Housing PSA 1. Community relations are handled with care and sensitivity, and the Precinct is involved in many activities within the district (National Night Out Against Crime, the amusement area events, the festivals and park activities, etal.). Their omnipresence is compellingly noted. Strength is added by the mandatory summer detail, at which time additional forces work in the peninsula to handle the mammoth crowds arriving for the beach, amusements, restaurants, and special events – not limited to the internationally-known Hot Dog Eating Contest at Nathan's or the Mermaid Parade or the Brighton Jubilee or the Friday night Fireworks, the Circus, the Volleyball events, the Cyclones' ballgames. The men and women are diligent and hold onto busy schedules. As a result, there should never be cuts at this Precinct; its men and women work extraordinarily well with the residents, houses of worship, Community Board, storeowners, schools, and visitors. There is careful monitoring of sites thought to be drug dens. There is a strong watch over any gang activity, and illegal gun traffic. But there is also care and watch over vending, and there are Russian speaking Police who can easily work with the growing numbers from the former USSR. The 60th Pct. works closely with the Board office, and communication is ongoing on a daily basis. There is added communication and support for the local CERT team, and the Police work hand-in-glove with its members during all kinds of local problems.

The FIRE DEPARTMENT serving C.B. 13 likewise has been of enormous effectiveness. Here, too, there is close communication with all agencies and neighborhood elements. As with all other local agency representatives, members of the Department attend the monthly Cabinet meetings held by C.B. 13's District Manager. Still, there are needs, as there are with the 60th Pct. In '09, the units did not have a suitable lightweight vehicle for its EMS needs on the Beach and Boardwalk. The Precinct needs appropriate vehicles too, as have been noted in budget concerns over the years. The Fire Department has much to watch and much on which it must respond including aging structures (some of which are abandoned and vandalized), the Brighton Beach bungalow area in particular, the Boardwalk prone to fires set underneath by the homeless, to name but a few. Important community involvement has been shown by distribution of smoke detectors and carbon monoxide detectors, and it is strongly hoped that more of these can be made available to people throughout C.B. 13. It is inconceivable that in the aging communities of Brighton Beach, Coney Island, Sea Gate, and parts of Gravesend that there be any plans, at all, to limit the personnel at the local Department, or, even worse, to ever consider closing down a facility. It is unfortunate enough to know that there are times that the men of the local Department are sent elsewhere and are sent back up from a distant Firehouse. But with aging structures in the area, and with heavy construction in the near future, the Fire Dept. is mandatory for safety of all kinds.

CITY SERVICES – ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The busy corridors of Brighton Beach and the potential boom town expectations of Coney Island indicate the need for economic well-being and effective development. The rezoning plans for

Brighton Beach have been scrapped although Councilman Nelson appears to be scanning alternative methods to deal with that area's business woes and pluses. The Brighton Beach Business Improvement District remains a key to the ongoing success of the Brighton Beach Ave. strip, but it is understaffed although run by a superlative director in Yelena Makhnin. This extraordinarily crowded corridor must be watched with diligence, because a handful of storeowners violate rules of trash disposal, including dumping rotted fruit and grease into sewers, and violating rules for sidewalk usage. Many stores and services also can be found on Neptune Avenue in this Brighton area, and economic advice is needed as this area's population grows and includes immigrants from all over the world.

Economic development in Coney Island has been discussed previously in this Statement of Needs, but it is strongly advised that every step of the development be carefully scrutinized. Nothing will happen all at once while the economy is in such an 'iffy' shape, but there still will be of those seeking to develop businesses throughout this peninsula. Particular interest will be needed on the Surf Ave.-Mermaid Ave.-Bowery-Boardwalk strips, all involved in future island hotel-housing-business growth. Stores of all kind dot the renewed vigor of Mermaid Avenue, with clientele from all of the high rise buildings as well as the newer one-and-two family homes throughout the west end. Then, too, the areas that are near the Creek and the Highway are already buzzing with new businesses and structures. Home Depot, Pathmark, Burger King, Starbucks, and Raymour & Flanagan are already along this route. The shuttered Retro Diner seems to beg for something like an IHOP, and new structures nearby await tenants. The mom-and-pop variety of stores on Mermaid should not be threatened by big box ideas, and all are watching, with concern, the cleansed landscape of the former BUG land, part of which will be used by the Dept. of Sanitation. The remainder of the land remains unclaimed at this time. What will the future mean for this area? And the former BUG office space at the corner of Neptune & Shell is a beautiful building that seems to offer a perfect spot for enterprising individuals. Much will be happening in Coney Island.

CITY SERVICES- PARKS & RECREATION

The responsibilities of the men and women of the Dept. of Parks & Recreation are enormous throughout C.B. 13, and, fortunately, strong leadership is evident in the handling of the work and the personnel. The 'why' of the need is obvious, as is the 'why' for added workers. The Parks MUST maintain the enormous responsibilities of the beach and the Boardwalk, and these factors, in other areas, might be enough of a burden. But C.B. 13 involves, among others: Kaiser Park, Asser Levy Park, Calvert Vaux (Large Dreier) Park, Nautilus Playground, Babar Yar Park, West Street Park, Little Dreier-Offerman Park, Grady Park, Six Diamonds Ballfields! Kaiser Park's long-delayed renovation is underway thanks to the 'push' of Councilman Recchia. Its fields and running track are widely used; its park house rehabilitation has been delayed, in part, by discovery of asbestos. The basketball courts are next to be modernized. Tennis courts are occupied constantly, and complaints reach the Board office that people, with valid tennis permits, have troubles getting onto the busy courts. Part of this problem relates back to the fact that there may be no Parks' person present due to the lack of the finished park house. Hopefully, this structure is near completion and will have room for offices, storage space, meeting rooms, and upgraded bathrooms. The Friends of Kaiser Park remains one of the strongest working units in the neighborhood, and events are common throughout the year. The big question at Asser Levy Park is the replacement of the current Bandshell and its proposed new installation as initiated by Borough President Markowitz. The park's beauty should be restored, and it is hoped that mediation, now, will help him move

ahead on his proposed work WITH support from the nearby community. With the passage of the Coney Island Development Plan, there are apt to be even more for the local offices to consider, including the soon-due Steeplechase Park with the addition of the now-in-storage and renovated B&B Carousell (sic). Then, too, will be the designs for Highland Park in the Coney East sector. Blueprints for the future of Calvert Vaux have been shown to the community and found exciting.

CITY SERVICES – HOMELESS

In the last few years, there have been ‘new’ approaches to the problem of homeless within the City of New York, and C.B. 13 has had to deal with this problem day after day. The areas of C.B. 13 attract the homeless, be they drug addicts, alcoholics, refugees from mental institutions, the aged and infirmed, and expected growing numbers of people at loose ends by the fierce impact of the recession. Homeless are seen regularly in beach-boardwalk areas, parks, abandoned buildings, on street corners, along the edges of Coney Island Creek, and even on the benches of the Ocean Parkway Special District. It has long been understood why homeless hate shelters and try to avoid being placed in them. It is true that homeless people may be asked to ‘move’ from their adopted sites but cannot be ‘forced’ into a shelter under temperatures reach freezing. In a new position, the Street To Home program and the Dept. of the Homeless have been placing homeless into empty condos and buildings (e.g. a new condo in Crown Heights and a former hotel in Flatbush’s Ditmas Park). This move is made, supposedly on a temporary basis, even if detox has not been offered to the homeless person, or he/she has undergone an effective evaluation. No such situation has YET to occur in C.B. 13, but some fear that it can happen in the still-empty but completed buildings in Brighton Beach and in Gravesend, as well as in Coney structures. Because such moves are made sans discussion with Community Board’s, the public negative response is apt to grow.

CITY SERVICES-HEALTH

The importance of Coney Island Hospital and its offshoot at the Ida Israel Center on Neptune Avenue have been discussed in these pages. The Emergency Room needs are in the forefront, and the future omens well for its expansion. Still, the neighborhoods of C.B. 13 require a great deal of work to handle various negative health issues. The HIV-AIDS crisis may seem to be undercover, but it is a cloud over the district. Pre-and-post natal care must be addressed with greater efficiency. Then, too, the crowded neighborhoods have the usual concerns – flu epidemics of all varieties (Asian, West Nile, and whatever follows), drugs, alcohol abuse, mental illness. Fortunately, many smaller health facilities also are aiding residents. The rat population causes further worry, and one must be on watch where any construction is planned.

CITY SERVICES-SANITATION

C.B. 13’s communities pose the need for a strong Sanitation force, and, fortunately, the personnel at the C.B. 13 garage usually have proven their worth time and again. An amusement district, even with aid from workers from the DOE Foundation, evinces trash mounds regularly, especially after busy Friday and Saturday evenings. DOS must respond. But the personnel cannot ignore the other busy areas of the district. Brighton Beach Avenue and the surround streets of that neighborhood, as has been noted, can present problems. The Board office receives concern over occasional missed pick-up’s along side streets. For far too many years, the Sanitation Garage has been in a site on Neptune Avenue. People who bought homes nearby had been promised that the garage

would shortly be moved, but years and years have gone by, and the homeowners have seen no progress. Trucks idling, especially during nighttime winter weather, bother citizens, along with other problems. The answer has always been the anticipation of work on a new Sanitation Garage, for Boards 13 and 15, slated for the BUG land. Delays were encountered when the land was found to be toxic, but that situation has been alleviated by the cleansing of the land and Creek. The garage plans are readied, and, when constructed, the garage will utilize only part of the now-clear land. Trucks will go in and out of the area from Shell Road. The public is waiting for the next step. Is the funding in place? Is there a starting date? Are the designs approved? The C.B. 13 Garage must be commended for excellent attempts at rapid clean-ups after snow storms, but the trucks must be in working order at all times. The demands of the areas place considerable strain on the vehicles... and on the men and women who have to work with them. New up-to-date trucks must always be sought. Smaller weight units must be found for Boardwalk pick-ups when needed. Trash cans, sometimes vandalized or missing, must be replaced on the streets. Solutions must be found to handle private carters who do not work effectively. Smelly, overloaded carts should never be a concern for shoppers on the C.B. 13's streets. The Transit Authority should have developed greater communication with DOS so that TA properties can be adequately cleaned. Often, TA lands are left filled with discarded junk. One non-mapped street, an extension of West 6th Street between Neptune/Sheepshead Bay Road and a cut-off near Surf, is TA property, and it has caused considerable complaints from nearby Trump residents. This route is used for cars going in and out of Trump, the Motor Vehicles Bureau, and more. Its trash pileups are reported regularly as are the potholes along this 'unmapped street'. The TA must be held responsible for this site, and others. If DOS is expected to take care of TA property, the issue should be clarified, as it should with the Dept. of Highways and the areas beneath these roadways where garbage can be seen and where people simply bring their trash for dumping.

CITY SERVICES – YOUTH

The youth programs, throughout C.B. 13, have long been menaced by the city chopping block. Years ago, Community Board members were involved in the selection of sites for funding, and their work was exemplary. They visited every site – knew every operation – discussed the needs and the populations served. That entire system was scuttled by DYCD, and, for a short time, Board members were asked to evaluate youth programs WITHOUT visiting sites or discussing the matters with each other, or with other knowledgeable Board members and civic leaders. Today, there is a damaged scene for youth opportunities, be they in multi-use operations (sports and education) or for specific needs. There was a hue and cry when Madison Square Boys and Girls Clubs abandoned their role with the Carey Gardens Boys and Girls Club. Materials were removed, and the site was left with minimal uses. Fortunately, a new 'Y' is part of the CIDC program for western Coney Island (the onetime Hirschmann 'Y' on Surf Ave. served many purposes, but it was closed as a 'Y' years ago!). The new 'Y' will be fitted with programs that have been selected as most urgent by community residents who attended meetings and worked on the plans with the CIDC and the 'Y'. It is an admirable step for youth... and for adults. But assistance is needed throughout C.B. 13 with programs in Brighton Beach, in Gravesend, and more. The younger population, living in the midst of a recession, must not be forgotten. Their needs are critical for the future, and we cannot turn our fiscal backs on them now.

The school structure remains a muddle for many. Parents and students are confused by the methodology of school selections and distances to be traveled. Athletic fields should be much better maintained, and school administrators that refuse use of their fields for 'out-of-school' groups

should re-think their positions. The arts should be encouraged, not relegated to limbo status; students who are not athletically-inclined could well be stimulated into better scholarship patterns through theater and the visual arts. There are groups within C.B. 13 that are struggling to gain attention. Outdoor art shows have been staged at KeySpan Stadium, and Kaiser Park, and indoor sites e.g. Abraham Lincoln High School, Coney Island Hospital, the Aquarium, and more. All ages can be involved in these important endeavors. Funds from the Dept. of Cultural Affairs and its borough outreach programs, and from the New York State Council on the Arts have been very limited. Councilman Recchia has attempted to assist where possible, but more City and State aid is vital to the health of the communities. The Everyman Company of Coney Island had involved the entire populace of that area during the sixties, resulting in a show that played Lincoln Center and Off-Broadway. Some of its cast and crew still live in Coney Island. It played a key role in educational growth for those involved. Some went on to Juilliard; others continued onto college level.

The Rob Shanta Dancers hold a long track record and performed for BACA at such sites as BAM and The Brooklyn Museum. They are still performing to large and appreciate crowds to this day. There are individuals and organizations who are more than slightly interested in heralding their artistic and/or theatrical skills. They deserve attention.

The Abe Stark Skating Rink services league games....and the public at large. While the building has aged and its architecture has never earned awards, this Rink, located near the Parachute Jump and Boardwalk, means a great deal to the people of C.B. 13. Councilman Recchia has organized very successful skating days for young people. And there is a large teen and adult audience that can find great fun in this arena. But is it threatened by the development scheduled to be part of its environs? If it is, a proper nearby site must be found for its reconstruction. If it is to remain in its current place, it should be modernized and have its infrastructure updated for generations to come. Skating rinks, once prominent in Brooklyn, are now very few. The Abe Stark facility is an important part of the borough fabric.

The future of all of C.B. 13 remains in flux, and there is excitement mixed with some concern and anxiety. It is the area adopted by people from all over the world as a city shorefront wonderland. It is a wonderful place to live and a fascinating place to visit. The next few years should see important improvements in its infrastructure, critical additions to its services, and thrills-and-chills for another century of fun and frolic.

Marion Cleaver

Marion Cleaver
Board Chair

Chuck Reichenthal

Chuck Reichenthal
District Manager