



**COMMUNITY  
BOARD ♦ 14**

COMMUNITY BOARD 14  
City of New York  
Borough of Queens

DOLORES ORR  
Chairperson

JONATHAN L. GASKA  
District Manager

## **STATEMENT OF COMMUNITY DISTRICT NEEDS FISCAL YEAR 2008**

Community Board No. 14 encompasses the Rockaway Peninsula and Broad Channel. At least thirteen distinct communities, each with its own name, neighborhoods, interests and problems are bound together through a common geography and history, which is both written and hidden. From a westerly to easterly direction, we point to Breezy Point, Rockaway Point, Neponsit, Belle Harbor, Rockaway Park, Seaside, Hammels, Rockaway Beach, Arverne, Edgemere, Wavecrest, Far Rockaway and Bayswater. Broad Channel sits in Jamaica Bay, between Silver Hole Marsh and Big Egg Marsh, snuggling close to Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge, part of Gateway National Recreation Area.

The Rockaways is some eleven miles in length and averages less than three quarters of a mile in width. With its multi-ethnic, multi-religious groupings, the concerns of the poor, the aged, the young and the needy, is often termed a microcosm of New York City. Patterns of housing are equally diverse, with evidence of affluence in the western portion of the district, oases of attractive residences in garden-like settings in the far eastern portion, and large concentrations of public housing and publicly assisted housing in between.

### **THE ARVERNE URBAN RENEWAL AREA**

In 2005, the long awaited ribbon cutting for the Arverne-By-The-Sea project took place. The first phase of this project will include market rate two family homes, retail space and the Community/Recreation Center. It is anticipated that when this western portion of the Arverne-By-The-Sea project is complete it will provide hundreds of good permanent jobs as well as bringing over 2,000 new homeowners to our community. We await the selection of the development team for the Arverne East section of the AURA. Our vision of the site will provide for limited housing with recreation opportunities as well as a large retail / big box center that will provide for almost 2,000 new jobs for our needy unemployed residents. Unfortunately, it appears that HPD does not share our vision and instead HPD would like to

build more housing units and limit economic growth and new jobs. We are concerned that HPD's proposal will cause an over saturation of housing units and as a result, it will create a negative impact on our schools, libraries and property values. We are hopeful that these important issues can be resolved.



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## **EDGEMERE URBAN RENEWAL AREA**

The Edgemere Urban Renewal Area (EURA) with its affordable two family house format was approved by the Board and the community. The Board believes that this project will enhance an area that has been in decline for over two decades, a total of 400 two-family homes will be built, and a retail area and two new parks are planned. Construction of the Second Phase is expected to be completed in 2006.

## **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

The Rockaways and Broad Channel still has a need for active government assistance in spurring Economic Development. Most of our residents do the bulk of their shopping in Brooklyn or Nassau County. It makes no sense to have millions of tax dollars go to another borough or county.

Our few shopping areas are struggling to survive and are in need of assistance. We look jealously to all the money and government assistance that was put into the revitalization of the Jamaica shopping area. The Far Rockaway shopping area has been dying a slow death for years despite the efforts of the board and many local leaders. Thanks to the efforts of Congressman Gregory W. Meeks, a study was completed that makes a strong case for condemnation of the Far Rockaway shopping center and redevelopment of the Far Rockaway shopping area. Recently, EDC has met with the board and we are developing a plan for revitalization of this area.

## **EDUCATION / SOCIAL SERVICES**

The Peninsula's unemployment rate is high compared to the rest of the borough and is a serious problem. Our most precious resource, our youth, experience a 30% unemployment rate. The state continues to open group residences for those with mental and substance abuse problems despite our objections. The city also is continuing a policy of placing Section 8 clients in our neighborhoods. Both state and city governments must stop this destabilization of the fabric of our neighborhoods. The board's Youth Services Planning Committee, a hard-working, dedicated group, has made headway in providing vocational, educational and recreational opportunities for our youth, but they cannot do this significantly alone.

Allocations for Community Board #14 under Community Share Funding have not increased in over 10 years and have not kept up with the skyrocketing needs of our youth. This past year the mayor and the Department Of Youth Services has recommended leaving community boards out of the process of deciding which local groups are funded. This policy must not stand.

## **TRANSPORTATION**

Commuting to Manhattan or other parts of our borough remains difficult on a good day. The commute to Manhattan is still well over an hour by subway or bus. It is the community board's position that in order to attract working class families to live in our district, the commute to the city or the borough's business centers must be 35 to 45 minutes. Three

transportation improvements would allow for this: 1) the revitalization of the Old Rockaway Railroad Line would allow for an approximate 30-minute commute to midtown. 2) Ferry Service: The Port Authority of NY and NJ recently completed a feasibility study looking at commuter ferry service from Rockaway to Manhattan and its results are positive. 3) Establish am/pm rush hour express subway service on the "A" train. It would be simple to have 3 to 4 rush hour trains that would only stop in Rockaway, Broad Channel, Howard Beach and Aqueduct and go express until Jay Street in Brooklyn. The Board also believes that if transportation to and from Rockaway was made timely and convenient, it would spur Economic Development as well as attracting young families.

## **MUNICIPAL SERVICES / QUALITY OF LIFE / PUBLIC SAFETY**

### **SANITATION**

The most visible signs of any community district at its best are police on the streets, and the cleanliness of the neighborhoods and shopping areas. Rockaway hosts millions of visitors each year. Along with this influx come the added burdens of crime and litter. The garbage deposited on our streets on a regular summer day can be classified as "imported" garbage. The need for daily basket pick up and mechanical broom cleaning of our struggling commercial areas is a priority. Fifteen percent of the land in Community Board #14 is vacant and therefore provides an open invitation for dumping. Our most serious sanitation issue is the continuous illegal dumping activity that occurs on a daily basis. The cuts in Sanitation personnel are neither understandable nor are they acceptable because they are slowly devastating our communities. We have requested additional Sanitation police at night to prevent and apprehend the thousands of illegal dumpers that plague our community.

### **PARKS**

Our 7½ miles of beaches and boardwalks, together with our 22 playgrounds and parks, show that we have much to offer not only to our residents but also to the many visitors who come to our beaches and boardwalks, which on any reasonably sunny day attracts 200,000 people.

We have known the figures to show over 1 million people enjoying the cool breezes and cooler water on a particularly hot weekend. Proper maintenance and clean up is a seven day-a-week operation during the summer and requires many hours. Seasonal employees should be hired on a 5-day workweek basis. The decimation of the Parks Department and its personnel has had a particularly disastrous effect on its parks and beaches, and most importantly, our community. The local parks' staff has done an admirable job with very little resources but more help is still needed. The boardwalk must be continuously maintained; the restrooms along the boardwalk must be completely rebuilt. The yearly reduction in seasonal hires must stop. The beach cannot be properly maintained without adequate seasonal help. Finally, something must be done to end the lifeguard shortage. Part-time lifeguards should be hired to help with the shortage. All sections of Rockaway's beaches must remain open. We would also like to see the construction of a ramp or stairway at Beach 24 Street. This neighborhood deserves access to the beach.

## **FLOOD CONTROL**

In the past few years, we have suffered through a number of storms. Sections of our beaches and portions of the bayside communities of Arverne, Bayswater and Edgemere area have been devastated. The Army Corp. of Engineers has proposed to replenish our beaches over a ten-year period and then install new rock T GROINS to help stop the erosion of the beach. This project must be funded. On the bayside, the Nor'easter of 12/11/92 was the "straw that broke the camel's back" and the bulkhead abutting Jamaica Bay is in serious disrepair. The communities of Arverne, Bayswater, Broad Channel and Edgemere have streets and homes that are in jeopardy of falling into the Bay. This issue must be resolved as soon as possible.

## **CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS**

As always, it is not our intent to list and comment on individual capital budget requests by location and tracking number. We are gratified when sanitary/storm sewer projects move from study to construction; however, a number of projects have languished in the bowels of city agencies for too long. The Board requests continuing funding for HW631. The area in Arverne called "the valley" has suffered for years. The construction of the new sanitation garage remains a top priority. Replacement of missing and

bleached out traffic signs continues to be a serious problem. Without the proper traffic signs, enforcement agencies are unable to issue citations, which is a revenue producer for the City. Issuance of such citations can help better improve the quality of life to our residents.

## **UNSAFE BUILDINGS / ILLEGAL CONVERSION**

Within the boundaries of Community Board #14 there are over 200 buildings with an SRO designation. Unfortunately, over the last decade these rooming houses have been bought by unscrupulous absentee landlords who have illegally added more rooms and have been renting to persons who have unique social, mental and behavioral problems and who are generally receiving public assistance from various City/State and Federal programs. A large number of these locations have become the sites of drug use and sales, as well as murder and other crimes. The Dept. of Buildings continues to do a good job in responding to our requests and we hope the "new" Department of Buildings is here to stay.

We remain disappointed in the Dept. Of Housing Preservation and Development when it comes to the demolition and sealing of unsafe buildings. In our district we have a number of buildings with an unsafe designation that should have been demolished years ago. HPD must take a serious look at its policy as to what conditions qualify for demolition; dozens of dangerous buildings await demolition.

## **WATERFRONT ACCESS**

The Rockaways and Broad Channel are known as "beach" communities; however, we do not have the benefit of a legal public boat ramp or a public fishing pier. We hope the city can find the funds to support these two important priorities. Funding should be put in place for the design of the Rockaway Community Park located in the old Edgemere landfill.

Finally, we ask that community board budgets be increased to fund the collective bargaining increases as well as increased costs of supplies, postage and equipment.

In conclusion, the membership of Community Board #14 has remained tenacious in its efforts to improve all of the districts neighborhood's quality of life. This has become increasingly difficult with the reduction of resources and capital dollars. A number of promising proposals are being considered which would drastically improve the quality of life of our residents, provide jobs and improve access to the peninsula. It is up to our local elected officials, the Governor and the Mayor to see that this promise is realized.