



**THE CITY OF NEW YORK                      BOROUGH OF THE BRONX**  
**COMMUNITY BOARD 5**

*Honorable Ruben Diaz, Jr., Bronx Borough President*

Chairperson  
**Dr. Bola Omotosho**

**BRONX COMMUNITY BOARD 5**  
**STATEMENT OF COMMUNITY DISTRICT NEEDS**  
**FISCAL YEAR 2015**

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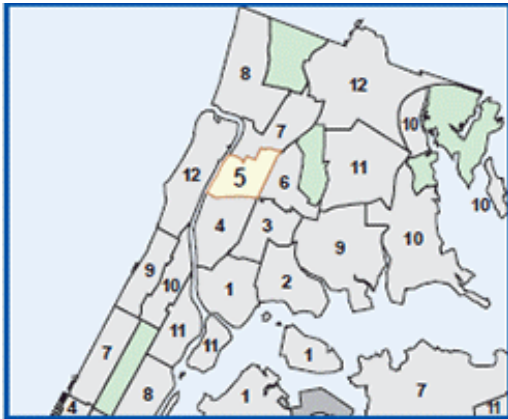
*Serving these Neighborhoods:*  
Fordham, Morris Heights, Mount Hope, University Heights

**BRONX COMMUNITY BOARD 5**  
**STATEMENT OF COMMUNITY DISTRICT NEEDS**  
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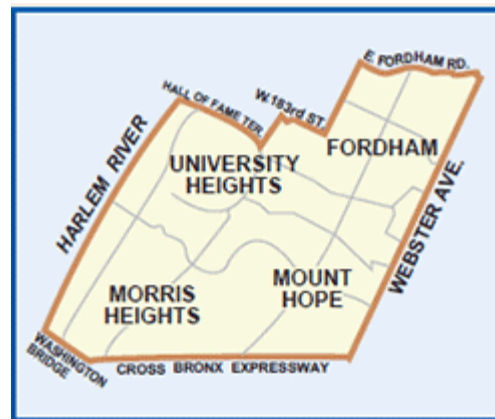
**District Overview:**

Bronx Community District 5, known as the West Tremont area, is located in the midwest Bronx with a total land area of 1.4 square miles. It is bounded by the Harlem River on the west, to the Cross Bronx Expressway on the south, Webster Avenue on the east, and the northern boundary extends from Hall of Fame Terrace at Bronx Community College to Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Blvd. and 183<sup>rd</sup> Street, east to Jerome Avenue and north to Fordham Road. The major streets running east to west are Fordham Road, Burnside and Tremont Avenues. The major streets running north and south are Jerome Avenue, Grand Concourse, Bainbridge, and 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue. The Grand Concourse is a major north/south corridor. Our district overlaps with City Council districts 14, 15, and 16.

Bronx Community District 5 is comprised of the following four neighborhoods: South Fordham, University Heights, Morris Heights, and Mount Hope.



Source: NYC Department of City Planning



Source: NYC Department of City Planning

The overall population count in this district was 131,879 in 2012, the last year the data was made available, and its population density (1,000 persons per square mile) was 87.4. There was a 2.8 percent increase in the population from the year 2010. The racial diversity of our residents is rich and the majority of the population is Hispanic and Black/African American. According to the 2010-2012 American Community Survey (ACS) estimates, 68.6 percent of the population in this district is of Hispanic origin; 33.7 percent of the residents are Black/African American; 1.1 percent of the residents are Asian or Pacific Islander; 12.9 percent of the residents are White; 0.8 percent of the residents are American Indian or Alaska Native. The ACS estimated that of the Hispanic/Latino group, 6.4 percent of the residents are Mexican; 18.3 percent of the residents are Puerto Rican;

0.5 percent of the residents are Cuban; 43.5 percent of the residents identify themselves as part of another Hispanic or Latino group.

There is also a significant proportion of residents that is foreign born. The population of foreign-born residents increased from 34.8 percent in 2000 to 43.4 percent in 2012. The ACS 2008-2012 data breaks down the region of birth of the foreign born population in our district: 12 percent of the foreign born population is African of which 11 percent is West African; 85 percent of the foreign born population is Latin American; 2 percent of the population is Asian; 1 percent of the population is European.

The growth of our foreign born population and the large population of Hispanic or Latino residents has potentially impacted the primary languages represented in our district. Of the residents living in our district for five years and more, 70.2 percent speak a language other than English and Spanish speakers make up 62.3 percent of this group.

In addition to race, the age groups contribute to the diversity of the residents living in this area. The population of residents in the 65 and older age group increased from 5 percent in 2000 to 8.2 percent in 2012. The households with children under 18 years old decreased from 55.4 percent to 43.9 percent from 2000 to 2012.

Although there is a range in the socioeconomic makeup of the residents in the district, the percent of households living near the poverty line and who are considered to be low-income is high. The proportion of residents with a household income below \$20,000 increased from about 35 percent to about 46 percent from 2000 to 2012. The poverty rate also increased from 40.6 percent to 42.3 percent from 2000 to 2012. It was ranked as one of the community districts with the highest number of households with the total income below the poverty level. For the year 2012, the median household income was \$21,959 which is significantly less when compared to the Bronx overall (\$33,006) and New York City (\$51,750). It was ranked as one of the community districts with the lowest median household income levels. The percent unemployed is about 20.9 percent. The proportion of residents who used supplemental security income was 18.3 percent. The proportion of residents who needed cash public assistance income was 12.3 percent. The proportion of residents requiring food stamps/SNAP benefits was significant at 50.6 percent.

## Land Use in Bronx Community Board 5



Morris Heights is the lowest density area in District 5. Morris Heights is along the western ridge of the district, covering the area from Jerome Avenue valley to the Harlem River Valley. Here, the zoning ranges from R5 (typically 2 and 3-family row houses and small apartment buildings). In addition to the low density development, several high-rise developments including Sedgwick Houses, a NYC Housing Authority Development complex and several large private apartment towers along the Undercliff and Sedgwick Avenues, as well as River Park Towers along the Harlem River.

University Heights is part of the same rock ridge that characterizes most of Morris Heights, and is similar, architecturally. One of the key landmarks in this area is the beautiful Bronx Community College Campus, which gives the neighborhood its name. This public facility is the highest geographic point in New York City. University Heights is the least dense area of the district and benefits from a large proportion of 1-4 family housing stock.

The area East of Jerome Avenue and Fordham Road encompasses two neighborhoods: South Fordham, North of Burnside to Fordham Road, and Mount Hope, South of Burnside Avenue to the Cross Bronx Expressway. Both extend east to Webster Avenue. The Mount Hope/South Fordham neighborhoods are densely populated mostly with five and six-story housing. At the eastern edge of these neighborhoods is a large residential development known as Twin Parks West, consisting of four residential towers.

At the northern portion of this area is the Fordham Road Shopping District, the third largest generator retail sales in the City of New York. Fordham Road has approximately 1-million square feet of retail space. Separating South Fordham from Mount Hope is the Burnside Avenue Shopping Strip, a strong and vibrant local commercial corridor, and at the South-East area of these areas is a small manufacturing zone, which contains heavy auto uses, small manufacturing shops and warehouses.

Data included in this Statement of Community District needs was collected from the US Census, New York City Department of City Planning, New York City Department of Parks and Recreation, and the Furman Center for Real Estate and Urban Policy.

### **Department of Homeless Services:**

While we consistently have opened our arms to the city homeless families by accepting our share, Community Board 5 continues to be saturated with residential care, transitional and a women shelter in our district. Our district holds a large percentage of permanent supportive and special needs housing. There are 32 special needs buildings with a total of 1,598 units, and there are 23 supportive housing buildings with a total of 1,274 units. An example of supportive housing saturation in our community board is the cluster of supportive housing on West 177<sup>th</sup> Street and Tremont Avenue. This block has one supportive housing building with 78 units and another proposed supportive housing facility with 62 units (to open in four to six months), and adjacent to these buildings is a 15-family transitional facility, and ½ block away on Jerome Avenue is a women's bed facility with over 150 beds. Currently there are two approved supportive housing facilities by the Department of Homeless Services (DHS) for Community Board 5 which will add approximately 40 units of supportive housing, and there are two more proposed housing developments which could add 95 units of supportive housing.



We believe that our district has reached its capacity and that the supportive and transitional housing facilities should be more dispersed throughout the City. In comparison to other community districts we have had more than our fair share and the Community Board continues to request “Zero” allocation. In the fiscal year 2013 alone



we had 432 family entrants to the Department of Homeless Services (DHS) shelters, which is about 11 percent of the total number of family entrants to DHS shelters in the Bronx. We request assistance in providing homeless prevention initiatives in our district to ensure that the number of families experiencing homelessness does not increase. The Mayor's Housing New York Plan aims to redistribute some of its homeless shelter funding to finance lower-cost permanent housing for homeless residents. We believe that restarting the Advantage program and providing funding to the Homeless Eviction Prevention Program to assist residents secure permanent housing is necessary for our district.



Bronx Community Board 5 requests the New York State Legislature to enact a meaningful, realistic amendment of the State Mental Hygiene Law relative to what constitutes over-saturation of community residences in a neighborhood. A noteworthy suggestion in this regard would be to count on a strictly per capita basis, irrespective of population served, the total number of Special Housing facilities or Group Homes in a district when determining whether or not over-saturation exists in that locality.

Moreover, Community Boards should be given an enhanced, authentic role in the site selection process for

special needs housing community residences. The supportive and transitional housing facilities have negatively impacted our local schools, property values, economic development, and other quality of life issues. Our feedback and role in the evaluation process for initiating supportive and transitional housing facilities should be taken more seriously since we are the local experts on how this program is affecting the community.

**In this regard, it is essential to the district's well-being that the Mayor's Budget reflected funding for Community Board 5 District in the following areas of priority:**

## Department of Transportation:

A large proportion of our residents, about 68.2 percent, use public transportation to commute to work. Other popular modes of commuting to work include driving to work alone (11.5 percent) or carpooling (5.8 percent), or walking (9.6 percent). The objective of Bronx Community Board 5 is to improve the existing transportation infrastructure. The resurfacing of our most important street, the Grand Concourse from 175<sup>th</sup> to Fordham Road, is an important priority for our district. The objective is to initiate a greening project which would be vital for enhancing the beautification and improving economic development in the area.

Also, due to the heavily utilized major thoroughfares in our district (including Grand Concourse, Fordham Road, University Avenue, and Tremont Avenue), traffic and road conditions need to be constantly monitored and repaired. There is a major road bridge which serves as the gateway from Manhattan to the Bronx and connects Bronx Community Board 4 and 5, the Washington Bridge on West 181<sup>st</sup> Street. This bridge requires funding for continued maintenance. Cleaner and improved streetscapes, especially on the Washington Bridge and on the Grand Concourse, are essential for improved roadways and efficient transportation routes.



Grand Concourse



Washington Bridge Gateway Streetscape

Safety measures are another important factor that the DOT should pay attention to in our district. The Mayor's Public Safety plan Vision Zero discusses slow zones which aim to decrease the speed limit in the area and add safety measures to reduce the number and intensity of automobile and pedestrian incidents. Also, the purpose is to enhance the quality of life in the surrounding neighborhoods by decreasing the noise levels for the community. We have one slow zone approved on the Grand Concourse and we have requested for another slow zone on University Avenue. We hope that these slow zones will act as traffic calming devices and reduce automobile and pedestrian incidents. In response to this, our district is requesting a program for car-free Sundays on the Grand

Paradise Theater on the Grand Concourse should have improved streetscape



Concourse Avenue at least once a month. Our district requests additional resources for improved signage and traffic calming devices on all our major thoroughfares (including Fordham Road and Tremont Avenue).

Additionally, although a high percentage of our residents commute to work using public transit, our district has seen an increase in demand for additional parking facilities. We request the Department of Transportation to conduct a study in our district to respond to these needs and offer

recommendations.

Other priorities include:

- Mill and resurface the Grand Concourse from Cross Bronx Expressway to Fordham Road
- Reconstruction of Stepstreet for Kingsland Avenue
- Painting and Graffiti removal of the underpasses on Burnside Avenue and East Tremont Avenue
- Rehabilitation of Step Street at Davidson Avenue between Featherbed Lane & Davidson Avenue
- Increase resources for the Bronx Bureau of Highway Maintenance Division & Cleaning Unit and the Department of Sanitation to increase cleaning to bi-monthly along the Major Deegan Sedgwick Avenue/Cedar to West 179<sup>th</sup> Street and underneath the embankments roadways of the Major Deegan along Sedgwick Avenue

### **Department of Parks & Recreation:**

According to the Furman Report, 100 percent of the residential units in District 5 are located within  $\frac{1}{4}$  mile of a park. The report required that the park was at least  $\frac{1}{4}$  of an acre in size and it included the Greenstreets program. However, there is still a small amount of usable open space available, about 32 acres of open space, especially considering the high density of our neighborhoods and the number of hidden open space areas (such as Bridge Park, Echo Park, Cedar Park, and Aqueduct Walkway). New Yorkers for Parks stated that the Bronx

Parks in Bronx Community Board 5



Sources: NYC Department of City Planning & NYC Department of Parks and Recreation



has the second lowest number of residents per park acreage when compared to other NYC boroughs.

The Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) defines underserved open space areas as “areas of high population density in the City that are generally the greatest distance from parkland where the amount of open space per 1000 residents is currently less than 2.5 acres.” The most recent data by DPR states that the underserved area in District 5 is the Fordham neighborhood.



**1805 Davidson Ave Park**

Our top priority is to expedite the development of two park spaces. The proposed park site on 1805 Davidson Avenue is currently under the jurisdiction of the Agency for Children Services (ACS) and we are requesting that this site be transferred to the Department of City Wide Administrative Services (DCAS). So that eventually the park would be under the jurisdiction of the DPR. This park site currently has a \$1 million dollar capital improvement line, but these funds cannot be utilized in an efficient way until the DPR has jurisdiction. Also we would like to expedite the reopening of

Bridge Park. This park has been closed because an adjacent site is currently used as a staging area for the Alexander Bridge project. It is blocking the residents' access to the Harlem River waterfront and needs to be given back to the community for open space and recreational uses.



The University Malls project (located on University Avenue between West Tremont Avenue and 175<sup>th</sup> Street) is our first public-private partnership with the Bronx Pro Realty. We would like the Department of Parks and Recreation to embrace this initiative and provide adequate capital funding for the project, by working with the community board and Bronx Pro Realty. A community-driven planning process will be taking place to redesign the University Malls, and we request the DPR and the DOT to embrace the final design product of this process.

A major challenge for District 5 has been the quality of life and public safety of our parks and playgrounds. District 5 has a shortage of Parks Enforcement Personnel (PEP) Officers, which needs more investment, due to the significant number of hidden open spaces (such as Bridge Park, Echo Park, Cedar Park, and the Aqueduct Walkway from Morton Place to Burnside Avenue). While there was a recent increase in funding for more PEP officers in the Bronx borough, but the current number of PEP officers have not met the needs of our community.

Our district also requests for an increase in budget from the DPR to provide comfort stations at various park locations (such as Morton Playground and Galileo Playground), and for the development of instructional programming by the recreation aids (which can consist of activities related to arts/crafts, botany, community gardening, games, nature walks, etc). The programs and activities would provide additional opportunities to our residents (of all ages) to engage with community members.

The proposal for capital improvement of the Aqueduct walkway within our district has been requested in the past. The Aqueduct walkway runs south from Bronx District 7 on Kingsbridge Road to the boundaries of District 5. The objective of our district is to develop segments of the Aqueduct trail along University Avenue and Tremont Avenue, by developing a pedestrian bridge or a Step Street project to reconnect the Aqueduct lands to the Aqueduct walkway.

We are also requesting funding to link our community to the High Bridge (pedestrian bridge). We need a planning study to connect the residents to the Depot Place on the

Harlem River to Bridge Park that will connect us to Roberto Clemente State Park. The development of a depot place along the Harlem River would create access to the Roberto Clemente State Park Waterfront Esplanade. This would provide waterfront access to residents in Community Board 4, 5, and 7.

Additional priorities include:

- Increase funds to DPR for miscellaneous park repairs
- Increase funds for the hiring of additional parks maintenance workers

### **Department of Education:**

A large proportion of our residents fall under the youth category. The 2010 U.S. Census showed that about 42 percent of our population is under the age of 18. Also, Community Board 5 is ranked as the district with the 4<sup>th</sup> highest number of households with children under 18 years old. Students are performing at the lower levels of the city wide average scores in reading and math subjects; only 14.4 percent of the students were performing at grade level in math and only 12.3 percent of the students were performing at grade level in reading. Thus, it is very important for the Department of Education to assist our district to provide adequate services intended for this age group. We are requesting that as housing developments occur in our district, there are sufficient funds available for the Department of Education to provide adequate capacity for our schools. The consequence of not keeping up with housing developments is overcrowding in our schools and limited resources for the students living in Community Board 5.

Other priorities include:

- An increase of funding for after school programs for the middle schools in Community Board 5
- An increase of funding for more seating capacity for the schools located within School District 9 and 10 (serving Community Board 5 residents)
- Construction of additional elementary-middle school to ease overcrowding in existing schools.
- Construction of a high school within the Bronx Community College campus

### **Department of Youth & Community Development:**

The development and improvement of youth services is integral for the future of our community. As stated earlier, 42 percent of our residents are under the age of 18 and we have the 4<sup>th</sup> highest number of households with children under 18 years old in NYC. We commend the work of the Kips Boys and Girls Club which is a major contributor to assisting the youth in our district. However, there is still more that needs to be done for our community.

An establishment of a Beacon School in our district is a necessary initiative because it would assist the youth of our community regarding: skills necessary to graduate from school (i.e. tutoring and homework help), career awareness and transition programs, civic engagement, health and fitness, anti-gang prevention programs, and improving cultural arts and music programs. This initiative can also provide services to the adults in our community wishing to pursue education and obtaining skills related to parenting and education.

Also, we urge the New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) which oversees the Sedgwick Houses and Twin Parks buildings to create more youth services related to education and recreation.

### **Department of the Aging:**

The elderly population in our district continues to increase. The proportion of the population group of 65 and older has increased from 5 percent to 8.2 percent from 2000 to 2012. We are requesting that the city provides for the special needs of our seniors especially for the recent seniors which require services that will keep them active. Community Board 5 is requesting that long range planning include housing, health and mental health care, home care and senior centers. With this approach, Community Board 5 feels we can improve their quality of life and prevent the isolation which many of our elderly are at risk for. Our priorities include:

- Increase funding for the improvement of senior citizens' facilities in Community Board 5.
- Increase funding for senior housing
- Increase funding for innovative senior programs in Community Board District 5, such as a Naturally Occurring Retirement Community.

### **NYC Police Department:**

Safety in our community is a major concern, and we believe more investment and efforts should be dedicated to strengthening the capacity of the police force in our district since District 5 still has some of the highest crime rates in the City. Also another primary objective is to expedite the process of acquiring and constructing a new 46<sup>th</sup> Precinct with parking facilities. This will definitely improve police department services and consequently improve the quality of life of our residents.

In addition, we request that the local police precinct increase funding for the Operation Clean Hallways program. It should work with the City's Housing Preservation and Development (HPD) agency to stop indoor drug dealing and loitering. This has been a quality of life and public safety issue for our community. In order to maintain security



and enhance livability in our community, we require that there be more attention focused on the indoor drug dealing issue in our district.

Our priorities for the NYC Police Department in our district include:

- Allocate funding to build a new front entrance ramp to make the existing 46<sup>th</sup> Police Precinct ADA accessible
- Increase funding for 911 emergency dispatchers to improve response time
- Increase funding to purchase noise meter devices and fire hydrant wrenches
- Increase funding for Narcotics' Enforcement
- Increase funding for School Crossing Guards to assist students to navigate the wide street crossing corridors such as the Grand Concourse, University Avenue, and W. Tremont Avenue.
- Conduct a community policing initiative to encourage dialogue between police officers and community residents in our neighborhoods

#### **New York City Fire Department:**

Our priority for the NYC Fire Department is to increase funding for 911 dispatchers Emergency Response Time for Ambulance Services. The average response time from the 2013 Mayor's Management Report for the city was 4:06 for structural fires, and the response time in the Bronx was 4:12. We believe it is necessary to improve the capacity of our Fire Department to maintain the safety of our residents. We also request additional funding for carbon monoxide detectors, and medical kits for: each of our Engine Company and Juvenile fire setters program.

#### **Department of Sanitation:**

Although sanitation has improved in the district, Community Board 5 still has the lowest sanitation score card rating in the borough related to sidewalk and street cleanliness. Our residents who submitted surveys for the NYC Citywide Community Survey rated the sanitation services as being below the sanitation score rating of the City. Sanitation has continued to be an important priority for Community Board 5 to improve the quality of life and economic stability and growth within our district. Therefore, we are requesting an increase of funding for cleaning personnel for our six commercial districts on Fordham Road, South Grand Concourse (Fordham Road), Burnside Avenue, West 183<sup>rd</sup> Street, West Tremont Avenue and University Avenue, and Featherbed Lane. Also, we request funding for our Canine Unit, additional personnel for the 13 Step Streets, cleaning personnel for Grand Concourse and University Malls, sanitation equipment (for cleaning the Grand Concourse and the University Malls, tree pruning, and weed whackers), and for personnel to service garbage baskets in our district (especially in commercial areas).

### Index Ratings: Bronx Community Board #5 Compared to Ratings Given by All Respondents

☒ All Community Board #5 Respondents  
☐ All New York City Respondents

	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	Index Score
Social Support Services Index	4%	18%	32%	46%	54
	4%	19%	35%	42%	58
Public Education Index	5%	30%	37%	27%	73
	6%	30%	39%	25%	75
Cleaning and Maintenance Index	5%	28%	37%	30%	70
	13%	41%	29%	17%	83
Streets and Sidewalks Index	5%	24%	41%	30%	70
	9%	36%	34%	21%	79
Mass Transit Services Index	10%	38%	35%	18%	82
	10%	42%	34%	14%	86
Neighborhood Public Safety Index	9%	34%	33%	24%	76
	18%	45%	26%	12%	89

### Most Important Issues Facing New York City: Bronx Community Board #5

Survey respondents were asked to name what they thought were the three most important issues facing New York City. The three responses most commonly given by Bronx Community Board #5 respondents are listed below.

1. Housing
2. Crime
3. Jobs

### Ratings of Neighborhood Services: Bronx Community Board #5

Survey respondents rated 24 services in their neighborhood. The highest and lowest rated services are displayed below.

#### Highest Rated

1. Fire protection services
2. Emergency medical services
3. Public libraries
4. Household garbage pick-up
5. Bus services

#### Lowest Rated

1. Rat control
2. Availability of cultural activities
3. Control of street noise
4. Cleanliness of your neighborhood
5. Crime control

NYC Feedback Citywide Customer Survey Results

### SCORECARD Monthly Ratings by Borough and Community Board - 2014

Bronx														
Community Board	July	August	September	October	November	December	January	February	March	April	May	June	FY to Date Average	
1	88.1	90.6	86.1	82.9	88.8	96.3	90.2	95.3	79.4	81.9	88.8	93.7	88.5	
2	89.9	90.8	90.8	85.8	95.1	96.4	91.2	93.5	72.7	84.0	96.8	93.7	90.2	
3	92.9	79.3	89.4	84.2	89.4	96.2	90.5	95.1	72.5	88.0	83.9	95.4	88.1	
4	85.9	98.3	95.5	91.4	90.9	86.5	81.2	34.7	79.7	91.2	91.0	85.2	84.3	
5	89.7	95.8	90.4	90.4	88.1	90.7	70.9	36.3	68.9	92.4	91.3	89.6	82.9	
6	91.7	94.1	92.4	95.4	98.0	92.7	82.6	81.7	74.8	96.1	89.3	98.4	90.6	
7	96.0	97.7	85.6	94.6	97.2	85.5	83.9	73.3	77.7	95.7	81.1	90.9	88.3	
8	95.1	94.3	96.0	96.3	98.9	94.7	97.7	100.0	97.4	97.4	98.5	94.0	96.9	
9	89.1	96.5	90.6	92.0	97.3	94.0	92.3	88.4	74.0	96.0	98.4	94.5	91.9	
10	98.7	99.4	98.8	98.6	100.0	94.2	98.8	95.7	89.8	100.0	100.0	99.7	97.8	
11	98.7	98.8	100.0	95.2	98.7	91.9	96.0	73.1	92.6	99.6	97.9	97.2	94.9	
12	95.9	95.0	94.1	91.8	100.0	90.1	86.9	79.4	88.1	96.4	90.7	94.0	91.9	

### Department of Business Service & Economic Development:

Economic Development is one of our top priorities, since it will assist to improve the economic growth as well as the infrastructure and social well-being of our community. There are six commercial strips in our district which include Fordham Road, South Fordham Road and South Grand Concourse Avenue, Burnside Avenue, West 183<sup>rd</sup> Street, and West/East Tremont Avenue. We are in the last phase of creating a Business

Improvement District (BID) on the Burnside Avenue commercial corridor, and in the interim we are requesting funds for a BID express initiative to provide our services to entice property owners and merchants to support a permanent BID. The creation of a BID is a mechanism to improve conditions in our neighborhoods and brings a sense of pride and ownership to local merchants and residents.

### **Land Use/Re-zoning Proposals:**

There is one rezoning project taking place in District 5 on Jerome Avenue, and we have a request to propose another rezoning project on Webster Avenue. We aim to meet the residential and commercial needs of our residents through encouraging mixed-use zoning and mixed-income development to our property owners, merchants, and residents.

#### Jerome Avenue:

Jerome Avenue is a major street in our district running North and South, and the section we wish to focus on is an auto-body corridor from the Burnside Avenue to the Cross Bronx Expressway. The physical appearance of this corridor has a negative impact on the residents' quality of life. Even though this corridor provides some employment opportunities (but not necessarily to residents in our community), we believe that the businesses should be relocated to another location. The objective is to change the existing C8 zoning along Jerome Avenue with the support of stakeholders and community members. We believe this is an opportunity area for mixed-use development, and request for a zoning change to residential with a commercial overlay. This is also an opportunity for affordable housing on Jerome Avenue, and the establishment of an Inclusionary Housing Program can be a tool to incentivize this type of housing development along the corridor.

#### Webster Avenue:

We are proposing for a rezoning project on Webster Avenue, which is another major street in our district and it is the eastern boundary of Community Board 5. Recently, Community Board 6 which resides on the other side of Webster Avenue had their rezoning proposal approved. In addition to enhancing the economic development and the quality of life of our community through a rezoning project on Webster Avenue, this project would allow the character of Webster Avenue to remain consistent. This proposal is for the corridor on Webster Avenue from the Cross Bronx Expressway to Tremont Avenue. The current zoning for this area is M1-1, C4-1, and R7-1. The objective is to change this zoning with the support of stakeholders and community members for a mixed use development area. This proposal is in its initial phases, and we are encouraging the property owners in this area to advance the rezoning proposal. The goal is to work with the residents and various stakeholders to re-imagine Webster Avenue. We would like to submit a preliminary study of this area, and we encourage zoning another study conducted by DCP for this corridor.

## **Department of Housing Preservation & Development:**

Community Board 5 has an old housing stock with over half our housing built before 1930, and it is defined as a primarily a multi-dwelling bedroom community. The homeownership rate in our district is categorized as having the lowest rates in the New York City community districts. It has a homeownership rate of 2.8 percent. Also, our district is ranked as having the highest number of renter households whose gross rent was more than 50 percent of their pre-tax income. Other issues affecting housing quality are increasing utility costs for landlords and homeowners; the percentage of housing with five or more maintenance deficiencies has increased over 35 percent; a lack of code enforcement (this district ranks in the top 20 in serious housing code violations throughout the City); an increase in building debts due to over-financing. Approximately 44.4 percent of the rental housing units considered overcrowded (our district ranks 6<sup>th</sup> overall in the City).



The Mayor's Housing New York 10-year plan looks to invest in 20,000 new and 180,000 preserved affordable housing. The goal is to target vacant land for development through the Neighborhood Construction Program and the New Infill Homeownership Opportunities Program and to preserve existing housing. Our district is the ideal candidate for these programs, especially for housing preservation, due to the large number of existing affordable housing units in our district. Thus, we request the assistance of the Department of City

Planning and the Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD) to assist us in determining the appropriate sites for housing preservation and affordable housing development.

The Mayor's Housing New York Plan aims to redistribute some of its homeless shelter funding to finance lower-cost permanent housing for homeless residents. We believe that restarting the Advantage program and providing funding to the Homeless Eviction Prevention Program is necessary to assist residents secure permanent housing. Additionally, we request an increase of funding for the Proactive Initiative in our district (currently 50 buildings are part of the Proactive initiative and we wish to add more buildings which we believe qualify for this program). Our district has a challenge of buildings not being up to date with the NYC building codes. We request HPD to increase its funding for enforcement inspectors and to provide incentives to property owners to repair and retrofit in accordance with the building codes (such as 8A loan and Participation loan programs).



The objective of our district is to maintain, preserve, and increase the stock of affordable housing. The Mayor's Housing New York Plan aims to support mixed income developments to improve economic development in the neighborhood through zoning changes. We require assistance from HPD to develop cooperative apartments and condominiums to advocate for more mix-income housing and homeownership in our community, especially since homeownership rates are low. We propose that potential mixed-income housing development can occur on the Grand Concourse, University Avenue, and West Tremont Avenue.

Another objective of our district is to reinstate the Narcotics Control Unit within the HPD. Previously, HPD assisted property owners to reduce the number of indoor drug dealing incidents in their buildings for the purpose of preserving buildings. Since the elimination of this Unit within HPD four years ago, the NYPD has been less efficient in stopping indoor drug dealing, because they tend to focus on drug dealing on a macro-level.

Community Board 5 has seen the recent increase in housing development, which we believe is an important community need. However, our district infrastructure is in a fragile state, because of overcrowding in schools, lack of open space per capita, and the lack of youth services. The board wants the City to be mindful that an increase in development must be accompanied by these additional types of resources and new infrastructure improvements.

### **City University of New York:**

Increase funding to CUNY schools (Bronx Community College and Hostos Community College, and Lehman College) which are located in CB 5. These schools are one of the major learning institutions in the Bronx; therefore it is imperative that services are maintained to continue providing quality Education to the less advantaged. The District wishes to form a stronger partnership with the Bronx Community College, and urges funding for the College to provide training programs and certifications for skills development training in various fields. In order to decrease the unemployment rate and improve the livelihoods of families within our district, it is imperative that our population on public assistance get extra attention. Employment and skills training are necessary building blocks that we should be able to provide to our community. We require increased

funding for educational programs to enhance workforce development. For example, there is a lot of construction occurring currently in our district. It would be beneficial for the many residents on public assistance to receive skills training in this sector. The Mayor's Housing New York Plan aims to preserve existing affordable housing units and invest in developing new affordable units. The Plan states that nearly 194,000 construction jobs and 7,100 permanent jobs will be available with the new budget. These jobs are aimed to provide more opportunities for low-income residents. It is very important for our community to have the skills and certifications necessary to take advantage of these new jobs and improve the livelihood of the residents.



#### **Department of Human Resources Administration:**

Although the unemployment rate of our district has decreased from 2000 to 2012 from 19.9 percent to 17.9 percent, it has the 3<sup>rd</sup> highest unemployment rate in the City. The need to improve the livelihoods of our residents and reduce the number of residents on public assistance is a high priority. Bronx Community Board 5 leads the city in the number of cases for cash assistance and those on the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). As of 2014, there were 8,720 cases of cash assistance and 33,378 cases for the SNAP.

As mentioned in our narrative, it is imperative for our district to increase funding for employment, training, and job placement to enhance human capital. We urge the Human Resources Administration (HRA) to partner with local colleges in our district, such as the Bronx Community College, to provide adequate skills training and certification programs to assist in creating more job opportunities for our residents on public assistance. We request HRA to improve its employment programs and engage with our community to provide these resources. We are particularly in favor of some of the recent reforms proposed by the HRA Commissioner Steven Banks including: supporting the State budget to offer four years of college as an option to HRA clients; creating a centralized HRA rent check processing unit; developing new rental assistance initiatives to alleviate homelessness; ensure that appropriate broker's fees are in place to alleviate homelessness; working with HPD to address inadequate conditions in buildings where significant people with cash assistance recipients reside; working with NYCHA to ensure that HRA makes timely rent payments to mitigate eviction of NYCHA residents. With the

assistance of the welfare reform from the new administration, we are hopeful to improve the overall quality of life of our community.

**Department of Health Services:**

Within the Bronx, the infant mortality rate (IMR) remains extremely high for black women (including African American, African immigrants, and non-Hispanic Afro-Caribbean women) compared to the average IMR in the borough at the community level. This statistic is relevant for Community Board 5, since 33.7 percent of our residents are Black/African American. From 2007 to 2009, the IMR surpassed 10 deaths per 1,000 live births for black women under the age of 20 in the University/Morris Heights neighborhood. We urge the Department of Health Services to increase funding to address this health issue in our district. Also, Bronx Community Board 5 has the 4<sup>th</sup> highest number of asthma hospitalization in the City. Our district requests the DHS to increase funding for asthma treatment. Our other requests are an increase of funding for the expansion of the Pest Control Unit to add additional personnel and field inspectors/ Exterminators, and increase funding for teen pregnancy and obesity programs in our district.

**Conclusion:**

Finally, community boards are indeed the link to the city and are integral to ensuring that adequate and appropriate services and policies are being implemented at the local level. In this regard, Community Board 5 continues to advocate for the increase in community boards' operating budgets, allowing for further strengthening and improvement in the delivery of services to communities at large. Equally important are the obligations mandated to community boards by the New York City charter, which encourages the development of a 197-A Plan for each community district. Community Board 5 recognizes the significance and contribution that a 197-A Community Plan affords a district, specifically in preparation for future capital and expense budget requests. Towards this end, we wholeheartedly urge the present city administration and the City Council to increase funding for each of the 59 community boards to hire a City Planner to develop a 197-A Plan, which is a very costly and time-consuming process.

Community District 5, in echoing the sentiments of a community at large, understands that the budget development process has never been a painless exercise. We are deeply concerned, however, that the most vulnerable – children, senior citizens, and low-income residents are forced to bear a disproportionate share of the pain. However, we commend the Mayor and the City Council on passing a balanced budget that reflects the needs of our most vulnerable.

Respectfully submitted,

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Chairperson

Xavier Rodriguez  
District Manager