



*The
City
of
New York*

Community Board No. 5

Borough of Queens

Ridgewood, Maspeth, Middle Village, and Glendale

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Gary Giordano
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DISTRICT NEEDS STATEMENT for Fiscal Year 2012

The population in the Community District 5, Queens communities of Ridgewood, Maspeth, Middle Village and Glendale has risen, according to year 2000 Census statistics to 167,000 residents. In the 1990 Census, we were estimated to have 150,000 residents. Many believe that there are considerably more than 167,000 residents in District 5, Queens, considering under-counting and far too many illegal apartments.

Our most pressing problems include illegal apartments, primarily in basements; large increases in vehicular traffic and too many drivers speeding, running traffic signals and stop signs; a significant reduction in the number of police officers assigned to the 104th Police Precinct since 1995; an alarming number of sewer system breaks that are causing dangerous roadway conditions; a shortage of Parks maintenance workers to keep playgrounds and ball fields in good repair; and very crowded schools.

There is an obvious correlation between the increases in illegal apartments and the overcrowded schools conditions.

Fortunately, we and other areas of New York City have generally safer streets, and people are safer in their homes in recent years. The plague of crack in the last half of the 1980s, combined with huge decreases in the number of manufacturing jobs available to City residents were prime reasons why the CB5Q area / 104th Precinct had more than 1,200 robberies in 1990.

The significant, welcome reduction in crime during the past decade is the result of an improved City and National economy, and great work by the Police Department and the Mayor in targeting drug dealers, guns and career criminals.

Some City services, which had deteriorated greatly from 1990 through 1996, have improved somewhat over the past several years. During the early 1990's, deep potholes and street cave-ins had not been repaired adequately and led to dangerous roadway conditions. More resources are now needed to diminish the huge backlog of sewer pipe repairs and catch basin repairs, many of which have been unattended for months or years. Street trees that have been dead for years and dangerous dead tree limbs are finally being removed. Traffic safety studies and installation of traffic safety devices that had been languishing for several

years have finally been performed and installed in an attempt to improve safety for pedestrians and drivers.

We have recently seen the completion of a new school at PS 128 and school additions at P.S. 49 and P.S. 113. We look forward to completion of a new high school on Metropolitan Avenue, east of Woodhaven Boulevard, which is scheduled to open in September, 2010. Because of the need for additional space for high school has begun on 74 Street at 57 Avenue, in Maspeth for 1,100 students.

Local parks are an important resource and concern throughout District 5, Queens. While improvements in City budget conditions has resulted in numerous long-awaited Parks projects being completed, far too little is being done to properly maintain some parks property. Dirt ball fields, rebuilt several years ago, have deteriorated quickly due to inadequate design, lack of watering and poor drainage. The maintenance of Parks in District 5, Queens has become the responsibility of about 10 Parks Department Staff, including supervisors, and an overwhelming dependence on POP Workers.

Finally, City agencies are starting to crack down on the excessive number of illegal apartments that have had negative impacts on many communities. Over-occupancy of residential buildings has resulted in fire hazards, severe school overcrowding, dirtier neighborhoods and the elimination of parking on the streets. Much of Queens has been overwhelmed with new residents while vacant land and abandoned properties remained undeveloped in other areas of the city.

The need for many services historically provided by City agencies is growing for numerous reasons. It is due mainly to the age of specific communities' roadways, sewer lines, bridges and parks. These important assets must be maintained or they will fall into serious disrepair, necessitating greater capital expenditures, sooner. In far too many instances, the need for maintenance and enforcement is due to the growing lack of respect, civility and lawlessness in an ever increasing number of residents.

Illegal dumping had become a terrible problem in our communities - one of the primary reasons that businesses, especially manufacturers and distributors, have left the City for so called greener pastures. Thankfully, the Queens District 5 Sanitation force has done a great deal to get dumping locations cleaned as expeditiously as possible, given fairly limited resources. Sanitation Police 'stake-outs' of dumping sites must be a priority. Littering has also become a growing menace, as has the preponderance of residents who feel free to dump their household trash in and around the City litter baskets. The reason that Community Boards are consistently requesting that catch basins be cleaned and sewer lines flushed, in so many locations, is the degree of littering done in the catch basin and on the street.

Vandalism in parks, combined with broken glass, dog excrement and park litter have caused too many parents to avoid taking their children to many parks. These conditions put more pressure on reduced parks maintenance staff, while giving reasonably educated residents another reason to flee "The City".

Graffiti has become a scourge to many communities. Few working class families are going to buy a home in a graffiti covered community. How are graffiti vandals punished? At best, they are sentenced to community service. What is the punishment if they do not perform the community service? The answer is often no punishment, even when they have caused thousands and thousands of dollars in property damage.

These are just some of the indications of how too many people are uncaring, and without respect for themselves and others. Other indications of these growing problems are: vehicles speeding on residential streets; illegal uses of fire hydrants; blasting car radios; and rowdy street corner/park conditions. Each of these abuses must be conquered as effectively as possible, since these are among the main reasons that good, honest, hard working residents move out of the City. ***One primary way to reduce the speeding, dumping, littering and noise problems is by radio and television commercials appealing to residents' common decency.***

In an era when many City services had been cutback due to a declining tax base, volunteers have become the backbone of our community. Thank heavens for volunteers who serve diligently on Community Boards, not-for-profit organizations' boards of directors, civic organizations and block associations. Thanks to volunteers in the communities served by Community Board 5, Queens, graffiti has been removed from many buildings, children and teenagers are engaged in many recreational activities, and local parks are cleaner than they would be otherwise. Since there are deficit projections for future years, and New York taxes are too high, every effort must be made by the Mayor, the City Council members and other elected officials to build a working government and to eliminate government waste.

Many of the area needs that we have worked to accomplish for years seem much less consequential, after the September 11, 2001 disaster at the World Trade Center. Many families need psychological and financial assistance. Our world, in a devastating half-hour, is forever changed. The Police Department, who have done so much to reduce crime, will now be working increasingly with the FBI to greatly reduce the possibility of future terrorist disasters. After the Trade Center disaster, our wars in Iraq and Afghanistan have caused additional heartache throughout the country. Considering the severe economic recession that has hit our country, every effort must be made to ensure that government expenditures are prudent, that waste be reduced and that Medicaid and Medicare fraud be eliminated.

CAPITAL BUDGET PRIORITIES

TRANSPORTATION

The Reconstruction of Streets in South Middle Village including the Cooper Avenue North Service Road into 71st Avenue and 73rd Place, south of Metropolitan Avenue, is the "Number 7" capital budget priority of CB5Q. This work is long overdue, considering the amount of truck traffic on these roadways (HWQ708). This area-wide project had been scaled down since CB5 Queens successfully pushed for the lower-cost resurfacing of many of these South Middle Village Streets, but now the entire reconstruction project in this important community is not expected to begin until at least 2014.

The Construction of a Pedestrian Crosswalk across Cooper Avenue in the area of 74th Street is a priority that we want to see performed expeditiously. Design and construction must be accomplished promptly so that pedestrians, especially school children, have a safe traffic crossing.

The Reconstruction of the Cooper Avenue Underpass in the same area, which links Middle Village and Glendale, is also needed to correct very deteriorated conditions. This is the "Number 2" Capital Budget priority of CB5Q. Fortunately, this long-awaited \$7 Million project is scheduled for Spring of 2011.

Reconstruction of the Metropolitan Avenue Bridge, at Fresh Pond Road, over the LIRR - It is very unfortunate that this project, which was supposed to begin years ago, has now been delayed until 2014. We are very concerned about the structural stability of this vital bridge, which carries extensive truck, bus and vehicular traffic, and have asked for an on-site tour of this bridge to see deteriorated conditions underneath.

Rehabilitate Fresh Pond Road from Metropolitan Avenue to Myrtle Avenue in Ridgewood - Including Traffic Facilitation Upgrades

Fresh Pond Road is a major north/south artery in the District 5 area. This request includes rehabilitation of the roadway, including a concrete base to support heavy truck and bus traffic daily, and the planning and implementation of traffic facilitation, such as, cutting into the curb areas where possible to enable trucks and buses to navigate this heavily congested artery without double-parking and blocking traffic. In the short term, Bureau of Highways crews have thankfully resurfaced Fresh Pond Road, but this critical roadway takes a beating.

Reconstruction of 75th Street from Lutheran Avenue to Juniper Boulevard

North in Middle Village. This roadway is characterized by a roadway crown that is much higher than pedestrian sidewalks which results in extensive flooding. The Bureau of Highways supervisors have done a good job of short-term resurfacing of 75th Street.

- **75th Place, from Eliot Avenue to Juniper Blvd North, in Middle Village also likely needs street reconstruction.**

Street Resurfacing is an important priority in Community District 5, Queens. Many roadways have not been resurfaced in many years. The damage caused by large trucks and other heavy vehicles is the primary reason for deteriorated roadway conditions, which too often pose safety hazards to motorists and pedestrians. The In-House Street Resurfacing Program of the Bureau of Highways has improved significantly in recent years, with the use of milling machines. The In-House Program should not be cut back and should be bolstered by contract resurfacing. Resurfacing is also an important means to improve the look of a community, and is evidence of taxpayers getting something visible for their work efforts.

The Maintenance and Capital Rehabilitation of Bridges throughout the City needs to be a priority for the foreseeable future. The Williamsburg Bridge, Manhattan Bridge and Queensborough Bridge are obvious concerns as these main bridges carry both vehicular and mass transit traffic. **Locally, the Grand Street Bridge is now being delayed until 2016, and the Metropolitan Avenue Bridge at Fresh Pond Road is not scheduled for reconstruction until 2014.**

PARKS

Rehabilitation of the Ridgewood Reservoir and Highland Park – Our vision is for the Ridgewood Reservoir to become a nature preserve, and an environmental education center. A Phase I Project is funded, and has thankfully begun in 2010. We look forward to a Phase II Project, as \$50 Million was originally allocated for Ridgewood Reservoir revitalization. **Yet, it is critical that existing ballfields be reconstructed in adjacent Highland Park so that children and teenagers can engage in healthy sports activities there, instead of harming the reservoir's natural habitat by building ballfields in one of the reservoir basins. This is the "Number 5" Capital Budget Priority of CB5Q.**

The Reconstruction of the Soft Surface Ball Fields and Jogging Path at Frank Principe Park (formerly known as Maurice Park) in Maspeth is the "Number 10" priority of Community District 5. The existing dirt baseball fields, which were reconstructed in the mid-90's have deteriorated significantly. The jogging path around the ball fields is very narrow and there isn't any security lighting in this part of the park. These fields need to be reconstructed, and the best option for multiple sports use (such as, baseball, football and soccer) is

likely the installation of a safe artificial turf-type surface.

Reconstruction of Dry Harbor Playground – Phase II located on the South side of Myrtle Avenue, at 80th Street in Glendale. This request is for the rehabilitation of the softball field, the park house/bathrooms, and installation of secure fencing around the children's play equipment.

Develop Former KeySpan Gas Tanks Site for a Community Park – The former Brooklyn Union/KeySpan Gas Tanks site, located on Grand Avenue, between 74th Street and 80th Street, was recently acquired by the City of New York for parkland development. We are very pleased that the Mayor has allocated capital funding for this important project. We look forward to the completion of this potentially beautiful new "green park" by Autumn of 2010.

Increase Funds for Planting New Street Trees and for Forestry Services Increased appropriations to plant an additional 900 trees in District 5, Queens are needed to reduce air pollution and beautify local streets in our area. This will help to curb the rise in incidence of asthma and other respiratory diseases among our population. With the LIE, the Jackie Robinson Parkway, industrial areas and five commercial strips located in Community District 5, Queens, tree plantings are more important than ever in improving the quality of life for local residents. We thank the Mayor for his vision to plant 1 million new street trees.

Reconstruction of Evergreen Park - The reconstruction of the remaining playground area and softball fields at Evergreen Park is needed to serve the community where Ridgewood and Glendale meet.

Community District 5, Queens has over 220 acres of parkland within the communities we serve. Therefore, parks capital projects have consistently been critical (often "Top 10") priorities of our members. It may seem that many park projects in District 5 Queens are being funded. This is true, but we have requested many park rehabilitation projects for between 5 and 12 years.

Other Parks Needs include:

Park Lighting - Adequate park lighting, especially vandal proof lighting, should be a priority at all parks. Vandalism and rowdy behavior usually increase in dark areas.

Lower Cost Comfort Stations/Bathrooms – Typically, construction of new bathrooms in parks costs more than \$500,000.

104th POLICE PRECINCT

Some capital improvements have been performed at the 104th Police Precinct, including: a new roof, boiler replacement, plumbing system upgrades, renovation

of locker rooms, bathrooms and a new assembly room.

Additional improvements needed are: new windows, additional electrical upgrades to support central air conditioning, new flooring, new computers, and overdue upgrades to the telephone/communications system.

WATER AND SEWER SYSTEMS

Water quality in New York City is known to be among the best in the world. Every effort must be made to continue this excellent record. Completion of the Third Water Tunnel Project, and the construction of necessary shafts and tunnels associated with this critical project, must be a priority.

Redesign and Reconstruct Sewer System in Portions of the CB5Q Area

Having the Worst Conditions. Based on complaints from our residents, Community Board 5, Queens has asked the Dept. of Environmental Protection to study the following areas, in an effort to reduce street flooding, sewer backup and basement flooding problems:

- Sewers in Penelope Avenue and intersecting streets, especially from 70th Street to 75th Street;
- Sewer lines along Fresh Pond Road in Ridgewood and Maspeth, from Flushing Avenue to Myrtle Avenue;
- The Sewer System in and adjacent to Cooper Avenue, from 73 Place to 80 Street;
- The Sewer System in the eastern Glendale area bordered by Cooper Avenue, 77th Avenue, 88th Street and 80th Street;
- The Sewer System in the areas of Flushing Avenue and Grand Avenue, in Maspeth, from approximately 61st Street to 65th Place.
- Maurice Avenue, from 54 Avenue to 56 Avenue, recently had a new box sewer and numerous catch basins installed. We thank NYC DEP for adding this to the 54th Avenue Reconstruction Project, and are reasonably confident that this completed project will alleviate some of the worst flooding in portions of the Maspeth community.

A Comprehensive Study of the Sewer System in the CB5Q area and throughout Queens County is very important, considering excessive street and basement flooding in the past and anticipating future growth. This should include analysis of flow patterns to treatment plants.

The area of Middle Village around and near Juniper Valley Park has had problems of residential basement, community drive and street flooding conditions which have become much more prominent in recent years. The NYC Dept. of Environmental Protection, in conjunction with the Dept. of Design and Construction, planned a sewer project (SEQ-002372/EP-7) to alleviate flooding problems. This important project was completed in mid-1999. The project

included a new sewer chamber in the area of Lutheran Avenue between Juniper Boulevard North and Juniper Boulevard South, and two other new sewer chambers which alleviated some area wide flooding conditions.

Flooding conditions in the West Maspeth Industrial Area have hurt the efforts of the West Maspeth LDC to retain and attract business. This important distribution and manufacturing center is bounded by Rust Street, Grand Avenue, and the Newtown Creek. A study of the sewer lines in the West Maspeth Industrial Area should be seriously considered by NYC/DEP, as this area is vital to the tax base of New York City. A major sticking point is that part of the sewer system in this area is privately owned. We ask that staff of NYC/DEP work with businesses and the West Maspeth LDC to define problems and work toward solutions.

Replacement of deteriorated catch basins and installation of new basins throughout District 5 Queens is needed on an ongoing basis. As CB5Q's "Number 3" Capital Budget priority, areas of primary concern are the sections of Middle Village north of Metropolitan Avenue, from 69th Street to 80th Street, with the northern boundary at Eliot Avenue. The residential community, north of Eliot Avenue from 81st Street to 86th Street, has a considerable downhill slope, causing rain water to rush into residential driveways. This area needs to be studied by NYC/DEP for installation of additional catch basins and other sewer improvements.

Considering the age of many sewer lines, and deteriorated catch basin structures, new catch basins and sewer line replacements will be needed on a continuing basis.

There is an ongoing need to clean up Newtown Creek and possibly work to develop public access to the waterfront along the Creek.

SCHOOL CONSTRUCTION AND REHABILITATION

Overcrowding in our local schools has become a great concern throughout Community School District 24, of which the communities of CB5 Queens are a major part. Historically, Community School District 24 has been among the most overcrowded in the City. While this is not true in all neighborhoods, it has certainly been a problem in the Ridgewood community. **P.S. 81-Q needs a school addition to replace the deteriorated temporary classrooms in the schoolyard.**

The Department of Education plans to construct new schools, mini-schools and school additions are much needed, considering current and projected classroom overcrowding. The education of children, pre-teens and teenagers is suffering as attempts are made to teach in gyms and auditoriums. It is especially sad when teachers are even forced to educate children in school stairways. Plans for new schools should consider adjacent residential and business communities. This is our "Number 8" Capital Budget priority.

In general, the Mayor, elected officials and the NYC Department of Education must strategically prioritize the provision of adequate learning space and the ongoing, regular repair and maintenance of educational facilities.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Ongoing Rehabilitation of our public transit system is critical to the health and vitality of the City of New York. If not for our extensive subway and elevated train line service, air pollution would be much worse and street traffic even more hazardous and gridlocked. Track beds, rails, signal systems, elevated line supports, platforms and stations must be upgraded, rehabilitated and maintained on an ongoing basis.

The BMT-M elevated train line, the BMT-L and IND lines are the trains that primarily serve residents of the CB5 area. Specific capital improvement needs include:

- **Ongoing rehabilitation of the BMT-M train stations.** Significant deterioration of the stairways at both Seneca Avenue and Forest Avenue stations needs to be addressed. In addition, rehabilitation of the mezzanine levels of stations at Seneca Avenue, Forest Avenue and Fresh Pond Road, needs to be performed.
- **Reconstruct DeKalb Avenue, Halsey Street and Jefferson Street Train Stations (BMT-L Line).** Only the Halsey Street Train Station is in Queens, but many of our Ridgewood residents either use these stations, or would use them, if they were not so deteriorated and if they were more inviting. An elevator is needed at the busy DeKalb Avenue station.
- **Improve Myrtle/Wyckoff Transit Hub (to include overdue painting of the M Train Structure to prevent deterioration).** There had been a great need for extensive **Reconstruction of the BMT-L and BMT-M Train Transit Hub at Myrtle and Wyckoff Avenues**, which had not been improved in decades. This long-awaited project finally began in 2005, and was completed in 2008. Unfortunately, nothing has been done to paint the elevated M Train structure, which is needed to prevent further deterioration and to enhance the station aesthetics. We have also looked forward to increased street lighting, a canopy for waiting bus riders and other improvements along Palmetto Street between Myrtle Avenue and St. Nicholas Avenue. This Intermodal Project is almost complete. **This section of Palmetto Street is an integral part of the Myrtle/Wyckoff Transit Hub**, where many City buses pick up and drop off commuters, as their first and last stop on the bus route.

Other important needs regarding public transportation include:

- Replace air-polluting diesel engine buses with new cleaner fuel and/or

hybrid buses.

- Ongoing upgrades to train tracks, signal systems and switching systems.

LIBRARIES

Capital improvements at area libraries are needed, as local libraries have the ability, when open, to serve almost all community residents. Our Capital Budget Priorities include:

Rehabilitate Glendale Branch Library

There is a need for an elevator or access ramp to ensure handicapped accessibility at the Glendale Branch Library. A new boiler, air conditioning system, new windows, doors, security lighting and other upgrades are needed, as well. This request is the "Number 4" Capital Budget Priority of CB5Q. We look forward to the Phase I construction beginning by Spring of 2011.

Rehabilitate Ridgewood Branch Library – Phase II

New flooring, a new air conditioning system and pointing the exterior brick façade are needed under the Phase II portion of this capital project. Phase I, which was recently completed, brought an elevator, a new roof, and ground floor renovations to establish a children's library and auditorium. This Branch Library serves 50,000 residents in the area, a large portion of whom are new immigrants. We anticipate completion of this project in calendar year 2010.

FIRE DEPARTMENT

The condition of buildings that serve Fire Department Engine Companies and Ladder Companies is critical. An example of problems that can arise from lack of capital improvement to fire houses has been seen most recently when the fire companies located at the house on Grand Avenue, just west of Queens Boulevard in Elmhurst, had to be relocated. It is imperative that capital improvements to the structures and apparatus floors of all fire houses be performed expeditiously, based on problems reported by engine and ladder companies and inspections done by qualified engineers.

Regular ongoing replacement of Engine Company and Ladder Company fire fighting vehicles must be a City priority.

To our knowledge, funding was available to provide Fire Department apparatus with exhaust connections that are state of the art, to provide minimal danger to firefighters' health in the fire houses. It is critical that these new exhaust connections be installed, and maintained, in all fire houses.

SERVICE NEEDS

AGING

The neighborhoods of Community District 5, Queens have a very large senior citizen population and many of these seniors are living into their late seventies and eighties. **As a result, there is more of a need than ever for "Meals on Wheels", transportation and other services for the frail elderly.** Congregate meals programs continue to be important, so that seniors get to socialize, exercise and receive good hot meals. Caregiver Programs that give comfort and free time to family members who care for frail seniors are also very important, especially considering how these family members have saved government so much cost of nursing homes and other types of formal care. Alzheimer's Programs are a critical need, as seniors are living well into their eighties. Housing for Seniors is another important need. **Well-supervised nursing homes, where background checks are done to prevent abuse of senior citizen residents, is essential.**

BUILDINGS DEPARTMENT

A minimum of 30 inspectors and 25 plan examiners are likely needed for Queens, in the hope that questionable construction and illegal uses can be better controlled. There is a need for two Buildings Department inspectors for District 5, Queens alone, considering the number of unanswered complaints, and where in all too many instances, violations previously issued are not corrected. **The importance of the Night and Weekend Inspection Unit is critical,** since without this unit, construction without a permit and unsafe work will proliferate, as will the plague of illegal apartments.

A tragic fire in Maspeth in early 1997, in which four immigrants died, is a clear indication of how illegal uses must be eliminated. Greater penalties and education are part of the answer, as is good coordination between the Buildings Department, HPD, the Fire Department, other City agencies and the IRS.

We are very concerned about questionable construction that is taking place throughout our District and in other areas of Queens. **Self-certification of building plans may be efficient, but has likely increased instances where construction does not comply with zoning regulations.**

BUSINESS SERVICES

Probably the major reason that New York City has had such grave problems balancing a budget revolves around the fact that manufacturing and non-service employment has declined astronomically during the past several decades. With this decline in manufacturing and non-service employment related jobs, the number of residents receiving public assistance had risen to alarming heights. The current administration should focus on job development and bring manufacturing back to our City. All too often, we hear about how the City has virtually given-up on the manufacturing sector to boost employment and the tax-base. This effort will no doubt require a great deal of cooperation with Federal and State government, but must be done.

In District 5, Queens, we have had one of the largest concentrations of knitting mills in the United States. The knitting industry has historically been associated with the Ridgewood community. Locally, this very important industry has declined, but with the proper support the garment manufacturing business in Ridgewood and other communities can flourish once again. The West Maspeth Industrial Area is also very important to the community and our City. Retention of industry in this section of our community has always been a priority of Community Board 5. We have shown our commitment by consistently pushing for improved roadway and sewer conditions in this section of the community.

There are four major commercial streets in the Community Board 5, Queens area. Myrtle Avenue in Ridgewood and Glendale stretches from the Brooklyn border all the way to Cooper Avenue. Myrtle has seen a resurgence in recent years, thanks in large part to the efforts of the Ridgewood Local Development Corporation and the establishment of the Myrtle Avenue Business Improvement District, from Wyckoff Avenue to Fresh Pond Road, in Ridgewood. Grand Avenue in Maspeth, Fresh Pond Road in Ridgewood and Metropolitan Avenue in Middle Village are important commercial strips as well. Stores along these commercial streets serve the local communities and workers, who come from other neighborhoods to their jobs in our communities. Off-street parking and increased police security are two of the most important needs of the Myrtle Avenue, Grand Avenue, Fresh Pond Road and Metropolitan Avenue commercial areas.

Atlas Terminals in Glendale and Rentar Plaza (Metro Mall), on Metropolitan Avenue in Middle Village, are important centers of employment and distribution. There is now a lovely shopping mall, named ATLAS PARK, developed along Cooper Avenue east of 80 Street.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Every effort must be made to continue the high quality of the drinking water available to NY City residents. Travelling to other localities, City residents can take pride in the fact that they can still "turn on the tap" and pour an excellent glass of drinking water.

Completion of the third water tunnel and the system that will bring water from this tunnel to residents and businesses is very important. Water Tunnel Shaft 19B at 53-01 Grand Avenue is complete and now tunneling from this shaft has begun. It is very important that tunneling be accomplished with minimal impact to the surrounding community, and protecting workers performing this dangerous work.

While the water system in our City is quite good, the sewer system is another matter entirely. Cave-in conditions on local streets and main arteries are very often caused by sewer line breaks or problems with manhole structures. Sunken and broken corner catch basins can go unrepaired for months at a time. The Community Board consistently reports clogged catch basins and sewer lines that need to be cleaned and flushed.

The City must make the repair of broken sewer lines and catch basins a significant priority, and catch basin cleaning needs to be performed expeditiously. Personnel to perform this work must be hired. Efforts to get the public and businesses to stop littering and dumping into catch basins are important.

Air pollution and noise pollution are important concerns as well. Part of the solution is enforcement. **Street tree plantings are a great means to reduce air pollution.** An excellent public transit system is another important means of reducing air pollution (train service). **Poorly maintained buses (especially NYC/TA buses) cause a great amount of air pollution.** Every effort must be made to solve this bus pollution problem.

FIRE DEPARTMENT

Professional fire protection is absolutely essential in urban areas. Yet the 59th Fire Battalion was closed in 1990, and several engine companies were closed over the past several years. One saving grace is that Mayor Giuliani saw to the reopening of Engine Company 294 in Richmond Hill. **The risk of reduced services in the Fire Department can be disastrous.** Those living in Ridgewood and adjacent communities remember well when the nearby Bushwick, Brooklyn community was devastated by fire in the 1970's.

Fire Prevention is an important concern. **With the growing number of illegal**

occupancies in residential buildings, it is more important that the Fire Department play a greater role in curbing this problem. Often times a Building Department or Housing inspector can not gain access to a building that has one or more illegal apartments, but access will less likely be refused to firefighters.

There are also serious concerns about reductions in the number of firefighters that go out on each run to a fire scene, both planned and reductions that have already occurred (roster manning). This can endanger the public as well as the firefighters.

Emergency Medical Services (Ambulances) have consistently been a top priority of the members of Community Board 5, Queens. The time that it takes for an ambulance to get a person to the emergency room of a hospital can be the difference in life and death. Well trained EMS workers and properly maintained ambulances are of the utmost importance. We are most fortunate to have the Ridgewood, Middle Village and Glendale Volunteer Ambulance Corps working in close cooperation with EMS.

HEALTH DEPARTMENT AND HHC

Ridgewood Communicare Center, located on Onderdonk Avenue in Ridgewood, is a NYC Health and Hospitals Corporation facility that now serves residents of all ages. This Center is needed for poor and low-income residents of Ridgewood and neighboring communities. Once known as the Maspeth Child Health Station, thousands of children, ages newborn to six, received health services here for decades. The fact that residents of all ages can now receive health care at this neighborhood site is very important, especially for school-age children who might not see a doctor otherwise. **Additional hours of operation should be added, especially on evenings and Saturdays, to meet increased demand and parent working hours.**

Elmhurst Hospital, an HHC facility located outside of the CB5Q area, has a very good reputation for a City Hospital. This standing is even more impressive when one considers the diverse ethnic make-up of the people served at this hospital. Quality care and renovations at Elmhurst Hospital are very important to all of Queens. While Wyckoff Heights Medical Center and St. John's Hospital have been the primary health sites for CB5Q area residents, we are in their catchment area and are dependent upon this hospital's emergency room in critical times. The closures in 2009 of both St. John's Queens Hospital and Mary Immaculate Hospital could severely hurt health care in Queens. Every effort should be made to re-establish these hospitals as medical facilities, if doing so as hospitals is cost-prohibitive.

Bureau of Pest Control inspection and extermination services are an

important priority. With as many or more rats in the City as people, it is very short-sighted and potentially dangerous to fund this arm of the Health Department at such low levels.

HOMELESS SERVICES

The homeless population in New York City and the lack of affordable housing for many New Yorkers is a serious concern. Yet, any plans to build large facilities to house the homeless in residential communities is unwise. There are still a large number of vacant buildings and lots, where residents without homes can have a place to live. This requires renovation and new construction. Why not hire professionals to teach people who are without a stable place to live to renovate and/or build housing for themselves? This would provide more housing at lower cost while teaching people a skill at the same time.

HOUSING PRESERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT

Code enforcement inspectors are needed to get uncaring landlords to correct unsafe conditions in multiple dwellings, and to ensure compliance with existing Building and Housing Codes.

Community Consultant Programs, such as that administered locally by the Greater Ridgewood Restoration Corporation, are very important. This community-based organization has rescued abandoned buildings and succeeded in facilitating the conversion of deteriorated buildings into low and middle income cooperatives. GRRC has worked diligently to bring numerous loan programs into Ridgewood, particularly the "Neighborhood Strategy Area". Ridgewood is also one of the largest "Federal Historic Districts" in the United States.

Continued funding is needed for HPD programs which offer opportunities to improve building-wide systems, rehabilitate facades/structural elements and reduce the risk of fire. These programs are preventive and wisely cost effective. **Effective HPD "emergency repair programs", sealing and demolition services are also vital to the stability of communities.**

HUMAN RESOURCES ADMINISTRATION

Most taxpayers realize the need to provide for the less fortunate in our society, but the number of New York City residents receiving some form of public assistance rose alarmingly for decades. Efforts to stop public assistance and Medicaid fraud must be a top priority. The incentives for people to stay on public assistance for years must be reduced. The great majority of public assistance recipients would rather be working, if possible, than receiving something for nothing. While manufacturing employment declined so drastically in NYC over

the past several decades, we saw a great increase in the number of residents receiving public assistance. Providing clients with access to better job opportunities and child care will not only serve to reduce welfare rolls and the incidence of crimes, but will help to develop their self-esteem and significantly increase their earnings potential.

AIDS prevention is very important, especially in New York City. This is a touchy subject, especially in the schools. Yet, if we don't prevent this terrible disease, more people and families will suffer, and the drain on City resources will climb to even more alarming heights.

Domestic Violence is another critical concern. The lives of women and children are being destroyed due to the scourge of violence in the family. There is little doubt that children and teenagers who live in a violent family atmosphere may become violent adults. Every effort must be made to get the Police to take these matters seriously and to provide counseling and intervention for those who are the victims and the perpetrators of domestic violence. Radio, television and newspaper advertising campaigns should not be limited to the middle of the night or stuck in some small corner of the newspaper. Doing more to reduce alcohol and drug abuse, and to increase employment, is a prime way to greatly reduce domestic violence.

LIBRARIES

Having libraries open more days and more hours is very important, as is the need for more books and other learning materials in libraries, especially for children and teenagers. Branch libraries are often the only place that any resident can go to expand their thoughts. Close communication between libraries and local schools is vital.

PARKS AND RECREATION

Neighborhood parks are the cornerstone of many communities. Park conditions can either uplift or bring down a community. There should be no tolerance for those who turn parks into drug dealing locations, or for those who misuse parks in any other way. In far too many instances parents avoid taking their children to the park for fear of safety or because the abusers have vandalized or littered the park with broken bottles, dog excrement and/or debris.

Despite drastic reductions in park maintenance personnel, the Queens Division of the NYC Parks Department has done an admirable job of maintaining the great majority of parks in the neighborhoods comprising District 5, Queens. Volunteer efforts have also helped, but we are overly dependent upon POP Workers for basic cleaning or maintenance.

There are 229 acres of parkland in the CB5Q area, yet we have less than 10 full-time parks maintenance staff workers to care for all this parkland. Additional cuts to maintenance staff would be ridiculous. Equipment to enable parks workers to more effectively maintain parks is a priority. Dirt ballfields need to be watered, seeded and much more consistently maintained! Graffiti in parks is an eyesore. We applaud the efforts of Q5 parks supervisors who have removed graffiti from our parks over and over again.

Repair and Replacement of Parks Equipment (i.e. swings) is a critical need. Fortunately, the Q5 Parks Department supervisors have done a good job of keeping hazardous conditions at a bare minimum.

Forestry Services, such as, tree pruning, dead tree removal and stump removals, are sorely needed. Forestry Division personnel had been severely reduced in recent years. We had a situation in Queens where each forestry worker was literally responsible for the care of at least 10,000 trees. In the past few years, we are finally seeing dangerous conditions corrected, but efforts to remove dead trees and dangerous limbs remain critical, and are always a priority.

POLICE

Crime may be down on paper, but robbery and violent crime remain the first concern of most New Yorkers. The last two decades have been very violent times. Dangerous undertakings by teenagers and even children are alarming. Violence within the family occurs at a time when meaner streets require more loving domestic situations. Burglary and auto theft are a way of life for too many. Young people in city schools can look to a graduation from a high school with a metal detector. We must work to foster weapons of good health, education, respect, and positive ambition instead of being forced to conquer the use of 22s, 45s, and other weapons. To win the termed "war against crime", one must look at the causes, the whys of why people rob and even beat or kill at such an alarming rate in America, where crime is more of a problem than almost anywhere else in this so called civilized world.

Our communities of Ridgewood, Maspeth, Glendale, and Middle Village had witnessed much more lawless behavior until recent years. Efforts to win the crime war have included, acquiring the **Robbery Identification Unit** at the 104th Precinct, advocacy for more police officers and communities working with those police officers, removal of a great deal of graffiti from buildings, and providing after school and weekend education, sports and recreation programs. Once known as the "country club", the 104th Precinct, by 1991, awoke to the facts of 1,000 robberies and more than 4,000 auto thefts per annum. And we live in some of the better city neighborhoods.

The residents of the Community Board 5, Queens area need the following resources and the police cooperation to effectively fight crime in the areas served by the 104th Precinct:

- 180 Police Officers; 24 Sergeants; 7 Lieutenants; 2 Captains
- Robbery ID Unit, considering Bushwick border and commercial areas
- A well run Precinct Detective Unit
- Sufficient, well conditioned cars, scooters, bicycles, and 4-wheel drive vehicles for police to effectively patrol.
- Better attentiveness to juvenile crime
- Stiff prison sentences for the most violent criminals and more structured detention for auto thieves, pickpockets and substance abusers
- Long-term prison sentences for those convicted of dealing in quantities of crack and other hard drugs
- Attention to poor physical condition of the 104th Police Precinct and the morale of the officers, who do not work in the most enviable conditions

Illegal truck traffic continues to create havoc throughout our city. This problem needs more attention from the NYPD, DOT and other responsible agencies.

SANITATION

For the most part, refuse and recycling collection is consistent and respectful in QW5. Snow removal was quite efficient during the storms of recent years. Mechanical broom sweeping of Ridgewood, parts of Maspeth and Glendale, along with the help of caring residents, keeps the area reasonably clean except where illegal dumping and litter occurs. **Collection of sanitation litter baskets, on our busy commercial strips, needs to be performed 7 days a week.**

Recycling at schools is where many problems are caused in the community. Bagged food cans and other recyclables can't be stored in schools, so custodial staff put the bags on the sidewalks adjacent to the schools, causing an eyesore and encouraging illegal dumping. **The Sanitation Department needs to schedule pick-ups for recyclables at many schools daily. Five-Day-A-Week School Garbage Collection is a top priority for District 5.**

The QW5 area is still plagued with illegal dumping, primarily in out of the way areas (adjacent to the LIRR/CSX, and where industry must flourish). The Sanitation Department has successfully worked to diminish this once overwhelming scourge, but too often QW5 staff must return time after time to clean-out dump sites. Too many of the people living in New York are abusing our city and this must not be tolerated. **Sanitation Police must give more priority to 'staking-out' dumping sites, seizing vehicles, incarcerating dumpers, and publicizing the names of those convicted in major media.**

TRANSIT AUTHORITY

In recent years, our communities have had graffiti-free, air-conditioned train cars making some travel more tolerable. The train system, thought by many to be crime ridden, is often safer than life above ground. A ride on the "M" train (which has now been combined with the "V" train), from Metropolitan Avenue into midtown Manhattan and then back into Queens can be a varied experience: from a small town type outdoor station thru good old Ridgewood, into some of Brooklyn's once-toughest turf, and over the Williamsburg Bridge into Manhattan.

There have been recent "on-line" improvements like track and signal upgrades and a project to rehabilitate the "M train station" platforms, with new canopies and vandal proof "fluorescent" lighting. Ongoing improvements to tracks and signal systems must be a City priority.

The Transit Authority must efficiently and safely carry millions of passengers into and around "the City" every day. Safety of passengers is of paramount importance.

TRANSPORTATION

The following are or should be priorities of the NYC/DOT:

- Allocate adequate resources for Traffic Safety Studies, installation of All Way Stops, One-Ways, Warning Signage and Traffic Signals. These critical needs had been scrubbed by the City until 1997.
- Doubling from one to two daily, the number of crews Queens Highways sends out to repair serious roadway defects and pot holes.
- Having Arterial Highways free of dangerous conditions and cleaned.
- Giving more attention to the Jackie Robinson Parkway with its S-curves, the LIE, the BQE, and other non-JFK roadways.
- Make Roadway Resurfacing an on-going priority so as to greatly reduce the roads "rated 5 or worse".
- Improve Bridge Maintenance so that costly replacement does not become imminent.
- Provide adequate numbers of Traffic Control Agents (NYPD) assigned to bridge entry points and other congested areas (especially major construction detour routes).
- Reducing truck traffic problems throughout our City.

YOUTH PROGRAMS (SERVICES)

Those of us who have provided for the educational and recreational needs of children and teenagers, after school and on weekends, know that a dangerous number of young people, unhappy at home and without parental supervision and

nurture, need positive outlets so that they have a chance to succeed.

Programs offered by caring, not-for-profit, community-based organizations include after school tutoring/homework assistance, after school/evening recreation, truancy prevention/work experience and summer camp. The great majority of these programs are critically needed, well run and cost effective. Far too many children and teens are reading below grade level. More and more of these young people, who are our future leaders, get little attention at home. Single parents and families having two working parents have difficulty supervising their children. Too often, the consequences are criminal.

Considering the troubling times presented to children and teens, ***it is irresponsible for the City and State to reduce funding for local youth programs that are well run.***

*Gary Giordano,
District Manager*