

City of New York Community Board #1, Queens

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Vinicio Donato,
Chairperson
Lucille T. Hartmann,
District Manager

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Youth
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Zoning & Variance
John Carusone

NEEDS STATEMENT FY 2013

INTRODUCTION

Community Board 1, Queens' District covers the area bounded by Bowery Bay on the north, on the south by Queens Plaza North, Northern Boulevard and the LIRR Tracks, on the west by the East River, and on the east along the west bound curve of the Brooklyn Queens Expressway to the Grand Central Parkway and 82nd Street. We service the communities of Astoria and portions of Long Island City, Woodside and Jackson Heights.

Our zoning is mixed with residential, manufacturing and commercial areas. There are two Industrial Business Zones (IBZ) within our boundaries, a Business Improvement District (BID) on Steinway Street. Major shopping areas along Broadway, Ditmars Boulevard, Steinway Street and 30th and 36th Avenues.

The District abuts LaGuardia Airport, along with several major roads that provide access through our community to and from Manhattan, Brooklyn and the Bronx. We also provide the only land access to Riker's Island. District 1 is home to the largest number of energy power plants that provide electricity to New York City.

We are the most culturally diversified District in New York City. We strongly feel that the results of the 2010 census do not reflect the accurate growth of the Borough of Queens and certainly not District 1.

Our community has many desirable qualities, including the beautiful waterfront, cultural establishments such as the Museum of the Moving Image, the Noguchi Museum, Socrates Sculpture Park and a replica of an ancient Greek Amphitheater at Athens Square. We are also home to the Kaufman Astoria Studios, one of the largest film and television production centers on the east coast. Our cultural diversity provides an epicurean delight for the multitude of diners that live in and visit our District.

BOARD MEMBERS (cont.)

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Department for the Aging

Our District has a large population of seniors, many of whom are homebound and depend on home delivered meals, home health care and visiting nurse services. Home care for our frail and elderly is less costly to our City and more desirable to many in need. These must be maintained and expanded when fiscally possible.

Increased rents for those living on a fixed income are forcing many seniors to move from apartments and the community that they have lived in for many years, some a lifetime. The development of affordable housing for seniors and the physically disabled living within our District is great and we are very supportive.

Buildings

The need for affordable housing in our District has produced a market for illegal apartment conversion. It has long been our Board's opinion that legislation should be considered to legalize apartments that meet all safety regulations. This will provide safe, affordable housing and add to the City's tax base. Conversely, more inspectors are needed and stiffer fines must be levied to those who violate their building permits and Certificate of Occupancy.

Additional Building Inspectors are required, specifically on weekends and evenings, to address complaints regarding new construction and conversion sites that are not adhering to Building Codes. The community is often frustrated when violations are found, summons issued and the violation is not rectified. The flagrant disregard for summons is of great consternation for our community. These violations often occur when zoning changes are anticipated. A stiffer means of enforcement would better serve the community.

Consumer Affairs

Our District has the greatest number of licensed and unlicensed Unenclosed Sidewalk Cafes in Queens. While the Board appreciates the ambiance that these cafes bring to our community, we realize that the quality-of-life of our residents must be maintained. We stress the need for Enforcement Agents, specifically in the evening and on weekends to monitor the licensing codes and padlocking of habitual violators. Those cafes that are unlicensed should be summons and have their outdoor seating confiscated.

Economic Development

District 1's commercial/manufacturing/industrial areas play an important role in the stability of our community. Two Industrial Business Zones have been designated within our manufacturing/industrial areas. A Business Improvement Districts (BID) has long been established on Steinway Street and a more recent one established in the Queens Plaza area.

The commercial strips must be supported by City services e.g. curb and sidewalk repair, sufficient parking, tree stump removal to facilitate and encourage shoppers. Tax incentives are necessary to ensure that jobs are maintained and businesses remain.

Environmental Protection

New development has put a strain on our infrastructure, particularly on our combined sewer and storm systems. Multi-family dwellings are now being built where one and two family homes previously existed. Our current infrastructure cannot handle this increased population. The City must plan for the increase in higher density development.

Our District host the greatest number of power plants in the City, we abut LaGuardia Airport, the Grand Central Parkway, the Brooklyn Queens Expressway and the Robert F. Kennedy and Queensborough Bridges. Exhaust and air fuel fumes have contributed to our District's reputation as one of the highest respiratory distress related areas in New York City. Therefore, monitoring of our air quality is essential to our health and well-being.

Housing

Our District has five New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) developments. They are Astoria, Queensbridge North and South, Ravenswood and the Woodside Houses. Funding from Federal/State/City sources for after school and senior citizen programs are essential to address the large population of both resident groups in these housing units.

Parks & Recreation

Our increased population has created a greater need for the development of our open spaces. The much anticipated Skate Board Park, in Astoria Park, has been built and is providing enjoyment and a safe environment for our youth. In addition the bicycle paths along the waterfront, through our Parks, will offer a safe and beautiful route for cyclist while providing a splendid view of the Manhattan skyline.

Our Board strongly supports the hiring of additional personnel to maintain the City's investment in our recreational spaces.

Fire

Due to our close proximity to Manhattan, the Bronx and Roosevelt Island our Fire resources are stretched to supplement fire protection to the residential and business communities in those areas. The new development of high-rise and multi-family dwellings where 1 and 2 family homes existed has created an even greater demand on our fire resources. A decade ago, our District lost Engine Company 261 due to the City's budget constraints. We must be vigilant in our support of our current Fire resources and "Bravest" who put their lives on the line each time they respond to an emergency.

Forestry

We applaud the Mayor's Million Tree Initiative which seeks to plant a million trees throughout the City. Currently, Queens County has the greatest number of trees of all the boroughs. The removal of dead trees and large tree stumps must be given a priority in the City's budget. The pruning of our street trees, every 10 years, is insufficient for the benefit of the trees and safety of our streets. More frequent maintenance will save our City from the many lawsuits resulting from falling branches and trip hazards.

Police

The 114th Precinct is located on Astoria Boulevard, which is a main thoroughfare through our District. Astoria Boulevard also serves as the service road between the Robert F. Kennedy Bridge and the Brooklyn Queens Expressway. Parking along the boulevard is limited and our Board has, for years, requested the construction of a parking lot over the Grand central Parkway to accommodate Police Department vehicles, as well as, the increasing number of commuter vehicles.

We urge the enforcement of regulations pertaining to cabarets and bars i.e.: excessive noise, drugs and serving alcohol to minors. The MARCH Program (Multi Agency Response to Club Hotspots) has been effective in monitoring those establishments that violate the law. This program must continue. More Police are needed on the streets.

Sanitation

Our Board has supported the relocation or expansion of the existing QW-1 Sanitation garage. The facility was built in the 1930's and our community's needs and population have changed drastically since that time, as has the Sanitation's vehicles. Additional space is needed to meet an increase in the size and number of vehicles utilized at this site.

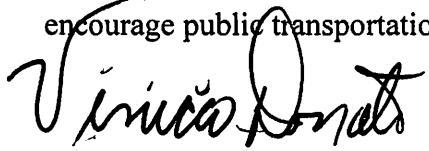
More litter baskets are required on our commercial strips. Also, we need greater enforcement of litter laws. Merchants and property owners bear the burden of being ticketed for litter that is indiscriminately dropped by pedestrians or motorists.

Transportation

Community Board 1 acknowledges the need for safe passage of cyclists through the City. We applaud the plans to provide access through our community, in particular along Vernon Boulevard via our shore line, connecting riders to our parkland along the East River. However, we have serious concerns regarding the elimination of parking spaces. This action creates a hardship for businesses that desperately need parking to accommodate patrons.

New development has brought more residents who depend on public transportation to commute to work. In addition, many commuters from Nassau and Suffolk counties drive

as far as Astoria/Long Island City and park their cars and board the train to Manhattan. Addition cars are needed during rush hours to accommodate these commuters and to encourage public transportation.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Vinicio Donato". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name being more prominent.

Vinicio Donato
Chairperson

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Lucille T. Hartmann". The signature is elegant and cursive, with the last name being more prominent.

Lucille T. Hartmann
District Manager