



# THE CITY OF NEW YORK MANHATTAN COMMUNITY BOARD 3

59 East 4th Street - New York, NY 10003

Phone (212) 533-5300 - Fax (212) 533-3659

[www.cb3manhattan.org](http://www.cb3manhattan.org) - [info@cb3manhattan.org](mailto:info@cb3manhattan.org)

Gigi Li, Board Chair

Susan Stetzer, District Manager

## **District Needs Statement for Fiscal Year 2015**

Community Board 3 Manhattan covers the Lower East Side and part of Chinatown. CB 3 is bounded by 14th Street to the north, the East River to the east, the Brooklyn Bridge to the south, and Fourth Avenue and the Bowery to the west, extending to Baxter and Pearl Streets south of Canal Street. This community is filled with a diversity of cultures, religions, incomes, and languages. Its character comes from its heritage as a historic first stop for many immigrants, which is still represented today. CB 3 is one of the largest and the third most densely populated district with over 165,000 people. CB 3 residents are very proud of their historic, diverse, and densely populated neighborhood; however, the very characteristics that make it unique also make it challenging to plan and ensure services for all our residents and businesses.

The population of Community Board 3 is changing in many ways. The 2000 census reported that over 38,000 of our residents required income support -- 23% of our population. In 2012, over 77,000 persons received income support, about 47% of the total population. The number of people receiving Medicaid-only assistance continues to increase. According to the Furman Center's 2012 *State of New York City's Housing and Neighborhoods* report, approximately 28% of our residents have household incomes under \$19,000 while 17% are over \$114,000; the latter illustrating increasing numbers of higher-income households since 2008. The district now has the fifth highest income diversity ratio in the City according to the Furman Center report—a jump from 7<sup>th</sup> place the previous year. The district continues to attract more people and businesses that support the growing market rate housing and high-end retail, but many people within this community continue to live on the edge of homelessness and economic survival.

Our demographics illustrate our diversity; CB 3 is tied as the fourth highest racially diverse neighborhood in the City, which reflects our immigrant population of 37%. The District's population is approximately 39% white, 36% Asian, 23% Hispanic, and 9% African American according to 2011 American Community Survey.

Community Board 3 has worked to retain its affordable housing stock and its local businesses while still serving the needs of the newcomers to this community; the displacement of long-time residential and commercial residents has caused great loss to this community. Many small family-owned stores, especially those that serve local retail needs, and arts businesses, have closed and have been replaced by an ever growing number of bars and restaurants. Families have been displaced from their homes because they cannot afford increasing rents. Community-based organizations, which provide essential services for community residents, struggle to provide more services and to afford their own costs with fewer resources. The growing need to provide for our lower income residents in a gentrifying district as well as provide services for all residents continues to create a challenge for Community Board 3.

The changing economy into a nightlife destination district has increased quality of life complaints due to nighttime noise. It is the most frequent complaint to the community board office. Community Board 3 continues year after year to lead all community boards with the most NYPD commercial noise complaints (nightlife noise). These complaints are very difficult to resolve as they span state and local enforcement, with no agency having mandated jurisdiction over the quality of life side of enforcement for most of these complaints.

### **Disaster/Crisis Preparedness (Post Superstorm Sandy)**

Areas of Community Board 3 suffered severe impacts during and after Superstorm Sandy. CB 3 calls for the following plans to be implemented.

#### **Economic Development**

- Small businesses need to be organized to assist each other.
- Education is needed for business tenants to understand their rights in times of crisis.
- Small businesses need access to cash--the inability to access banks or ATMs causes a cash flow crisis for businesses.
- Education is needed around insurance coverage, including liability, property, business interruption, spoilage, and comprehensive flooding. Information is needed on how coverage applies to natural disaster situations.
- Government assistance is needed to provide adequate loans/grants for local small businesses to recover from disasters.

#### **Housing and Land Use**

- Buildings in Zone A should be mandated to take steps in upgrading aging infrastructure, waterproofing the building, provide needed water pumps, and provide sufficient backup power generation
- Proper evacuation/contingency plans for seniors and disabled, and for residents living in high-rise developments must be developed.
- The need for backup generators, particularly to provide for stairway lighting & recharging of electronically operated medical equipment is a priority.

#### **Human Services, Health, Disability, Seniors/Youths, & Education**

- Develop a contingency plan to have health, medical and pharmacy services accessible to residents during a natural disaster.
- Educate public around the impact of mold, and how removal of mold should be addressed.
- Housing developments need to designate interpreters in each building to ensure that all residents have access to important information in times of crisis.
- Develop and train a CERT team to assist with evacuation in times of need.

#### **Transportation & Public Safety / Environment**

- Develop a plan for proper monitoring of streets & avenues during crisis to provide for safe traffic flow.
- Provide alternative transportation – Staffs for senior centers and service providers that do not live in the community need transportation to come to work. Access-A-Ride shut down within hours of evacuation, leaving many disabled people

unable to evacuate. The breakdown of the transportation system affected businesses and services that are important to public safety

- There must be a public evacuation transportation plan that is visible and accessible for all residents to utilize efficiently. This is especially essential for those with special needs. First responders should create a traffic plan for emergencies when traffic lights and street lights go out.
- The loss of telecommunications and the overall lack of communication about some utilities in the area presented a major problem during sandy. Traditional public pay phones attached to a reliable landline network are critical to public safety and must be maintained.
- Plans and maps for local charging stations should be created and made available.
- Local groups are creating a plan for hubs and centers for information, supplies, coordinating volunteers and providing care. The City should create a plan to educate and distribute maps of local, emergency resources.
- Emergency infrastructure in case of future power failures is needed. Solar powered cell phone towers distributed throughout CB 3 should be considered. These require minimal energy and could be activated in case of power failure, and would provide much needed information and communication during a blackout of a power blackout.

#### **Parks/Recreation/ Cultural Affairs/ Landmarks**

- The city needs plans for expedited replacement of damaged or loss of tree canopy in parks, playgrounds and street.
- Design for resiliency and permeability of materials used along the East River to saltwater and inundation. Resiliency of new parkland should be designed for esplanade and Piers.
- Parks should place sandbags at doors of most vulnerable park buildings to prevent water from coming in.

#### **Communication, Evacuation and Emergency Shelters**

- Local shelters need to have sufficient backup generators, wheelchair accessibility/ADA compliance, and adequate deployment of volunteers per shelter, and interpreters and translators.
- Need plans for designated locations/gathering spaces for volunteers to assemble, plan, coordinate and disseminate information.
- Paper copies of resource lists and emergency information should be available for handing out—in the three major languages spoken in the community.
- CAU liaisons should be kept in neighborhoods of their assignment during emergencies to use their expertise and connections to best help their assigned communities. During the Sandy crisis, the CAU liaison for CB 3 was moved to another devastated area and CB 3 was left without any links for planning, information, or an official connection for help or information.
- Communication to community board is needed from city, state, and federal agencies.
- FEMA team needs local knowledge of the urban environment and cultural diversity for proper dissemination of its own information.

## **Economic Development**

### **Retail Diversity**

In recent years, Community Board 3 has watched its local mom and pop shops rapidly replaced by chain stores, banks and destination bars and restaurants. Stores that once served the retail needs of local residents have been out-priced in rent, forcing people to either leave their neighborhood to shop or shop online. The unplanned proliferation of nightlife destinations has put a tremendous strain on CB 3's infrastructure of police, sanitation and transportation as well as created the most noise complaints of any community board in the city. It has also formed an unattractive retail environment for existing stores because most bars and restaurants leave their gates down during the daytime hours.

The Center for an Urban Future's *State of the Chains 2012* identified the East Village as having the second highest number of chain stores in all of Manhattan with a total of 179 in the 10003 zip code alone. The East Village has experienced the third highest growth in chain stores citywide from 2008-2012. The growth of chain stores raises the overall rents in the neighborhood, displacing local mom and pop shops and compromising the unique character of our neighborhood.

CB 3 has conducted surveys of businesses on Avenue A. In 2009 approximately 13% of the stores were vacant and 35% were liquor licensed. The current statistics are 10% vacant and 37% licensed. The percentage of liquor licensed businesses is increasing

Stores that do survive are threatened by rising utilities and taxes. Surveys by CB 3 identify rent, utilities and property taxes as the biggest challenges that face small businesses. Property taxes have risen dramatically over the last nine years and a percentage of those taxes are passed down the businesses by landlords. Store owners that are no longer able to bear the burden of the taxes are forced to close or relocate outside the district. This continues the cycle of temporary storefront vacancies and closed shutters that ultimately hurts daytime retail businesses.

### **Merchant Organizing**

Community Board 3 has four Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) currently within its boundaries.

- The Chinatown BID: Broome to Worth Street and from Allen to Rutgers;
- The LES BID: Orchard Street and currently seeking to expand to include a large section of the Lower East Side, with Houston Street as its north border;
- The Village Alliance: 8<sup>th</sup> Street and some surrounding blocks; and
- Union Square Partnership: 14<sup>th</sup> Street and Union Square area.

While these associations cover a large area of the district, the East Village (from Houston Street to 14<sup>th</sup> Street and from Bowery to Avenue D) remains without any merchant organization.

In order to support small businesses, CB 3 strongly believes that the East Village would benefit from the creation of a local merchants organization. A merchant organization can be very beneficial to small businesses in that it can:

- Provide a means to network and share information with other small businesses;
- Allow members to join forces politically to have a greater voice with legislators and to apply for City grants;

- Create an opportunity to improve the area's business climate by creating a more attractive environment for customers by keeping streets clean, adding holiday decorations etc.; and
- Organize joint events to attract customers.

The lack of merchant organizing became clear in the wake of Superstorm Sandy. Businesses did not have a local organization to help access information and aid. They also did not have an organization to advocate on their behalf for grants and support after the storm such as the Chinatown BID, which recently received \$79,000 in grants for Chinatown businesses who suffered losses after the storm.

### **Opportunities for City Support**

CB 3 is currently engaging in an exhaustive survey of the East Village to inform future plans for retail diversity by identifying which types of businesses the district lost and which it retains. The CB plans to take final statistics to the Department of City Planning to collaborate on a long-term plan for retail diversity and sustainability.

## **Housing and Land Use**

The crisis in affordable housing in Community Board 3 continues to worsen. The Furman Center's State of New York City's Housing and Neighborhoods 2012 report notes:

- The median rent for all renters in our community district has increased an astoundingly high 20% in the six (6) years since 2005 (from \$745/month to \$895/month).
- With a rental vacancy rate of 3.3%, units are very hard to come by and affordable units even harder. The Furman Center report ranks this board's vacancy rate 38th out of 51 community districts. This phenomenon is attributable to a number of factors including:
  - The deregulation of rent-regulated existing housing units;
  - Government cut-backs in subsidized housing and rent vouchers;
  - Increasing rents in New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) developments; and
  - The expiration of restrictions on former Section-8 and Mitchell-Lama housing.

Significant governmental action is necessary to curb the alarming change in the community's profile from the most historically important immigrant community in the country – where low-income people from every corner of the world were able to gain a foothold in this county – to a neighborhood that is increasingly stratified and upper income. The 2012 Furman Center report says, "Renter households in CB 3 who have lived in their units for four years or less pay more than twice as much as their neighbors who have lived in the units longer."

We call for all of the following actions to slow the growth of gentrification and to ensure that long-term residents can remain in decent affordable housing:

- **Increase the Stock of the Subsidized Affordable Housing** Over the last decade, federal, state and local government have drastically reduced funding available for the construction or renovation of new affordable housing. CB 3 was once a prime beneficiary of new subsidized low-and moderate-income housing, but the rate of this production has now slowed to a trickle. Virtually no new Section-8, public housing or Mitchell-Lama housing has been built to replace lost housing stock.

The almost complete elimination of Section-8 vouchers has also made it vastly more difficult for low-income and homeless families to find decent affordable housing on the private market.

- **Preserve Existing Public Housing** The over 14,000 NYCHA housing units in CB 3 and the approximately 164,000 units elsewhere in NYC are threatened because of the chronic federal underfunding of this essential housing resource. The cutbacks in funding over the past decade have resulted in under - and deferred -maintenance, raising rents and fees, and threats of land sales. Full federal funding is a key to the preservation of this critical housing resource, but the city should also augment the extremely tight NYCHA budget. The current practice of requiring NYCHA to pay for police and sanitation services and of charging Payments In Lieu Of Taxes (PILOT) should end immediately.
- **Reverse the Trend of Deregulating Rents** The Furman Center reports show that since 2002, the percentage of rent-regulated units in CB 3 declined from 66.3% of the rental stock to only 48.3%. That loss of affordable housing has tremendous repercussions because, in CB 3 alone, the median market rent in 2011 was \$2,680/month, while the regulated rent was less than half that amount, \$1,205, according to a 2011 Furman Center report on rent stabilization in NYC. The loss of this housing stock has had a profound effect on our community. We must reverse the deregulation that has been seriously eating away at our stock of affordable housing since 1993.
- **Upgrade Enforcement of Housing and Building Codes and Fund Community-Based Housing Organizations** Because affordable housing is as threatened as it is, we must fully utilize available governmental enforcement tools to assure that existing housing is maintained adequately and that developers do not alter the housing stock in ways that threaten existing tenants or force them from their homes.
  - NYC Department of Housing Preservation & Development (HPD) and Department of Buildings (DOB) must vigorously enforce the Housing, Building and Zoning Codes. HPD needs to ensure that residential structures are adequately maintained and safety standards are met at all times, and that threats to children's health from asthma triggers, lead and vermin are eradicated.
  - DOB must make sure that that buildings are not overdeveloped beyond the legal limits and fire safety regulations are not side-stepped when additions are built on tenement buildings.
  - Effective plan examination and increased enforcement with tools to enforce regulations is necessary so that non-compliant development does not go unchecked.
  - Follow up on Environmental Control Board (ECB) and DOB violations to ensure that all violations, including those overseen by the ECB, are corrected and the fines are not merely absorbed by developers as part of their cost of doing business.
  - Legislation is needed to increase these fines to a level that that makes them a real deterrent to over-development as well as other tools for enforcement.
  - Federal cutbacks in Community Development Block Grant funding, which has long been used to support HPD and DOB enforcement, will diminish these essential code enforcement services and further threaten our housing stock. These cuts must be reversed.
- **Provide adequate funding to community-based non-profit housing**

**advocacy and legal organizations** This is essential to safeguard existing affordable housing. These groups provide essential assistance to tenants who are fighting the lack of basic services, building code violations, and threatened evictions. Without the work of these community-based organizations, harassment of rent-regulated tenants will be unchecked and long-term residents displaced. The city must increase funding of these groups that provide the first line of defense to community residents.

- **Legal Reforms to Increase Privately Developed Affordable Housing** Although CB 3 is now located in the economic exclusion zone of the 421-a tax abatement program, we continue to support revisions to the 421-a program that would produce more affordable housing. We believe that the program should be altered to:
  - Eliminate the use of negotiable certificates;
  - Mandate that only 30% of on-site affordable housing can be used to satisfy the abatement requirements; and
  - Mandate that developers taking advantage of both 421-a tax abatements and inclusionary zoning bonuses should allocate 40% of the on-site units for affordable housing.
- **Make Buildings Green** City policy needs to provide greater incentives to low-income housing providers to reduce energy usage. NYC's 2030 plan sets the goal of reducing greenhouse gases by 30% and since buildings account for 94% of electricity use, energy audits can identify retrofits to reduce waste in lighting, heating, ventilation, and air conditioning systems. Federal weatherization funds have been cut drastically in recent years, leaving the weatherization program unable to serve many low-income applicants. The City should provide matching grants to low-income HDFCs to encourage energy upgrades that will reduce energy costs for low-income buildings, thereby preserving affordable housing while also reducing carbon emissions.

### **NYCHA Housing**

NYCHA has proposed the long-term lease of land in five CB 3 developments as a revenue generator. This process is occurring without a proper community notification process which allows for meaningful local input. The housing that results should be majority affordable with preference going to current NYCHA residents. Any sale of NYCHA property in this community board should have a 50% local preference.

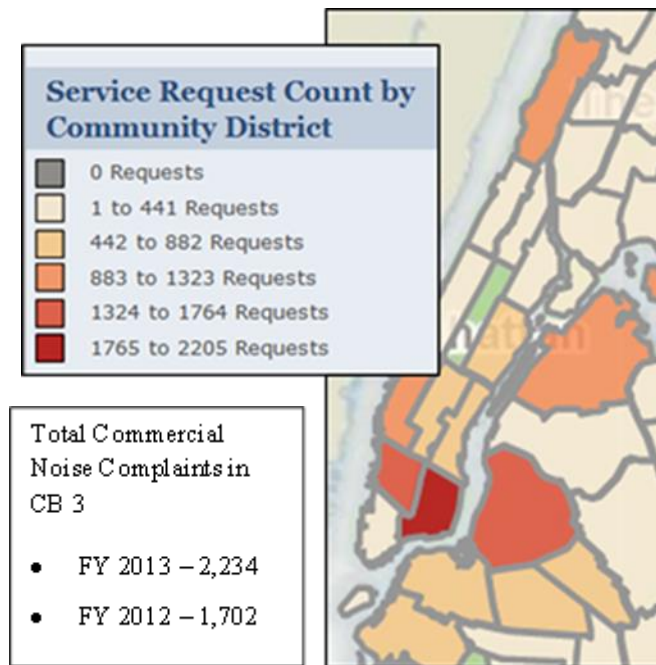
- Because NYCHA has failed to follow an open process with community input and because NYCHA has failed to respond to CB 3's questions, and because all but one of the NYCHA projects in our Community Board are opposed, therefore Community Board 3 opposes NYCHA's current Infill Plan.
- The Community Board is also concerned that this plan does not include planned infrastructure to support it, such as first responders, sewage, sanitation services, schools, and plans for diverse retail to support the community.

### **Nightlife and Licensing**

Community Board 3, especially the Lower East Side and East Village, has been and is increasingly a nightlife destination. The number of license applications has been between

320 and 330 over the past three years, excluding renewals and corporate changes. The number of complaints about licensed businesses, however, has risen (Figure 1).

Figure 1: 311 Commercial Noise Complaints in Manhattan (Fiscal Year 2013)



Source: New York City 311 Service Requests, 2013

- Per 311, CB 3 has consistently had the highest number of NYPD commercial noise complaints of all community boards. The 311 complaints have increased over 32% in the last year.
- The rising number of complaints in the last year correlates with an apparent decreasing focus by police on quality of life complaints associated with these 311 calls and loss of the cabaret unit in the 9<sup>th</sup> Precinct. All CB 3 precincts should have specialized cabaret units.
- The Community Board office allocates the majority of its time to addressing SLA-related complaints rather than the many complex issues of the District. The office needs closer coordination with precincts to effectively resolve resident noise complaints as has been shown to be effective in the past.
- Precincts need training in implementing the “6 in 60” law, which allows them to document non crimes, such as violations of operating stipulations.
- Increasing numbers of hotels are being developed that include destination nightlife businesses that create more nighttime noise. Some offer rooftop and other outdoor areas that also add to the noise impacting residents. Outdoor nightlife in residential areas should be restricted to early hours so that the quality of life of residents is not impacted.
- Vehicular and Pedestrian Traffic and Horn Honking:  
The NYPD should instruct business owners to monitor their sidewalks. TLC and traffic police should perform targeted horn honking enforcement operations.
- Rodent and Sanitation Problems:  
The City should plan infrastructure, such as rat proof baskets and extra pickups to respond to these growing health issues caused by increased nightlife.



### **Sidewalk Cafes**

Sidewalk cafes add to vitality of street life but also create congestion and noise. Lack of NYC Department of Consumer Affairs (DCA) staffing has resulted in loss of routine inspections for permit compliance, as well as loss of night inspections.

- DCA should create rules to distinguish between sidewalk cafes that are bars and those that are restaurants. This would allow communities to identify appropriate locations where they will not conflict with residents.
- DCA should create rules for evaluating sidewalk cafe applications that would examine the 8-foot sidewalk clearance as well as existing sidewalk congestion, such as locations near subway entrances or bus stops, to ensure sufficient sidewalk access for pedestrians and wheelchair bound residents.
- The City needs to use nightlife revenue to provide staff and resources to monitor and enforce its existing regulations.

## **Transportation**

### **Accessibility and Safety**

Accessibility and pedestrian safety are a Community Board 3 priority.

- Curb cuts are essential to make the sidewalks accessible for people who rely on wheelchairs for mobility. Currently they are forced to travel in the street in some locations. An expedited schedule for the remaining curb cut installations is an essential priority.
- Many existing curb cuts need repair. NYC Department of Transportation (DOT) should prioritize identification and repair of curb cuts that do not meet smoothly with the street bed.
- Enforcement and pavement markings are needed to prevent vehicles illegally blocking some curb cuts.
- Ponding and storm drain blockage make it difficult for pedestrians to cross some streets in the district. NYC Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) should identify and correct these ponding problems.

New patterns of sidewalk and street usage associated with increased cycling has created the following needs:

- Increased NYPD staffing to enforce traffic laws regarding dangerous cyclist behavior: riding against traffic, on sidewalks, through red lights and without yielding to pedestrians.
- DOT should maintain reduction of pedestrian-cyclist conflicts as a design priority.
- DOT should increase bicycle parking facilities to reduce inappropriately chained bicycles that contribute to sidewalk congestion.

### **Bridges**

The approaches to/from the Williamsburg and Manhattan Bridges are particularly dangerous for pedestrians.

- The Williamsburg Bridge is very confusing and dangerous to both pedestrians and cyclists. There should be a self-enforcing design to prevent the continuous conflicts between pedestrian and cyclist movements.
- Cyclists often use the dedicated pedestrian walkway of the Manhattan Bridge, even though there is a physically separated bikeway on the other side of the bridge. Enforcement and design changes are needed to encourage cyclists to use the correct bikeway.
- In 2012, the Delancey Street Pedestrian Safety Plan did improve safety along that corridor. Similar safety improvements are needed on other traffic corridors, such as Essex St and Canal St, which are part of the traffic patterns related to the bridges.

### **Curbside Management**

Local businesses need adequate loading/unloading zones for commercial delivery.

Curbside parking regulations need to balance competing demands of pedestrians, businesses and motorists.

- The Chinatown Curbside Management Study, to be completed in Spring 2014, will have several important test solutions (e.g., loading/unloading zones with coordinating commercial delivery schedules, adjustments to sidewalk widths, measures to discourage placard parking) that should be evaluated for replication in other areas to address curbside loading needs.
- Businesses should be encouraged to report needs so that loading zones can be sited, allowing small businesses to comply with regulations.
- Commercial delivery needs must be considered by DOT when DOT assigns on-street bus stop locations through the intercity bus permit system. Existing truck loading zones should not be eliminated if this threatens the continued operation of existing local businesses.

### **Bus Management**

The new intercity bus permit system, along with the increased number of "Chinatown bus" companies, has resulted in layover and staging problems on the streets in Chinatown and the surrounding neighborhoods. Permitting of stops is being done on a case-by-case basis that is driven by individual applicants. This process ignores accompanying issues of staging and layover:

- This should be addressed with a DOT plan to study and locate bus stops and layover zones.
- There should be enforcement to prevent unauthorized layover by intercity bus companies that have been allocated on-street bus stop locations. These permits do not allow buses to layover on neighborhood streets.

### **Public Transportation**

Community Board 3 is underserved by public transportation. The eastern and southern-most residents of the district will continue to be denied public transportation until the MTA/NYCT restores or extends cross-town bus routes:

- Despite the district's density, many of our residents are poorly served by the subway system and live more than half a mile from the nearest subway stop.
- MTA/NYCT should restore the discontinued overnight and weekend service on the M8 route (on 8th/9th Street) and the completely discontinued Grand Street bus route.
- The City should improve the environment for public transportation within CB 3

by taking strong, creative measures to reduce traffic congestion, which fuels a vicious cycle of reduced ridership and reduced service. The MTA/NYCT will reduce service after ridership on a bus route drops below a certain threshold. Service cuts have a severe negative impact on vulnerable populations, including the disabled, who rely on public transportation.

### **First Responder Services**

CB 3 opposes any cuts to first responders and any potential firehouse closures.

- The neighborhoods of the Lower East Side and Chinatown are some of the most densely populated areas of the city and contain hundreds of tenements over a century old that are structurally vulnerable.
- The response areas of 9 fire companies in 4 battalions currently serve CB 3.
- We support the Auxiliary Patrol Units (APU) and the Auxiliary Patrol Support Units (APSU) as necessary to supplement first responder emergency services. The APSU are specialized Rescue Units which cover multiple precincts in support of the NYPD Emergency Service Unit (ESU).
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### **Rodents**

The serious rat infestation problem in Community Board 3 is a public health and safety issue:

- CB 3 ranks third highest among community board in Manhattan for failing rat inspections and is rated as “urgent action required.” CB 3 ranks third lowest among all NYC community boards for percentage of acceptably clean streets.
- CB 3 is an unplanned destination nightlife district, but does not have the sanitation infrastructure to accommodate this. DSNY litter baskets often overflow. The Department of Health has stated that the number of eating/drinking businesses contributes to this problem, but there is no plan to deal with the problem. Sanitation needs to have more basket pickups on weekends to prevent garbage on the streets that attract rats.
- Sidewalk “rat-restaurant” baskets need to be replaced with rat-proof litter baskets.
- CB 3 is a very densely populated. There are many old tenements without access to indoor storage or compactors. Increased curbside refuse and recycling pickup service are needed.

### **Environment**

CB 3 has few City resources allocated to reduce air pollutant exposure and asthma triggers despite a disproportionate amount of air pollution sources from the expanded 14th Street Con Edison fossil fuel power plant and from the vehicular congestion caused by its three bridges, transportation corridors, vehicle idling, and curb-side bus operations.

- DEP and NYPD should enforce idling regulations. Follow up of DEP violations for idling shows that these are often dismissed.
- Air pollutant exposure is compounded by the heat island effect of roads, artificial turf, and bare roofs, which raise temperatures and elevate ozone levels.
- The environmental health hazards within CB 3 are largely un-documented. These cannot be addressed until they are properly identified.

## **Parks/Recreation**

Community Board 3, like most districts in New York City, does not meet the City Planning Commission's guidelines for per capita open space according to the Governor's Open Space Report based on the 2010 Census.

- Open space/population ratio is approximately 0.66 acres per 1,000 people.
- The Governor's Report recommended 2.5 acres per 1,000; and NYC averages 1.5 acres.
- Open space is not evenly distributed throughout the district, with the area west of Avenue A and the Chinatown area lacking adequate open space.

Some Parks Department buildings in our community are used for storage for citywide Parks operations. Given that CB 3 already has so few open space and community facilities, our local parks should not bear this unfair burden of being storage for other neighborhoods.

- Stanton Street building is now on Parks capital list and received \$500,000 in capital funding from the City Council.
- Three out of four Parks buildings in Sara D. Roosevelt Park are used for Citywide Parks storage.
- Parks Department should allow the public to reclaim use of the Parks buildings (particularly those within Sara D. Roosevelt Park) by redistributing storage more fairly to outside areas and programming public use of those buildings.
- The "White House" in Baruch Houses is not operational and in need of capital repairs.
- The Seward Park building should be utilized for community programs.

### **Recreational Use**

The permitting procedure for recreational permits has improved in having fields accessible to local groups and for fair distribution. However, Community Board 3 asks that Parks increase transparency in the permitting process, as well as revisit public procedures for reviewing and re-approving light usage for night use of fields. CB 3 asks that Parks continue to maintain this fair distribution of park permitting time for local groups.

Lack of park space is compounded by lack of recreational sports fields. This is further exacerbated by permits allocated to groups from outside the community. While we do not seek to exclude outside groups from our parks, we do feel that:

- Priority should be given to local groups, particularly non-profit youth leagues.
- Emphasis on local groups should include a re-examination of Park Department policies that restrict the use of parks and play areas during daytime hours.

### **Community Gardens**

After the expiration of the Spitzer Agreement, NYC Parks adopted new rules for licensing of gardens every four years, where active status gardens in good standing have had licenses renewed.

- For sites not transferred to Parks, the City should consider transferring them to Parks or local community land trust organizations to maintain the locations as permanent open community space.

- All gardens under NYC Parks jurisdiction should be provided with adequate infrastructure, such as available water spigots, ongoing topsoil renewal, wrought iron fencing, and electricity/solar lighting where applicable.

### **Maintenance**

Constant maintenance by trained DPR professionals is required. While the City restored proposed cuts to the Parks budget this year, and staffing citywide has increased compared to the previous year, levels are still below full-funded staff needed to maintain parks and staff playgrounds.

### **Rodents in Parks**

The Community Board 3 district as a whole has the third highest failure rate for rat inspections in Manhattan, and has continued to be overrun with rats year after year.

- CB 3 Parks that have ongoing rat problems include Columbus Park, Tompkins Square Park, and Sara D. Roosevelt Park.
- Parks Department has only one full time exterminator, which does not allow for adequate baiting. Another exterminator is needed.
- More full-time experienced extermination and staff to maintain and clean the parks is necessary to protect the health and public safety of the community.
- Rat-proof wastebaskets are needed, as well as working with food vendors and providers to ensure clean up.

### **Tompkins Square Park Events**

Tompkins Square Park is popular for loud events, but is the only park in NYC with a concert area in close proximity to residents.

- NYC Parks should take responsibility for monitoring events they permit. Additional Parks Enforcement Police and sound monitoring equipment are needed to deal with the negative effects of these events on the residents surrounding Tompkins Square Park. PEP officers, on a regular, sustained basis, need to be assigned to the major CB 3 parks. All events need to be monitored by decibel meters with trained staff.

### **Comfort Stations**

Toilets in CB 3 parks and playgrounds are badly needed. This past year, NYC Parks was able to install toilets in Luther Gulick Park, Corlears Hook Park, Sol Lain Park, and East River amphitheater. Funding is still needed for comfort stations in other parks throughout the district such as Baruch Playground and McKinley Playground.

### **Wireless Access**

CB 3 asks that NYC Parks consider establishing free wireless access in all public parks, such as the network available in Tompkins Square Park, to allow all residents who cannot afford their own wireless connectivity to use their laptops and other devices in parks.

## **Landmarking**

Community Board 3 asks that the Landmark Commission expand its feasibility survey of ideal sites for landmark preservation similar to the one it has already done for the East Village. Such landmark feasibility studies should include the immediate area surrounding Tompkins Square Park, Chinatown and the Lower East Side.

## **New York City Libraries**

Community Board 3 has five branches of the New York Public Library (NYPL) system: Chatham Square, Hamilton Fish, Ottendorfer, Seward Park, and Tompkins Square. While we appreciate the renovation of our libraries, private donations and discretionary funds from our elected officials have paid for much of the work:

- CB 3 branches have the highest levels of use in the City, and preserving library openings to six days a week and restoring full operating hours is an utmost need.
- The libraries are especially necessary to our many low- and moderate-income residents who depend on the libraries for access to books and film and as the only quiet place to read or do homework or other work
- Residents who have laptop computers, but cannot afford internet fees, use the library for internet access.
- According to NYPL statistics, in Fiscal Year 2012 there were 1,078,751 visits to CB 3 libraries. This is a decrease of 3% over the previous year – but only due to the fact that all branches were closed for several days during Hurricane Sandy
- Our libraries need funding for expansion of collections, automation, staffing, and programming.
- In light of continuing youth violence experienced by the community, CB 3 requests more youth programming in libraries as a way to engage youth in meaningful activities. Certain programs, such as the art space in Tompkins Square Park Library, should be supported with more programming and expanded to other libraries.
- The arts and cultural programming for local libraries in this neighborhood is extremely important to many neighborhood residents, particularly families with children and seniors, who cannot otherwise afford access to commercial venues.

## **Waterfront**

Community Board 3 established a Waterfront Task Force in 2003 to formulate a viable plan for the area from the Brooklyn Bridge north to East River Park. We now have an East River Park esplanade that is being improved to make it safe and attractive.

- Large portions of the CB 3 City-owned piers are under-utilized; and the esplanade south of the piers is in need of repairs to improve safety and add amenities to increase its usefulness.
- Pier 42 has received funding for the first phase of rehabilitation, but at least \$50 to \$60 million more is still needed. CB 3 strongly urges and expects that the relevant City agencies will raise the necessary funding, fast track, and complete this improvement and stabilization, within the 2015 timeframe, so that Pier 42 will never be lost as a crucial amenity to this community.
- CB 3 continues to prioritize improvement and access to its waterfront as a necessity for the community. We look forward to working with relevant City agencies on the esplanade from Pike Slip to the Brooklyn Bridge, most of which is now being used as a temporary staging area for several projects to improve the Brooklyn Bridge.

## Human Services

CB 3 is the fourth most racially diverse district in the City. It is imperative that initiatives to address the human services needs discussed below must be culturally and linguistically appropriate in order to effectively serve this district's residents.

### Youth Services

According to the 2010 US Census, CB 3 is home to more than 22, 152 children under 18 years of age. The 2011 American Community Survey found that approximately 40% of the population under 18 years lives below the poverty level and roughly 47% of family households with children under 18 years receive some form of public assistance or emergency food assistance. According to the 2012 Furman report, 28% of households residing within CB 3 have a household income of \$19,000 or less, and many of these families rely on community-based programs such as Out-of-School Time (OST) and Beacon community centers during after-school hours and on weekends and holidays.

### Youth Violence

Violence in teens and young adults continues to be an issue in CB 3. Lack of documentation makes this particularly hard to address. The violence is geographically based, particularly in some NYCHA housing developments in the northern and southern areas. Agencies working with this population agree that proactive programs are needed, particularly for at-risk youth, such as employment and training opportunities, and programs other than sports.

Families and youth are also in need of intervention services and support system programming. Community centers, out of school time after school programs, and employment opportunities are necessary to positively engage youth.

- **Expand Access to OST Programming** CB 3 currently houses three Beacon programs, operated by Grand Street Settlement, University Street Settlement, and the Chinatown YMCA. In addition, over ten OST programs are located in CB3. Over the past few fiscal years, both OST and Beacon Community Centers have experienced unstable funding, with mid-year cuts, reduction to summer camp enrollments numbers, with an increased reliance on one-year City Council restoration funding. CB3 supports base-lining of OST youth funding to ensure that programs operate on stable and consistent funding.
- **Increase Youth Employment & Job Training Opportunities** Older youth, and at-risk youth in particular, need employment and job training opportunities such as the Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP) and the Young Adult Internship Program (YAIP), which helps produce critically important and positive outcomes, such as higher lifetime earnings and higher rates of high school attendance and graduation. CB3 hosts several SYEP contractors, including Chinese American Planning Council, Henry Street Settlement and Grand Street Settlement. According to a report by the New York City Independent Budget Office, contractors such as these provided summer jobs opportunities for approximately 35,654 students citywide in 2013, which is down from a high of 52,255 in 2009. Unfortunately, over 100,000 additional youth applied for summer jobs but were turned away in 2013, and youth unemployment rates continue to be at record highs in NYC. CB 3 opposes any further reductions in the opportunities available for youth through the SYEP and YAIP programs, and supports additional funding to expand existing programs and/or to

add new programs to ensure that our older and at-risk youth have the job training and employment opportunities necessary to succeed.

- **Provide Services for Youth Aging Out of Foster Care** Teens in foster care often age out of care without having acquired the skills necessary for a successful transition to independence. According to NYC Administration for Children Services' 2012 Child Welfare Indicators Annual Report, CB 3 was the third highest district in Manhattan for foster care placements (with 123 children in 2012). The 2011 ACS Community Snapshot report showed that while the majority of placements in CB 3 are age 11 and younger, 17.3% of CB 3's placements aged out of care, which is a higher percentage than Manhattan or NYC's overall foster population that aged out of care. According to the Children's Aid Society, many of these young people will exit the foster care system "without the knowledge, skills, experience, attitudes, habits and relationships that will enable them to be productive and connected members of society." Therefore, it is necessary that we maintain and expand programs to help this youth population make the transition from our foster care system to independence and adulthood.

### **Senior Services**

The NYC Department for the Aging's *Profile of Older New Yorkers* (2010) found that more than half of those individuals in CB 3 aged 60 and over were foreign-born – the second highest ranking community in Manhattan. Spanish and Chinese are the two most popular primary languages other than English in CB 3, with approximately 23% of seniors speaking Spanish and 38% speaking Chinese.

- **Strengthen Supports & Services** CB 3 calls for the continuation and strengthening of multilingual supports and services that allow senior citizens to remain in their homes and communities, such as congregate and home-delivered meals, case management and coordination, home care services (including non-Medicaid funding homecare), safe and reliable van transportation, healthcare, recreational activities, programs like Visiting Neighbors that provide much needed companionship and assistance with essential activities such as grocery shopping and affordable, accessible housing. Services such as Naturally Occurring Retirement Communities (NORC) provide critical supports to help seniors age safely in their own homes, and funding for existing programs should be maintained, while opportunities to expand the NORC programs in our community should be explored

### **Homelessness**

We continue to see homeless adults in the area of the district north of Houston Street. The current policy involves outreach with case management only to "chronically homeless" i.e. those who have been homeless for over two years. Since not all of the homeless fit into this category, they are not followed with case management. Therefore, CB 3 believes the current policy of conducting outreach to only "chronically homeless" individuals should be reassessed to allow for true outreach to all homeless.

## **Health**

Much of the health data used by CB 3 is from the NYC 2011 Community Health Survey. However, it should be noted that this information, while the best we have, includes the



following zip codes: 10002, 10003, 10004, 10005, 10006, 10007, 10009, 10038, 10048, 10280, 10282. CB 3 only includes, 10002, 10009, most of 10003, and small portions of 10013 and 10038. Therefore, we do not have health data that is definitive for CB 3.

### **Mental Health**

According to DOHMH's EpiQuery for 2010 Community Health Survey, this community ranked in the middle third of New York City as a whole for use of counseling or prescription medication for a mental health problem, and in the highest third of NYC communities for a diagnosis of depression. There is a significant need in this district for culturally competent mental health services for residents, particularly with training for our Chinese and Latino populations, as well as an expansion of the limited services currently available for pediatric and adolescent populations and for the LGBT community. As its funding for the Children Under Five Mental Health Initiative currently provided by University Settlement in CB3 has been threatened by city budget cuts since FY 2009 and should be made permanent.

### **Specific Health Concerns**

- **HIV/AIDS** HIV / AIDS continues to be a serious health crisis in CB 3. According to the NYC Department of Health's (DOH) 2011 statistics on HIV/AIDs, there were 3,359 People Living With HIV/AIDS in the Union Square/Lower East Side United Hospital Fund district. Of those individuals, 83% were male and 17% were female. According to the New York City Annual Surveillance Statistics, in 2011, there were 52 AIDS diagnoses and 46 deaths in this district (which includes ZIP codes 10002, 10003 and 10009). It is essential that our community continues to receive educational efforts and services, such as HIV testing services and access to needle exchange programs. Funding is needed to enhance existing programs and to develop better linkages between programs in order to reduce fragmentation of service delivery.
- **Alcohol Use** The DOH 2011 Community Health Survey found that the Union Square/Lower Manhattan district ranked in the top third of New York City as a whole for binge drinking. This new survey also showed that both heavy drinking (defined as an average of more than 2 drinks per day for men and more than 1 drink per day for women) and binge drinking (defined as 5 or more drinks for men or 4 or more for women on one occasion in the last 30 days) found approximately 24% of respondents were binge drinkers (compared to 16-17% for New York City overall). Funding for a more comprehensive public health effort targeted at CB 3 is needed to address the interaction of multiple factors to reduce the incidence of alcohol-related problems.
- **Asthma** This community needs funding to reduce known asthma triggers, such as poor housing conditions and rodent and insect infestation, as well as funding to increase education and awareness of how to reduce these triggers and thereby reduce the incidence of asthma. The DOH 2011 Community Health Survey reported the Union Square/Lower Manhattan district ranking in the middle third of New York City as a whole for asthma diagnoses. New York State Asthma Hospital Discharge data by ZIP codes (from 2008-2010 data) shows variation in asthma rates by age in CB 3; of the population 65 years and older, ZIP code 10002 is among the highest rates (59.4 per 10,000 population) and in the population 17 years and younger .

## Education

Community Board 3 encompasses 31 public schools in Community School District 1 (CSD1) and five charter schools, as well as 14 public schools in Community School District 2 (CSD2). In CSD1, 13 public schools and 3 charter schools serve elementary school age students (from pre-K to 5<sup>th</sup> grade), five serve middle school age students (6<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> grade) and four serve students ranging from pre-K to 8<sup>th</sup> grade. Two secondary schools serve 6<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> grade students and six schools serve high school age students (grades 9-12), of which three are alternative high schools serving over-age and under-credited students. In addition, one school serves students from K – 12. In CSD1, 62% of students are eligible for free lunch, with an additional 6% eligible for reduced lunch. The largest population of students in CSD1 identifies as Hispanic or Latino (43%), followed by Asian of Native Hawaiian/Other/Pacific Islander (22%), Black or African America (18%), White (16%) and American Indian or Alaska Native (1%). In total, 13% of these students are Limited English Proficient.

Of CB 3's 14 schools located in CSD2, four schools serve elementary school age students (from pre-K to 5<sup>th</sup> grade), two serve middle school age students (6<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> grade) and one serves students ranging from pre-K to 8<sup>th</sup> grade. Seven schools serve high school age students (grades 9-12).

Initiatives to address CB 3's education needs must be culturally and linguistically appropriate in order to effectively serve this district's children and families. The most pressing needs of schools within CB 3 are listed below, as well as several district-specific needs for schools in CSD1 and CSD2.

- **Reduce Class Sizes** According to analyses conducted by Class Size Matters, class sizes citywide have risen sharply in all grades since 2007, and K-3 class sizes are now the largest they have been in 14 years. Average class sizes in CSD1 are increasing at a high cost to our students. In particular, grades K-3 saw average class sizes grow from 19.6 in 2010-11 to 21 in 2012-13, and grades 4-8 grew from 20.1 in 2010-11 to 23.2 in 2012-13. CB 3 supports efforts to reverse these trends and begin reducing class sizes. CSD1 needs smaller class sizes in early grades, where small class size is directly correlated to improved long-term academic outcomes.
- **Reduce School Overcrowding** Many of our schools – and specifically over 75% of schools in CSD1 – share a building with one or more schools. The real extent of overcrowding in these schools is partially masked, however, as a result of the DOE's Instructional Footprint, which determines space allocations for specific uses and in these shared schools. After 2011, class size standards were eliminated completely, creating even further overcrowding in our schools. Overall, Class Size Matters estimates that the Footprint has reduced the permitted size of classrooms used for regular, specialty, and student support services by 33%. CB3, CSD1 and CSD2 support revised accounting and formulas to better reflect actual use, capacity and need so as to ease overcrowding of our schools.
- **Include a New School in the SPURA Project** There is a demonstrable need for a shared District 1 and District 2 Pre-K through 8th grade school to be built as part of the Seward Park Mixed Use Project Site. The ULURP for the SPURA project lays out the full justification for the inclusion of such a school, and can be found at <http://www.nyc.gov/html/mancb3/html/landuse/landuse.shtml>.

- **Restore School Budgets** Since 2007, DOE has cut school budgets 14%. As a result, schools struggle to fund specialized and enrichment courses, as well as materials and supplies, including basics such as paper and postage. This need is exacerbated in CSD1, where many families have lower incomes and are therefore particularly unable to remedy the consequences of deficient funding.
- **Increase Access to Enrichment Activities** Due to the decrease in discretionary school budget funding and a rising emphasis on state testing, enrichment activities have been reduced or cut completely. Our students need increased access to libraries art, music, theater, movement, dance, foreign language and science programs that are critical to their well-rounded development. CB 3 supports increased funding that will allow schools to provide access to enrichment activities for students of all ages.
- **Provide Facilities for Physical Education and Activity** Our children are in dire need of improvements to school facilities in order to meet their bare minimum needs for healthy physical education, development, and recreation. A 2013 survey of the physical education and activity facilities in 31 CSD1 schools reveals that the play grounds are in poor condition or have no facilities or equipment for play. In addition, five buildings, serving nine CSD1 schools, are not equipped with gyms, and some are unable to accommodate regulation high school games due to their small size. Schools in CB3 are in desperate need of attention and improvement to address the physical education and recreational needs of our students of all ages.
- **Specific CSD1 Needs** CSD1 has one of the largest proportions of students with disabilities among the 32 districts in NYC. With 23% of CSD1 students diagnosed with a disability, proportionate support – especially smaller class sizes – is necessary to effectively serve this high needs population. In addition, 43% of CSD1 students self-identify as Hispanic, but not one of the 21 elementary schools in CSD1 offers a Spanish dual language program. Similarly, 22% of CSD1 students identify as Asian, yet CSD1 offers.
- **Specific CSD2 Needs** Serving English Language Learners is a priority for District 2, particularly with respect to students arriving in this country at middle-school age or above. The District 2 community also needs supportive services to address various emotional and adjustment issues of its students, some of whom are raised abroad and move to the United States when they are school-age to live with parents they hardly know.

## **Arts & Cultural Affairs**

Our district has historically been an incubator of the performing and visual arts, with a higher concentration of artists and arts organizations than most districts.

- The arts serve as an important means of expression, preservation and exploration of our diverse community and cultures.
- District arts venues, including libraries & community gardens, balance the scales of gentrification by providing local, often low cost, access to arts expressions.
- Cultural venues have a powerful synergistic relationship with neighborhood small businesses and are economic drivers to our local neighborhoods.
- Fourth Arts Block estimates that their member arts organizations generate more than \$24.8 million in annual economic benefits for local restaurants, shops, and support services. Across the Lower East Side, the economic impact of neighborhood arts groups is over \$50 million.

- Funding to turn these linkages into viable projects cannot be further reduced without negative consequences for artists, youth, seniors, the educational system, small businesses, visitors, and others.

Community Board 3 supports the continued efforts of the Department of Cultural Affairs to foster a healthy creative sector by advocating for:

- City agencies to include commercial and nonprofit arts venues and organizations in their economic planning and development.
- City agencies to work in public-private partnerships to provide reasonably priced electricity and water to community gardens, so they can develop into true community centers for culture.
- Financial incentives for outreach made available to local venues to promote partnerships with local community-based organizations & the use of space to increase public & resident benefits.

Difficult economic times cannot justify threatening the creative arts. The arts community needs to have a healthy, balanced and open-minded society with support for creativity and activities that inspire the human spirit.



Gigi Li  
Chair



Susan Stetzer  
District Manager