



# Community Board 7

**Borough of Queens**

**Bay Terrace, College Point, Beechhurst, Flushing,  
Malba, Queensborough Hill and Whitestone**

**133-32 41<sup>ST</sup> ROAD • 3<sup>RD</sup> FLOOR • FLUSHING, NY 11355**

**(718) 359-2800**

**Fax: (718) 463-3891**

**Helen Marshall**  
*Borough President*

**Karen Koslowitz**  
*Deputy Borough President/Community Boards*

**Eugene T. Kelty, Jr.**  
*Chairperson*

**Marilyn Bitterman**  
*District Manager*

## **COMMUNITY DISTRICT NEEDS STATEMENT – FY 2008**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Community Board #7 is the largest in population of all 59 Community Boards. It is composed of seven towns, Bay Terrace, Beechhurst, College Point, Flushing, Malba, Queensborough Hill and Whitestone, making up 12.7 square miles, and 285 miles of city streets. We are an extremely diverse community consisting of one and two family homes, suburban high rise apartments, 64 park locations, 30 Greenstreets, an intermodal transportation hub with 23 bus lines, the #7 train, and the L.I.R.R. In addition, we are the 4th largest retail area in the city, and the second largest industrial area in the borough because of the College Point Corporate Park. Our Board has the largest waterfront area running from Flushing Bay to Fort Totten.

Our diversity presents us with many challenges and problems, which we must address and resolve, if we are to maintain the level of our past accomplishments and improve our quality of life in the 21st century. These can be summarized along the following issues: zoning, parking, the environment, transportation, service delivery, waterfront development, in addition to maintaining the economic growth in downtown Flushing College Point, and Bay Terrace

We are concerned about meeting the needs of our senior citizens, the proliferation of houses of worship, maintaining the viability of our parks, as well as our historical heritage. Our most immediate emphasis is concentrating on managing new developments within our board area, and the potential of its' impact on traffic and service delivery.

Specific areas of community zoning study requests are included in our 10 year Strategic Policy Statement. These areas should be studied with a view to preserving the character of the existing neighborhoods, and must be accelerated in order to keep the integrity of our residential communities. Evidence shows that Community Board #7 has experienced enormous building growth in both commercial and residential areas. For example, within only a four-mile radius of Downtown Flushing, the housing stock in the past 20 years has grown, and projects presently on the drawing board will bring in additional units of housing within the next several years.

Following the 1990 Census, our population was estimated to be just under 250,000 people, and we are the largest population wise of all 59 Community Boards. Many census tracts in and around Downtown Flushing have experienced substantial population increases while some tracts in Bay Terrace, Clearview, College Point, and Whitestone have experienced moderate to high increase in

population. The data confirms that the trend of sustained growth in our area has continued adding to the demand for new housing, classroom space, and city services.

## **BOARD OF EDUCATION**

Due to the building and population growth in our district, there is a shortage of classroom space, and many of our children are being bused to other communities. With the recent rezoning of Downtown Flushing, there will be an anticipated shortfall of classroom space and new housing developments should be built with schools within their project. It is necessary to improve space management of existing schools and in addition, new buildings should be considered to deal with their additional needs. There has been a tremendous demand for community space; i.e., expansion of after school programs, community meetings, seminars, service programs, etc., and it is recommended that school buildings be utilized for this purpose. School buildings should expand their role and serve a broader need to the residents of our communities.

In order to enhance the education of our youth, funding must be appropriated for construction of additional computer labs, and state of the art computer equipment.

## **BUILDINGS**

City Planning should review the need to examine appropriate zoning for Downtown Flushing – either a C4-4 or special district. The Community Board has been receiving many B.S.A. applications requiring a C4-4 zone.

In addition, all zoning change requests for our board must be accelerated in order to address the requests of the neighborhoods within our district. New York City Department of City Planning must expeditiously complete the campaign promise made by Mayor Bloomberg in 2005 to contextually rezone our residential neighborhoods (Queensborough Hill, Waldheim-Holly, North Flushing and Auburndale). These items should be given immediate priority and City Planning Commission needs to be sensitive to expressed re-zoning desires of the Civics, Community Board #7 and the affected Council Members.

Presently, R-6 zoning has a 50% parking requirement. However, developers are subdividing the lots which automatically eliminates the parking requirements. This loophole must be eliminated. Developers should not be allowed to circumvent this because it impacts tremendously on the affected communities. If single family homes are requested to provide one parking spot per house, we should not allow developers to receive waivers for multi-unit developments.

On new construction electrical and gas meters should be encased or protected from the outside elements. At present, they are left open with easy access, and in case of any emergency; i.e., explosion or fire, the Fire Department would not be able to evacuate people inside the premises.

Since all Building Department permits have to be posted, they should have the owners names and contact phone number, should an emergency arise during the construction process.

## **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

For the past thirty years, Downtown Flushing has expanded and thrived economically by private investment and without large infusions of city expenditures to encourage economic development. Presently, we are undergoing another development spurt, with at least six large projects

underway. This growth continues to present considerable infrastructure and service challenges, which require more immediate mitigation by the city especially for parking and traffic flows.

For example, the RKO Keith's which has been vacant for more than 20 years will shortly be developed for mixed-use. Another major retail-residential center will be built at College Point Boulevard and Roosevelt Avenue. Also Flushing Commons on the Municipal Lot #1 site will shortly begin development for residential and commercial purposes, in addition to replacing the current allotment of parking. While we are certain these large projects will continue to infuse economic health into Downtown Flushing, it cannot be at the expense of further congestion, disruption, and increased sanitation and safety concerns.

Similarly, plans for the final development of the College point Corporate Park will continue to impose more of a burden on the current infrastructure and provision of basic city services to the area and to the community of College Point. We suggest that capital construction for property and infrastructure be accelerated.

Lastly, with the impending plans to rebuild Shea Stadium, we urge the city to accelerate its proposal process to redevelop the Willets Point business area to maximize the property in more progressive ways that would benefit the community as well as the city. This particular area has been neglected by the city for decades. Comprehensive and new development to the Willets Point area will certainly benefit the Downtown Flushing area. It will also offer an opportunity to address several related problems such as unemployment, lack of green space, degraded environmental conditions in and around the Flushing River, and a deteriorated public infrastructure.

#### **DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION**

Flooding and ponding conditions are a growing problem in Community District #7. Additional funds are needed for manpower and for design and construction of storm sewers, sanitary sewers and catch basin maintenance. Many of our areas have been experiencing terrible storm and sanitary backups. Homeowners have had to live with these conditions too long. Additional funding must be allocated to decrease the time frame for initiating a capital project.

Additionally, due to the large increase in new immigrants, they must be educated by the department on the proper handling of grease and fish water, which is presently being dumped into the catch basins creating foul odors and backups in our commercial districts.

With the changing face of the commercial and manufacturing facilities in our area, additional inspectors are required, covering air pollution, wastewater discharges, solid and hazardous waste.

#### **FIRE DEPARTMENT**

It is essential that all engine companies be staffed with five-man crews throughout Community Board #7 and especially in the downtown Flushing area. The need for this is due to several factors; increased urbanization, new high rise construction causing a heavier workload, the congestion of the commercial shopping area, and the various roadway reconstruction projects within the area, as well as the threat of terrorism due to LaGuardia Airport, U.S Tennis Center and Shea Stadium.

The Department appears to be relaxing its enforcement powers in "Quality of Life" issues, and we feel this could lead to a serious safety issue. We would like to see more multi-agency Task Forces to address some of the Board's serious and often ongoing endless problems (ILLEGAL

**CONVERSIONS-STORES IN THE DOWNTOWN FLUSHING AREA BEING CONVERTED TO SMALL SCALE SUPERMARKETS, AND ILLEGAL SOCIAL CLUBS, SROS IN 1 AND 2 FAMILY HOMES, ETC., PRIVATE DWELLINGS ILLEGALLY RENTING OUT BASEMENTS, MULTIPLE DWELLINGS ILLEGALLY RENTING CELLAR AREAS RENTING ONE FAMILY APARTMENTS TO MULTIPLE FAMILIES, ILLEGAL VENDING WHERE PROPANE GAS IS USED FOR COOKING).**

The reestablishment of our fire alarm boxes is still a concern in our district. Year after year, the Board has requested for the alarm boxes to be upgraded to the newer E.R.S. design. Due to the lack of public telephones, the reorganization of telephone companies, and the extensive use of customer owned coin operated telephones (COCOT), **THESE ALARM BOXES ASSIST AND ARE MORE RELIABLE** in assisting our communities with any emergency (fire, medical, police), that may occur on the city streets.

It is essential that Engine Company 272 be reopened for the following reasons:

- 1) Increased population in Downtown Flushing, Malba, Beechhurst and surrounding areas.
- 2) Increased business and residential construction in College Point, College Point Corporate Park, Malba, Beechhurst and surrounding areas.
- 3) Engine Company 274 has been designated by FDNY as a Haz Tech engine company who will be dispatched to hazardous materials incidents in the borough of Queens and possibly city-wide. Responses of this type will leave a void in the response district for fire, emergency and CFRD operations.

It is essential that the number of fire marshals be increased in light of the recent rise in arson and the ever-present terrorist threat. The Queens fire marshal base at Fort Totten should be reopened due to the following:

- 1) Better response time to investigate suspected arson fires in CB #7.
- 2) Investigate terrorism threats especially at LaGuardia Airport, Shea Stadium, the tennis center and other important landmarks in the district.

There is a need for:

- 1) The creation of a new fire battalion to alleviate the work load and response district of Battalion 52 and to provide the necessary chief supervision desperately needed in the northern quadrant of CB#7 district; namely, College Point, Whitestone, Malba, Beechhurst, Robinswood and Bayside.
- 2) The creation of an FDNY summons enforcement unit who will assure that people are issued parking violations for parking on fire hydrants throughout the CB#7 district.

### **HOUSING PRESERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT – H.P.D.**

Due to the shortage of inspectors, illegal rooming houses and illegal apartments have been on the increase in our area. One-bedroom apartments are being subdivided to accommodate additional families. A law should be implemented disallowing this to happen, and should be part of the lease that is signed by the occupant. To preserve the housing stock, it is absolutely essential that Code Enforcement services operate 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The adjudication process

needs to be streamlined to cut down on the time it takes to mitigate a complaint and determine a FINAL solution. With the passage of the Pheffer Bill, serious consideration will be given for attaching unpaid fines onto the real estate taxes. Countless fines are going uncollected and recapturing these fines can only improve the fiscal outlook for the City. Additionally, Internal Revenue Service should also be notified of the potential of unreported income.

Programs for Senior Citizen homeowners are in demand to address the varied needs of this growing population.

### **HUMAN RESOURCES ADMINISTRATION – H.R.A./DEPARTMENT OF HOMELESS SERVICES**

The policy of discharging the mentally ill on the basis of they not being a danger to themselves or others is not working. Additional funds should be allocated to correct the problems of the homeless. They require speedy psychiatric evaluation, separating them from the general homeless population and into supervisory facilities that can properly care for them.

Outreach clinics to prevent homelessness should be funded in order to provide services to people prior to their wandering the streets and living in the parks. Fortunately, the closure of the Flushing Armory has reduced this problem to a minimum in Community Board #7's district. We suggest crisis intervention at its earliest stage and preventive counseling by the agency.

Seniors make up more than one-third of the population in our district; however, services must be increased in order to meet the growing demands of this population. New facilities are needed especially in College Point and the Downtown Flushing area, which is reachable by public transportation. Affordable housing with senior citizen services and recreation programs are necessary to accommodate them. Also, nursing care and transportation services must be improved. The present level of services offered is inadequate to address the needs of our large senior population.

Much of what is now available in terms of program centers is fragmented. The city should insure its related agencies are better coordinated to provide supplemental and required services to seniors. Supplemental transportation modes in the form of minibuses on local levels should be explored so seniors can travel for shopping and medical purposes. More financial resources should be spent on expanding and introducing specialized geriatric services at our two local hospitals, Flushing and New York Hospital. Land use applications for senior housing should be supported, provided the surrounding residential communities are not adversely impacted.

### **PARKS**

Capital Parks Projects in our District include Frank Golden Park, Weeping Beech Park, Kissena Corridor Park, and Kissena Park. Frank Golden Park has poor drainage and the marshy ball fields are heavily utilized by the community as well as, the surrounding communities and youth groups. The Margaret Carmen Green in Weeping Beech Park is in total disrepair and certainly does not depict a fitting memorial for the person for whom it was named. The Master Plan for the development of Kissena Corridor Park has languished for over 20 years, and must be looked at in a more serious light. The park must be moved into a phased development plan.

Our 64 parks are extensively utilized and in need of additional maintenance, rehabilitation, spruce up and, in some cases, design and redesign. There is a need for additional maintenance, supervisory, recreational and seasonal personnel, as well as Parks Enforcement Patrol workers who

would be available in the evenings and weekends. Overgrown grass and weeds, and refuse in the parks create an unsafe and unsightly environment, thereby, we require additional machinery; tractors, crew cab pickups, dump trucks, gravelies to cut grass, yazoos for sidewalk areas, leaf vacuums and Toro's are needed. In addition, the backlog of tree pruning is still critical.\* The Parks Department needs newer and better quality equipment, as the existing machinery is constantly breaking down. In addition, a pressure hose watering truck is needed to do deep root watering of street trees.

Gardeners are needed, as this district is the largest, greenest area in Queens. We have a number of center malls with shrubbery and flowers that need special attention, as they are constantly overgrown with weeds. Lack of maintenance creates a hazardous condition to motorists as well as an eyesore for the community. The district considers this ongoing beautification to be a quality of life related item. The City should enthusiastically encourage "Adopt-A-Park" or "Adopt-A-Garden" Program similar to the "Adopt-A-Highway" Program, but not as a replacement for needed personnel. The backlog of tree pruning and removal is still critical especially in view of the recent fatalities, and we support funding EARMARKED FOR QUEENS ONLY in the City budget in order to deal with this problem expeditiously.

\* Since only 10% of our trees are pruned each year.

## **POLICE**

A majority of complaints in the areas are attributed to the 64 park locations, bars and clubs, and the attendant youth problems. Other sources of complaints are quality of life issues such as an increase in abandoned cars, street peddlers, graffiti, loud radios, drinking on the street, rowdiness and drag racing. With 285 miles of streets to cover, the precinct needs additional manpower, specifically expansion of the Community Policing Unit Program. As our Asian population increases, our precinct desperately needs Korean and Chinese speaking officers.

There has been an alarming increase in reported crime, especially in prostitution, drug activity, car thefts and burglaries. This may be attributed to the willingness and cooperation of victims who in the past were unwilling to notify the police of crimes. An expanded Morals Squad and Narcotic Task Force Program to address the related concerns as expressed by the community, is desperately needed. In addition, our district is heavily impacted with establishments that have liquor licenses and illegal vending. These restaurants/bars are impacting on the quality of life in our commercial hubs abutting residential communities. Illegal vending is on the rise, especially vending from motor vehicles. Numerous locations throughout our district have people selling anything from furniture to watermelons out of the back of a truck. Enforcement is necessary and must be on a continued basis. Compounding the problem of police presence is caused by the constant detailing of personnel to various special functions; i.e., USTA, Presidents' visits, parades, special details, etc. This precinct many times has been depleted of its personnel imposing a heavy burden on the remaining skeleton crew. This in turn has a major impact on the effective handling of quality of life issues.

The present geographic boundary of our district is too large, burdened with increases in crime and population. Particular communities, such as College Point, Malba, Beechhurst, Robinswood, Whitestone and Bay Terrace, are receiving inadequate police protection in the form of radio motorized and foot patrols, which equates to less than adequate response times from the 109th Precinct.

A new police precinct needs to be built and established (i.e., 116th Precinct) in northeast Queens in order to satisfy the need for proper police protection and response times. The location of

the new precinct could be built on M-1 zoned property in College Point or converting the armory in Beechhurst into a precinct.

## **SANITATION**

The never-ending debris on the streets of Downtown Flushing is attributable to the transient population using the subway and buses. An estimated 10,000 people an hour pass through the Downtown area. Commuters and shoppers create the litter; however, manpower and equipment needs to be maintained, to effectively keep the area clean. To assist the Business Improvement District with the removal of the basket litter, mechanical brooms are needed to properly service ASP routes, especially in commercial areas such as Downtown Flushing. With the initiation of the Business Improvement District in Downtown Flushing, it is critical that these services be maintained and/or expanded.

Community Board #7 supports the recycling programs, and outreach and education efforts must continue in order to encourage vigorous participation. Weekly recycling must continue, and additional new materials should be targeted for recycling; i.e., cooking oil from restaurants.

We need additional Sanitation Enforcement Agents to issue tickets in our commercial hubs; i.e., Downtown Flushing, Whitestone and College Point.

A better system for towing cars during snow emergency conditions is vital.

## **DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION**

### **1 – HIGHWAYS**

Our neighborhoods are facing many new challenges – we must learn how to protect them by seeking new approaches to achieve our goals. Federal, State and City funding is insufficient to meet the needs of our capital projects, which are necessary to provide desperately needed infrastructure improvements. The majority of our capital priorities has been, and will remain, transportation requests.

The commercial areas of Flushing, College Point, and Whitestone generate large numbers of trailer trucks. This puts an incredible strain on the streets and highways of these communities.

Capital construction should be accelerated to accommodate the increased volume of traffic and the deteriorated condition of the streets. Linden Place, our #1 Capital Project, needs to move forward expeditiously. This roadway, which has been closed for close to 20 years, an ancillary road will relieve traffic backups on the Whitestone Expressway and along 20th Avenue. With the development of the Corporate Park and the new retail component, this roadway is a necessity.

Design funding for Phase IV of the Main Street Redesign, one of our top capital priorities, must be allocated. Phase IV will complete the street infrastructure repair in this highly utilized commercial area of our district. This reconstruction will enhance the Downtown Flushing rezoning project that was passed by our Board.

Within the towns of Whitestone, Beechhurst, and College Point, the seawalls have been allowed to deteriorate, causing a severe and expensive restoration problem. This area has further been decimated by storms that occurred over 10 years ago. The various communities have re-

quested Federal funding for immediate repairs. Capital projects from our Board have been initiated, but the financial crisis, has caused the restoration to be delayed by several years. The same applies to the Bridges, Ramps, and Flyovers. Preventive maintenance programs, by the agencies responsible, must be initiated before a major disaster occurs. Of course, maintenance also pertains to the periodic cleaning of our Roadways, Highways, Bridges, and Tunnels, which has shown considerable improvement over the last few years.

## **2 – TRAFFIC**

The results of recent traffic studies of Downtown Flushing conducted by various governmental agencies, while well intended, present findings and recommendations that often clash. There are currently three studies that are making the rounds each with valid observations. These uncoordinated efforts are time-consuming and inefficient, and should be replaced by a single master plan, rather than vague “wish lists”. For example, we were informed that computerized controls were scheduled to be installed on College Point Boulevard, 14th Avenue, 20th Avenue and Union Street in the fall of 2005. To date the installation has not taken place.

The College Point Corporate Park has reached a stage of development that requires the Economic Development Corporation to act more responsibly particularly in the maintenance of its huge traffic generating facility. While it is true that the city DOT maintains city roadways and oversees traffic controls, there is no excuse for the decade-long flooding and ponding on 20th Avenue after a drizzle, or the huge unrepaired pot holes on store parking lots, or the inordinate decade-long delay in the installation of computerized signals on the corporate park’s perimeters.

The city DOT should be asked to review its traffic control devices currently posted in Community Board 7. Many of the signs posted in Community Board 7 qualify as antiques. The “STOP” signs on corners are at least a quarter century old and has already lost its ability for nighttime reflectivity. This as you know, could be costly because it makes the city liable in the event of an accident. As part of an outreach program, maybe local civic and scout groups could be asked to report the location of faded signs, faded street markings, as well as inoperative traffic signals.

## **3 – TRANSIT**

We are concerned about expanding and improving our transit system. The Main Street subway station is the 12th largest subway in the city and the biggest transfer point between the busses and the subway. Relatedly, committed funding is required in order to meet continued improvement of our infrastructure. The rapid growth of vehicular volumes in Community Board #7 during the past decade has only been matched by the frenzied growth of the local demand for public transportation.

With the takeover of bus transportation by the MTA there is finally an opportunity for a unified and coordinated effort to transport shoppers and commuters to their local destinations. There is, therefore, a very strong need for an orderly analysis of bus transportation needs, not only to make bus lines more efficient, but also to maintain services for the aged, the handicapped and school youngsters. Where the use of the tandem/articulated buses is unwelcome in our area, Jitney buses are recommended to make up the areas where we have lost service due to the loss of ridership.

On a daily average, 85,000 people use the IRT #7 subway and 75,000 use the 23 bus lines in the Downtown Flushing community. Modern and innovated ideas should be pursued by New York



City Transit Authority (minibuses vs. illegal vans), which would improve the reliability of bus schedules and loss of passengers in underserved and highly congested areas. In addition, three major L.I.R.R. stations are located in our district. Of equal importance, (as we have in our #7 line) is the upgrading of our LIRR stations to ADA guidelines. All stations are in violation due to not having ramps or elevators to service the physically challenged. We are looking forward to the construction of the light rail with the vision of a Downtown Flushing station.

Tens of millions of dollars were spent on the upgrading and rehabilitation of the #7 subway station less than a decade ago. To date the escalators are still not 100% operable, and experience frequent breakdowns, forcing passengers to use the long descending staircases onto the platform level.

In addition, the maintenance needs major improvement – escalators walls are filthy, debris on top of the information booth and newspapers strewn on the floor. The high volume and echo of the public address system makes the announcements inaudible.

## **YOUTH**

Since 1995, Community Board #7's youth population has suffered due to the funding cuts that resulted in the elimination of the position of youth Coordinator. In the past, Youth Coordinators have played a vital part in enabling Community Board #7 to effectively monitor youth programs, provide technical assistance to youth service providers and to guide youth program users. In addition to monitoring local programs, Youth Coordinators made sure that various programs funded by the Department of Education, Department of Youth and Community Development, Borough President and the Council Members are meeting the needs of our growing community. This is the tenth year that Community Board #7 has been without a Youth Coordinator and as the years go by, it is more evident that this has had a negative impact on our youth population.

Since the elimination of the Youth Coordinator position, Community Board #7 has gone through tremendous changes and the need for this position has only been reinforced. 2000 Census showed that youth population (under 18) in Community Board #7 grew by 12.8%. The growth currently experienced by Community Board #7 calls for comprehensive youth service programs to maintain community stability as well as to provide safe and nourishing environment for youth. Additional and expanded youth services programs in the following areas would enhance the lives of youth in our community.

1. Beacon programs are effective programs that offer positive youth development through educational, cultural and literacy programs. Currently, Community Board #7 only has 2 Beacon sites to serve the needs of 47,000 youths. Additional Beacon sites and increased funding is necessary to effectively meet the growing needs of Community Board #7.
2. Preventive programs are necessary to keep youngsters active and engaged in constructive programs after school. These programs should include educational and career choice counseling, high school drop out prevention and family support programs to create a safe environment.
3. Youth employment programs should be expanded to address youth unemployment and to develop jobs for youth. Employment and job training programs are essential.
4. Increasing the use of existing school facilities is necessary to meet the needs of

youth for educational and recreational programs. Elimination of usage fees would ensure increased funding dedicated to programs and the increase in number of youths served.

In order to make certain that we are doing the best for our youth, the Department of Youth and Community Development and Community Boards must engage in cooperative planning efforts to ensure the most effective use of current youth programs as well as development of additional programs.

*Marilyn Bitterman*

Marilyn Bitterman  
District Manager