



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

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

Chairperson
Dr. Bola Omotosho

District Manager
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District Needs Statement FY 2013

Bronx Community District 5, known as the West Tremont area, is located in the mid-West Bronx. It is bounded by the Harlem River on the West, in the Cross Bronx Expressway on the South, Webster Avenue on the East, and the northern boundary zigzags from Hall of Fame Terrace at Bronx Community College to Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Blvd. and 183rd Street, East to Jerome Avenue and North to Fordham Road.

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

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

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

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

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*SERVING THESE NEIGHBORHOODS:
Fordham, Morris Heights, Mount Hope, University Heights*

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

The injustice regressive tax policies and shortsighted fiscal practices of local, state and federal administrations, as well as the effects of bad policy and consequent fluctuations in the economy among those directly affects many residents in Bronx Community District 5, in our city. The current Fiscal Year 2011 Budget appears bleak for areas such as District 5 in the Bronx, where the physical and social ills that affect poor and minority communities continue to be most concentrated.

Community District 5 is a severely stressed area. Listed are some of the conditions we face in our neighborhoods.

Department of Homeless Services

While we consistently have opened our arms to the city homeless families by accepting our share, Community Board 5 continues to be saturated with residential care, transitional and a women shelter in our district. In comparison to other community districts we have had more than our fair share and the Community Board request “Zero” allocation.

- The number of Special Needs Housing and Group Homes continues to increase at alarming rate in Bronx Community District 5. Large assortments of charitable and benevolent agencies in the private sector, that are either faith-based or non-denominational not-for-profit (N.F.P), operate Special Needs Housing facilities or Group Homes in the neighborhood. State and municipal agencies of government likewise directly administer community residences or fund private and charitable agencies that do so by means of the “R.F.P.”- i.e., “Request for Proposals”- and the public bidding/contracting processes. these facilities serve a variety of populations defined by age, gender, economic class, condition of family life, physical and mental challenges and status *vis a vis* the criminal justice system.

The brisk expansion in the number of two-family, three-family homes, in the area has facilitated the uninterrupted growth in the quantity of Special Needs Housing and Group Homes. While price so as to defy being even remotely classified as “affordable,” this new housing, nevertheless, is well within the means of public and private agencies wishing to establish Special Needs Housing or Group Homes in the district. Of course, houses or vacant parcel of land in more affluent, well-to-do neighborhoods are beyond their reach, thus repeatedly drawing these organizations and government entities back time and again to Bronx Community Board 5 in their search for sites. This circumstance, when coupled with the inability of the Community Board to assert over-saturation of these facilities, has created a most frustrating state of affairs. The deliberate definition of over-saturation in New York State legislation based upon extremely narrow and specific categories

guarantees that the tedious prerequisites of over-saturation cannot and will not ever be attained.

Bronx Community Board 5 calls upon our representatives in the New York State Legislature to enact a meaningful, realistic amendment of the state Mental Hygiene Law relative to what constitutes over-saturation of community residences in a neighborhood. A noteworthy suggestion in this regard would be to count on a strictly per capita basis, irrespective of population served, the total number of Special Housing facilities or Group Homes in a district when determining whether or not over-saturation exists in that locality. Moreover, Community Boards should be given an enhanced, authentic role in the site selection process for special needs housing community residences. Community Boards should no longer be reduced to their superficial contemporary condition of only being informed of the launch of this type of facility along with, perhaps, being requested to render an advisory opinion. Finally, state and local government must provide aggressive oversight or the fiscal and procedural operation of these Special Needs Housing facilities or Group Homes. These under-financed facilities are poorly staffed, maintained, and managed too frequently become bad neighbors and nuisances to homeowners and local residents as well as lowering property values.

- Some of the highest crime rates in the City
- Many streets remain overrun by drug-dealing;
- Although Sanitation has improved in Community Board 5 it is still one of the lowest sanitation score rating in the City;
- Very little acres of usable open space for every thousand people; far less than the city average;
- The largest overcrowded school district in the state; large number of schools in very poor physical condition;
- Concentrated and large immigrant population;
- Severe shortage in youth services
- Approximately 40% of residents pay more than one-third of their income on rent (highest in the city);***
- Approximately 61% of housing units are in fair to poor condition with 44.4% of rental housing overcrowded (ranks highest in the city).***
- Approximately 19.4% adult unemployment rate (ranks #highest in the city);***
- Children born into poor families receiving public assistance rank #1 in the city;
- Over 40% of the population is receiving some form of assistance (poverty rate 2nd highest citywide). ***
- Community Board 5 ranks the highest in serious housing code violations in the city.***
- Subprime home purchase and refinance loans are highest in the city
- Community Board#5 continues to rank one of the lowest in the city (#54out of 59) overall in economic conditions, health, youth, housing, community life, safety, environment &and education.

*** Analysis are based on the 2009 2010 Furman Report

Community Board 5 is delighted with recent development, although our district infrastructure is in a fragile state. Therefore, the board wants the city to be mindful that increase development must be accompanied by additional resources and infrastructure improvements in order to address our devastating needs. As advocates for our community, we will continue seeking specific funding in the areas of recreation, parks library, youth services, and education.

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

1) Department of Transportation:

- Creation of a Step Street Task Force (Community Board #5 has approximately 14 Steps Streets in its district).
- Continuation of Jerome Avenue Transportation Study
- Resurfacing of the Grand Concourse from 175th to Fordham Road.
- Improved signage and traffic calming device on all our major thoroughfares (Gr. Concourse, University Ave, Fordham Road & Tremont Ave.)

2) Department of Parks & Recreation:

- Improvement of the Aqueduct walkway providing connection at Burnside Avenue Pedestrian bridge or Step Streets to Morton Place Playground.
- Increase in budget allocation for the hiring of additional PEP officers;
- Increase in budget for the construction of additional neighborhood Playgrounds and recreation aides, as identified by CB 5 and residents;
- Development of depot place along the Harlem River creating access to the Roberto Clemente State Park Waterfront esplanade, access for the residents of CB 4, CB 5 and CB 7.
- Development of Highbridge Park

3) City University of New York:

- Increase funding to CUNY schools (Hostos Community College, Lehman College) and Bronx Community College located in CB 5, is one of the major learning institutions in the Bronx, therefore it is imperative that services are maintained to continue providing quality Education to the less advantaged.

4) Department of Youth & Community Development:

- Increase in Youth funding services and Summer Youth Employment.
- Increase funding for Job Training & Employment Readiness

5) Department of Business Services:

- Increase funding for the creation of the merchant's associations BID planning funds for Burnside Avenue, University Avenue/West Tremont Avenue & Featherbed Lane.

6) New York City Board of Education:

- Increase funding for new construction and infrastructure development of our schools in CB 5 district.

7) Department of the Aging:

The elderly population in our district continues to increase. We are requesting that the city provides for the special needs of our seniors especially for the recent seniors which require services that will keep them active. Community Board 5 is requesting that long range planning include housing, health and mental care, home care and Senior centers. With this approach Community Board 5 feels we can continue their quality of life and prevent the isolation which many of our elderly are at risk for poor health and unacceptable living conditions as well as poor nutrition.

- Increase funding for the improvement of senior citizens' facilities in Community Board 5.
- Increase funding for senior housing
- Increase funding for innovative senior programs in Community Board District 5 e.a. Naturally Occurring Retirement Community (NORC)

8) NYC Police Department:

- Acquire and construct a new 46th Precinct with parking facilities;

Additionally, listed are areas where the budget responses from the agencies once again fall short of need. It is noteworthy, that while many of these capital and expense budget requests have in some form received favorable responses and approval, the actual implementation of capital and expense projects continues to remain idle to lack of effective coordination and communication among the appropriate city agencies. It is imperative that agencies become more responsive in the implementation of these capital and expense projects, which are constraints to the community residents.

Youth Services -- Department of Youth & Community Development

- Restoration of millions of dollars in Youth Services and programs including additional funds for CB 5 Area Youth Programs: Fair Share, Anti Gang Prevention Programs, Cultural Arts/Music Program, and a Beacon School.

School Improvements -- New York City Board of Education

- Rehabilitation of MS 319x
- Reconstruction of retaining wall supporting PS 109 playground
- Rehabilitation of PS 26X
- Completion of scope and design for rehabilitation of PS 33X
- Construction of school playground at PS 91X
- Construction of additional elementary-middle school

Street Reconstruction/Milling & Resurfacing/Step Streets (Department of Transportation)

- Reconstruction of Stepstreet for Kingsland Avenue
- Reconstruction of West 174th Step Street, between Popham & Undercliff Avenues
- Rehabilitation of Step Street at Davidson Avenue between Featherbed Lane & Davidson Avenue
- Mill and resurface sections of Tremont Avenue: West University to Sedgwick Avenue; East Tremont Avenue from the Grand Concourse to Webster Avenue
- Mill and resurface the Grand Concourse from Cross Bx Expressway to Fordham Road
- Increase resources for the Bronx Bureau of Highway Maintenance Division
- Increase resources for the Bronx Bureau of Traffic Maintenance and Bridges.

Sanitation-Cleaning/Enforcement -- Department of Sanitation

- Creation of Step Street Task Force to clean the 128 Step Streets in New York City
- Increase personnel and basket pick-up schedule to service overflowing baskets in CB#5 district (especially commercial areas)
- Overgrown weeds on Step Streets – (black top/weed killer)
- Increase funding for the Canine Unit

Parks Improvements & Maintenance -- Department of Parks & Recreation

- Increase funds to Parks Department for Miscellaneous Park repairs;
- Reconstruction of Aqueduct lands and Aqueduct walkway Morton Place to West Burnside Avenue; construction of Step Streets or pedestrian bridge to reconnect Aqueduct Lands to Aqueduct walkway.
- Increase funds for the hiring of additional parks recreation specialist;
- Increase funds for the hiring of additional parks maintenance employees;
- Increase funds for additional personnel in Forestry
- Increase funds for additional parks enforcement personnel PEP.

Safety -- New York City Police Department

- Acquire and construct new 46th Precinct with parking facilities
- Increase funding for narcotics' enforcement
- Increase funding for personnel maintenance
- Increase allocation of police officers CPOP/Safe Halls Operation Impact program

- Increase funding for the purchase of additional noise measuring devices;
- Increase funding for NYPD Security cameras on West Tremont Avenue, University Avenue. And Burnside Avenue

Housing -- Department of Housing Preservation & Development

- Increase funding for capital improvements of city-owned buildings
- Increase funding for the expansion of the Anti-abandonment program
- Fund/Restore Narcotics Control Unit
- Building Maintenance/Inspections (Department of Buildings)
- Increase funding to hire additional inspectors for the office of the Bronx
- Increase funding limits for 8A Loans and Participation Loans
- Affordable housing still remains the priority in our district. However, we will continue to advocate for the development and building of Affordable housing which includes homeownership condominiums and cooperative apartments.

Health/Safety -- Department of Consumer Affairs

- Increase funding for expansion of Pest Control Unit including additional personnel
- Increase funding for additional field inspectors/Exterminators
- Increase funding for Teen pregnancy programs
- Increase funding for Asthma treatment

Human Resources -- Department of Human Resources Administration

- Increase funding for workfare to work initiatives in Community District 5;
- Increase outreach services to large immigrant population in Community District 5.

Economic Development --Department of Business Service & Economic Development

- Creation of Business Improvement Districts (Fordham Road, Burnside Avenue, West Tremont Avenue, University Avenue/Featherbed Lane

Fire Prevention/Education -- New York City Fire Department

- Increase funding for fire safety houses, medical kits for each Engine Company, the Juvenile fire setters program, and fatal fire teams.
- Increase funding for carbon monoxide detectors.

Additionally, it is imperative that the Executive Budget maintains resources to the New York City Public Library Branches to allocate for additional materials, increase in staff and exterior renovations, and maintenance for extended library hours.

It is also vitally important to recognize that Economic Development in Bronx Community District 5 is a priority, especially since the district is comprised of major commercial strips such as Fordham Road, Burnside Avenue, and Tremont Shopping areas. In this district, with such a high level of unemployment rate, the need for commercial

revitalization and community involvement is of the utmost important. The creation of Business Improvement Districts is a mechanism to improve conditions in our neighborhoods and brings a sense of pride and ownership to local merchants. We continue to encourage and support community and business collaborations.

Finally, Community Boards are indeed the link to the city. In this regard, Community Board 5 continues to advocate for the increase in Community Boards operating budgets, allowing for further strengthening and improvement in the delivery of services to communities at large. Equally important, are the obligations mandated to Community Boards by the New York City charter, which includes the development of a 197-A plan for each community district. Community Board 5 recognizes the significance and contribution that a 197-A Community Plan affords a district, specifically in preparation for future capital and expense budget requests. Bronx Community Board 5 is still actively engaged in a planning process for the future development and preservation of its neighborhoods. In the last decade, this part of the mid-west Bronx, known as West Tremont, has seen the development of new and rehabilitated housing, the opening of shopping districts some improvements to schools and community facilities, and increasing signs of community organization to improve commercial and retail strips. Nevertheless, there are still many more challenges facing the people living and working in the vibrant neighborhoods of Mount Hope, Morris Heights, University Heights and South Fordham. Moreover, the Community Board has continued to identify quality-of-life issues relating to safety, service delivery and effective programs for both its youngest and oldest residents. As the Community Board continues to work with government agencies to develop its plans for the district, the Board recognizes that full citizen participation is essential. To facilitate deeper community involvement, Community Board 5 has initiated a “Visioning Process” for leaders and citizens working together to develop shared goals, objectives and strategies to fulfill their hopes for the future of their community. We therefore, wholeheartedly, urge that the City of New York to allocate additional funds to each of the 59 Community Boards for the planning and implementation of a 197-A Community Plan, which is a very costly and time-consuming process.

Community District 5, in echoing the sentiments of a community at large, understands that the budget development process has never been a painless exercise. We are deeply concerned, however, that the most vulnerable – children, senior citizens, and poor people are forced to bear a disproportionate share of the pain. Although, the city is going thru financial constraints, we must insist that our community basic’s needs are not sacrificed in an attempt to seek a balance budget in the outer years. Our city government must examine means to improve its efficiency without being mean-spirited. We are certain that with a proper revisit to these issues, the City of New York could find ways to

maintain and secure a respectable quality of life for all of our citizens. Community's District 5 priorities remain a reflection of economic and community development, improvement of quality of life issues and most importantly, services to the future of our city youths.

Respectfully submitted,

Dr. Bola Omotosho

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Chairperson

Xavier Rodriguez

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