



## **BRONX COMMUNITY BOARD No. 10**

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### **STATEMENT OF COMMUNITY DISTRICT NEEDS FOR FY 2011 BRONX COMMUNITY BOARD #10 August 10, 2009**

#### **Opening Statement**

Bronx Community Board #10 is one of the largest Board service areas in Bronx County. The areas serviced by the Board are dotted with 1-3 family homes and multiple dwellings on quiet, tree shaded streets. The multiple dwellings consist of several high rise and medium rise multiple dwellings primarily in Pelham Bay. The Board is also the host community to Co-op City, the State's largest housing cooperative. Within the Board's service area lies City Island. This nautically themed community is a New England style fishing village in the Bronx. Several of the America's Cup Yacht winners were built on City Island. The City's largest park, Pelham Bay, is located within the Board's service area, as is the famous Orchard Beach, Bartow-Pell Mansion, and the Thomas Pell Wildlife Preserve.

#### **History**

The areas that comprise the Board were once part of Westchester County, and consisted of a group of private estates owned by the Throgmorton, Bartow and Pell Families. During the American Revolution, the Battle of Pells Point was fought between colonial forces and the British Army. This pivotal battle allowed the colonial forces to move safely onto White Plains, where they could continue our nation's fight for freedom.

#### **Boundaries**

North-New England Thruway, Eastern Prolongation of Park Drive, Park Drive, Long Island Sound, City Line; East-Western Boundary of Pelham Bay Park, Eastchester Bay, Long Island Sound (including City and Hart Islands); South-East River; West-Westchester Creek, Northern Prolongation of Westchester Creek to Waterbury Avenue, Waterbury Avenue, Westchester Avenue, Castle Hill Avenue, East Tremont Avenue Silver Street Eastchester Road, Blondell Avenue, East Tremont Avenue, Hutchinson River Parkway, New England Thruway.

## **Public Safety**

### **NYPD**

The 45th Precinct covers one of the largest service areas in the City, ranging from the Zerega community to Co-op City. Historically, this precinct has been understaffed. The Police Department depends on a statistical model, known as the Rand Formula, a decades old model that basically allocates officers on the basis of crime statistics. The higher the statistics, the more officers assigned. This model should be re-visited. While the statistics of the 45th Precinct are not as high as other precincts, the numbers of drug arrests, auto thefts, graffiti, prostitution, and quality of life crimes have definitely increased. The staffing practices of the Department are reactive, and not proactive. The Board does not want to be placed in a position of having to wait for an influx of officers, after some major event. The Board would rather see the Department reassess its statistics and have the proper number of officers assigned to the Precinct.

Co-op City, one of the largest housing cooperatives in our State, will have sporadic police protection. While the cooperative maintains its own Public Safety Department, the number and type of incidents have risen to the point where the expertise of the Police Department is needed. Co-op City enjoys a good rapport with the 45th Precinct, but additional officers are needed to augment Co-op City's Public Safety Department. The open nature of the development coupled with its immediate proximity to the Bay Plaza Shopping Center, requires the assignment of additional officers. Recently, the 45th Precinct received nine new officers. More are needed to curtail the incidence of gang related activities and theft of property in the Bay Plaza shopping center.

Bronx Community Board #10, especially along the E. Tremont Avenue corridor is home to many restaurants and bars. The majority of these establishments offer excellent dining and entertainment alternatives. However, there are a few establishments that allow themselves to become hubs for illegal and anti-social activities. Here again, the 45th Precinct does an excellent job of policing the more egregious bars, but is hampered by limited staffing. The New York State Liquor Authority (SLA) does not seem to have an adequate enforcement arm within New York City. The SLA and the NYPD should collaborate more often on joint ventures, so that the more flagrant violators of the law, can be shut down/fined.

The physical plant of the 45th Precinct requires an upgrade. The windows lack shades, the work areas of the individual officers, locker rooms, restrooms and gym require renovation.

### **FDNY**

Over the years, the maritime and industrial uses historically associated with waterfront use in the Borough, have given way to residential development. Under the present fire boat system, a "Boston Whaler" type boat stationed in Queens will respond to a fire, when needed. It can take 10-15 minutes to cross from Queens. If we do not have access to a fireboat stationed in the Bronx, fire protection for City Island and the shoreline of the Bronx is severely compromised.

### **EMS**

The FDNY made a decision last summer to remove the ambulance from its assignment at Orchard Beach. The Board contacted Commissioner Scoppetta on this matter and did not receive a response. Here again, a major portion of the Board's service area is being deprived of vitally needed

services. While it is true that the ambulance was replaced by a gator type vehicle that can travel to a sick or injured party over sand, it lacks the life-saving equipment of an ambulance.

## **Parks and Recreation**

Bronx Community Board #10 is home to Pelham Bay Park, the largest in the entire City's park system. This park includes Orchard Beach, yet it suffers from a lack of resources. The number of employees charged with its maintenance is relatively small. During the seasonal periods in the spring and summer, this staff is augmented by temporary workers. Scheduled budget reductions will see many of these seasonal positions eliminated, leaving the park, which is a borough wide resource, with a staff of twenty-five.

The playgrounds such as Pearly Gates, Colluci and Buffano Parks are subject to vandalism and illicit drug sales. The very limited contingent of Parks Enforcement Personnel or PEP officers is so small, that they are not in a position to control these situations, leaving enforcement efforts and crime prevention to the already over-taxed 45th Precinct. Ferry Point Park, the object of millions of dollars from the Croton Water Treatment Plant settlement monies, currently suffers from over-utilization and vandalism. When the new facilities, which include a new comfort station, ball fields, paths and a waterfront walk, come to fruition, they will be subject to the same problems without increased enforcement efforts. Another park, Veterans Memorial Park, is slated for thousands of dollars in renovations and it is subject to some of the worst acts of vandalism. There must be a greater commitment on the part of the Department of Parks and Recreation to deploy officers, develop new protocols with the Police Department, or install cameras in these parks. While all of these suggestions cost considerable amounts of money, and funding is limited, the Department of Parks and Recreation in the Borough should be encouraged to develop private/public partnerships, such as the Central Park Conservancy model, with Bronx businesses.

The Board is also vitally interested in the status of the Ferry Point Park East and the planned golf course, children's playground and riverwalk. It hopes that it will have an opportunity to work with the agency on the creation of this park.

There is interest on the part of the Co-op City community for a riverfront park along the shoreline of the Hutchinson River on City owned land. The Board, believing in the importance of water front access, would be supportive of such a project.

## **Transportation**

### **Mass Transit**

The primary means of public transportation within the Board service areas is a series of bus lines. The buses are designed to serve as feeder lines to the IRT #6 Train, the Pelham Bay Line at Pelham Bay, Buhre Avenue, Middletown Road and Westchester Square. The BX25, 26, 28, 30, QBX1 and Express Bus lines serve Co-op City.

The QBX1 serves all five sections of Co-op City. This is the only bus that provides an uninterrupted ride to the IRT #6 Train, and yet it receives the least amount of resources. Co-op City is also served by the Select Bus Service or SBS. This is a special bus that has its own fare collection

system and provides skip stop service to the Bay Plaza Shopping Center from northern Manhattan and the West Bronx. There is only one stop in Co-op City currently. The bus stops at one station at Bartow Avenue. After leaving Co-op City, the bus will return to Pelham Bay, the site of the Pelham Bay Station of the IRT #6 Train. This bus should be expanded to serve all five sections. The expansion would offer the residents of Co-op City another bus that would provide an uninterrupted ride from the development to the subway.

The Board is also served by Express Buses from City Island, Pelham Bay, and Throggs Neck. Additionally, the areas are served by the BX 5, BX 8, BX 14, BX29, BX40, and BX42. Some of these buses serve geographically isolated areas such as City Island and Country Club. During the past year, the MTA stated that there would be service reductions or eliminations due to budgetary concerns. However, these reductions or eliminations were never enacted. It is important that City government recognizes the importance of these transportation arteries.

During the discussion of Congestion Pricing, the issue of creating a Metro North rail station in the vicinity of Co-op City was reviewed. With the failure of Congestion Pricing, the station idea was no longer discussed. The Board supports the idea of creating the station. If the community had a station, commuters could be in Manhattan within twenty-five minutes. The presence of a rail alternative would give people the opportunity of leaving their cars at home, decreasing traffic congestion, as well as air and noise pollution.

The Pelham Bay, Buhre Avenue and Middletown Road Stations of the IRT #6 Train have been slated for varying degrees of renovation. These stations are characterized by peeling paint, graffiti, structural decay, drainage problems and inadequate lighting. They are in need of renovation, but the MTA has placed them on the list for future consideration, due to budgetary concerns. The Board has advocated for an expedited schedule of work.

It is the Board's understanding, that the City is exploring the possibility of establishing ferry commuter service from the Bronx. This is an excellent idea in that commuters will enjoy a commute of less than 30 minutes to mid-town. However, in order for ferry service to be viable, a jitney bus service will have to be established, or MTA buses extended to the ferry slips, so that commuters can reach the ferry.

## **Streets and Highways**

There are streets within the Board's service area that were identified in the Requests for Capital Budget items that were rejected. Streets, such as Middletown Road from Crosby Avenue to Westchester Avenue. The foundation of this street is in need of a complete replacement. Pot holes and sink holes routinely occur. Bellamy Loop and Casals Place in Co-op City are severely buckled due to settlement problems in the road bed. These streets have a roller coaster quality to them. It is important to have these streets surveyed and replaced.

The Board is home to Co-op City, the State's largest housing cooperative. This city within a city, is home to fifty thousand residents. In its interactions with City agencies, Riverbay Corporation, the cooperative management entity for Co-op City, often cleans and weeds the medians on Bartow Avenue and Co-op City Boulevard with their staff and resources. Additionally, they also clean the perimeters along the fence lines of the New England Thruway and the Hutchinson River Parkway. There seems to be some jurisdictional questions between the New York City Departments of Parks and Recreation, Sanitation and Transportation over responsibility for these cleaning efforts. The Levanthal Memorandum is often cited in these discussions. This document was authored by

former Deputy Mayor Nathan Levanthal and delineates the responsibilities of the agencies. The document is over thirty years old and needs to be re-visited, to assign responsibility for these tasks.

Additionally, there are several foot pedestrian bridges spanning the New England Thruway. The maintenance of these bridges falls into a bureaucratic limbo between the New York City Department of Transportation, the New York State Department of Transportation and the New York State Thruway Authority. They are often littered, covered with graffiti, poorly lit and are uninviting to pedestrians.

These issues represent protracted and difficult challenges. However, the effort must be made to coordinate the activities of the relevant agencies to ensure that this vital infrastructure is properly maintained.

## **Housing**

Bronx Community Board #10 has a glut of housing, a legacy of the boom real estate market. There are many large homes and several apartment buildings within the Board's service areas that are vacant and will remain so due to economic conditions. Pelham Bay in particular experiences this problem. When the Board was downsized, certain streets in Pelham Bay, such as Middletown Road, Roberts Avenue, and Parkview Avenue were not included in the downzoning and are slated for large scale development. The Board has witnessed one-three family homes being demolished, and replaced by multi-storied, multi-family structures. These structures are often built without adequate parking for the number of cars that the residents will own, the schools are overcrowded and the City services are taxed. The zoning designation must be changed to ensure that low-density housing is preserved. Both the Board and its elected officials have requested that the City Planning Commission consider the re-zoning.

The Board views with interest a plan announced by Council Speaker Quinn and the Mayor concerning the re designation of luxury housing into affordable housing, and is interested in pursuing a dialogue with the Department of Housing Preservation and Development on this issue.

## **Health**

Bronx Community Board #10 is serviced by three hospitals: Jacobi Hospital, the Jack D. Weiler Division of the Montefiore Hospital and Medical Center, and Westchester Square Medical Center. It has come to the attention of the Board that there is an increase in the number of low-birth weight babies and infant mortalities. Through research, the Board learned that the parents of these children often are alcohol/chemically addicted and do not obtain adequate prenatal care. Many suffer from controllable diseases such as obesity and diabetes. These conditions exist in a community that is served by three prestigious medical institutions. The Board would like to see greater outreach on the part of health care providers to reverse these trends.

The New York State Office of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities (OMRDD), New York State Office of Mental Health (OMH) and New York State Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services (OASAS) have inundated the Westchester Square community within the Board, with numerous programs. The presence of these programs in the community has had a negative affect. The State agencies often contract with providers, who in turn, do not supervise their clients properly. Reports of property damage, littering, noise and anti-social behavior are the norm.



The Office of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities (OMRDD) is particularly aggressive in buying vacant, often overpriced properties for use as group homes for the developmentally disabled. The Board often receives its mandatory forty day notice right before it breaks for the summer recess, necessitating interaction with OMRDD to obtain an extension of time to conduct a required hearing stipulated under the Padavan Law. Proposed group homes can be blocked if the Board can prove oversaturation, or if the Board can find an alternative property. This inevitably leads to controversy and divisiveness in the community. Often, the only resolution is an appeals procedure before the OMRDD Commissioner.

OMRDD, OASAS and OMH, do not engage in any community outreach effort whatsoever. If they had, perhaps the many misconceptions surrounding the mission of these agencies could be overcome. They often leave this function to their contractual service providers, who do a very poor job of educating the public and providing information. This leads to rancorous meetings and adversarial relationships. These agencies must adopt a community outreach team, which operates within the five boroughs, to answer questions and provide support when communities are considering group homes.

## **Environmental Protection**

Bronx Community Board #10 had submitted Capital Budget requests for drainage studies for the Country Club area. This neighborhood is located in a coastal area that floods, during inclement weather. In order to prevent further property damage, the Board submitted requests for new sewers and catch basins. The Department of Environmental Protection has postponed these studies for several years. The quality of life of the residents of Country Club would be greatly enhanced by the completion of these projects.

Community Board #10 is bisected by the New England Thruway. On any given day, hundreds of trucks, cars and buses are locked into a traffic jam on this road. The air quality of the communities along the route is severely compromised. The incidence of asthma and other respiratory ailments has increased. There are many innovative ways of contending with this situation, which must be explored with our partners in State government.

Much of Bronx Community Board #10 is open land bordering Westchester County. Interaction between residents and area wildlife has increased in recent years. It is not uncommon for homeowners, renters and business owners to encounter raccoons, skunks or deer in Bronx County. The Center for Animal Care and Control makes little or no provision for services to deal with these animals, nor do any of the other established animal service entities. As our environment encroaches upon theirs, these encounters are bound to increase. The Board would like to see a policy of humane removal of these animals, when encountered in urban areas.

## **Education and Youth Services**

### **DOE**

The New York City Department of Education needs to strive to achieve an effective community outreach program. Recently, the DOE announced that a charter school was going to be placed within the campus of PS 160 in Co-op City. The DOE relied on the charter school staff to conduct its outreach to the community board. The agency itself held meetings with a select group of individuals, which did not include the community board or the host community, Co-op City. With re-

spect to the siting of the charter school, the DOE relied upon the Facilities Hearing process, which is nothing more than a sounding board for people to express their thoughts on the matter. Information about charter schools, their purpose, funding, operations or success rate, was not relayed to the community by DOE or its staff.

Recently, the DOE admitted that the putty used to install the windows in a Co-op City school contained PCB's, and that the soil samples around the school showed evidence of PCB contamination. This matter was brought to the Board, as well as the Borough President by the community. This is another example of the DOE not reaching out to the community board or any other office concerning a major problem within the area's schools.

The DOE is one of the few agencies of government that does not send representative to the District Service Cabinet meetings of community boards. They assert that they are not a co-terminus agency and therefore are not required to do so. With two high schools and the Northeast Bronx Education Park located within its service areas, Bronx Community Board #10 feels that it is incumbent upon the DOE to attend these monthly meetings.

## **DYCD**

The Department for Youth and Community Development administers a series of programs through contractors that are designed to augment the learning process and provide recreational activities in an after school setting. These programs are overseen by the Neighborhood Advisory Boards. The money for the programs comes from block grants from the Federal and State governments, and they go to areas of economic need. Many of the young people residing in Bronx Community Board #10 do not meet the economic criteria for these programs. Unfortunately, many of these young people are at risk. The number of young people receiving C-Summonses has risen, as has the incidence of youth involvement in quality of life crimes, such as graffiti. The Board would like to see an expansion of services for this "at risk" population.

## **Economic Development**

The Board services the older shopping areas of Westchester Square, Westchester Avenue, Crosby Avenue, City Island Avenue, E. Tremont Avenue and the three shopping centers within Co-op City. All of these shopping districts are experiencing the same problems, such as overzealous parking and sanitation enforcement, a lack of public parking, little or no shopping destination status, older infrastructure and security issues. The Board is also the host community to the Bay Plaza Shopping Center, a regional mall. The shopping center is a polyglot collection of stores that seems to have been assembled without much planning. It is very difficult to drive within the shopping center's environs, it is even more difficult to walk. The mall itself is not well lit at night and the security force is small. Currently, the Economic Development Corporation and the Department of Citywide Administrative Services are allowing the NYPD to operate an impound unit for tractor trailers within this mall. The Board was never notified of this development. It should be noted that this parcel of land was being considered for a community center, featuring intergenerational programs.

In the case of the older shopping districts, the Board would like to see the services of the Bronx Overall Economic Development Corporation, the City's Economic Development Corporation (EDC) and the Small Business Services unit brought to the fore, to resolve some of these problems. In the case of Bay Plaza, where the City's Economic Development Corporation has jurisdiction,

the Board would like to see EDC work with the Mall's managers to improve pedestrian and vehicular access, as well as improving security.

## **Human Services**

Bronx Community Board #10 is experiencing an upswing in its homeless population. There is an indigenous homeless population, particularly in Pelham Bay. This population is augmented by others coming into the area to encamp in Pelham Bay Park and other smaller parks, such as Keane Square and Miele Park. The Department of Homeless Services has been on top of the situation, through its contractor the Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB). CAB, through their outreach efforts has been able to place people into counseling and permanent housing. However, CAB is encountering difficulties in trying to place individuals in need of psychiatric services into New York City Health and Hospitals Corporation (HHC) facilities, such as Jacobi.

The preceding paragraphs have attempted to present a picture of the needs of Bronx Community Board #10. The Board looks forward to working with its partners in government.

Respectfully Submitted,

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