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DISTRICT NEEDS STATEMENT – SUMMER 2006

YESTERDAY: ‘Meet me Tonight in Dreamland...’ An island of lights sending bright rays into the Brooklyn skies from the trio of huge amusement parks – Dreamland, Steeplechase, Luna Park. The wonders of Edison’s electricity lighting up the bustling streets so that people felt as if on a trip to the wonderland of Oz. Feltman’s and Child’s Restaurants offering delicacies and entertainment. A new Boardwalk linking the peninsula’s neighborhoods’ shorelines. Trains, boats, Stanley Steamers and Reos all wending their way to what had been an island and was now connected to the mainland of Brooklyn, nee Breukelen. The Elephant Hotel bulky and totally unique for the less discriminating while the plush Brighton Beach Hotel stately enticed the richer folks who first found that the salt air and clean waters created a perfect place to escape from the hubbub of already bustling Wall Street. And there were the Shoot-the-Shoots, the freak shows, and Feltman’s new invention - the ‘hot dog’. Summer bungalows dotted the streets as warm weather escapes for the middle class fleeing the hot pavements of the big city. Then, too, there was the Half Moon Hotel, where Abe Reles’ ‘mysterious’ death was to turn it into a headlined subject for writers in decades to come. Add to that the live theaters and the numerous restaurants. A Britisher named Archie Leach, later Cary Grant, was performing his stiltwalking act, while Durante, Sophie Tucker, and other talents performed at the Brighton Beach Theater and in ‘hot spots’ all through the district.. Tin Pan Alley’s new tunes could be heard on calliopes, bandstands, and at large eateries. An Italian immigrant named Valentino provided services as a dancing partner at one of the huge pavilions. This was the world of carousels and bathhouses, pools, cotton candy, knishes, freak shows, burlesque and vaudeville. And, above all, there was the exquisite new Boardwalk linking the island, and the long, long beach where the masses found release from the burning sun. All of it made up the wonderland that was an American invention and one to influence the world for decades.

TODAY: Times change, but this breezy Mecca for the millions has rebounded after decades that drew some people away from the shore due to the lures of air conditioning, television, and distant parks that were made easier to reach by faster and sleeker autos. Nonetheless, Brooklyn’s ‘Oz’ of thrills and chills remained popular even after fire upon fire leveled Dreamland and its neighbors. The landmarked Cyclone still continues its Siren Call for a pulse-quickenning roller coaster challenge. The Wonder Wheel, another landmark, entertains tens of thousands with its swinging and stationary cars. The Parachute Jump, an émigré from the ’39 World’s Fair, looms above it all, now flashing luminous displays of color to all on land and sea. Will this mythic Parachute Jump resume as a ride for the public? That, too, is a tantalizing thought to many amusement entrepreneurs and

to an eager public. The Boardwalk, carrying Brighton Beach to the west end of Coney Island, stretches its length as an ever reliable and comfy place to stroll and enjoy outdoor dining areas. There are Boardwalk entrances to Astroland and Deno's Wonder Wheel Park, and it's a perfect spot to enjoy the Friday night Fireworks, skyrocketing from the beach itself. KeySpan Park, home of the Brooklyn Cyclones' team, offers SRO crowds an opportunity to cheer and groan in the tradition of the onetime Dodgers at Ebbets Field. Nearby is Gargiulo's famed restaurant, and not far, Totunno's pizza where people swarm from the entire city. Brighton Beach with its numerous restaurants and night clubs delivers more than just a taste of Russia! High rise housing has replaced summer bungalows and boarding houses. To add to the funhouse tradition, there's Nathan's, The Mermaid Parade, The Annual Hot Dog Eating Contest on July 4th, The Siren Festival, Brighton Jubilee, and hundreds more special summer events and concerts. New stores and housing can be seen throughout Brighton Beach, Coney Island, Sea Gate, Gravesend and Bath Beach. Mermaid Ave. and Brighton Beach Ave. have renewed their positions as two of the busiest streets in a busy city. The shuttered Shore Theater Building, once the home of the mighty Loew's Coney Island, awaits a rebirth, perhaps as a cultural center unparalleled in Brooklyn. And there still is that Beach – long and spacious, still washed by a surf that entices the swimming and splashing antics of smiling salt water fanciers. Here are areas that welcome all ethnic groups from all countries. All economic conditions in a wide variety of neighborhoods, all linked by the sights and sounds of water. And, now, with growth unprecedented since the turn of the 20th Century,

The initiation of NEW plans, still in early stages, have been set into motion by the recently-formed Coney Island Development Corp. (CIDC). And there are NEW plans at the Aquarium, NEW plans throughout Brighton Beach and Gravesend, NEW plans for tourism and culture and sports and community centers. Much more! This is today's C.B. #13 – at the start of this new Century, and entering it with vigor, imagination, and an omnipresent sense of adventure but all still involving the pitfalls of a 'Trader Horn' trip into the future!! What will the future bring to C.B. #13's neighborhoods, to its merchants, residents, amusement area operators, and to the latest explorers of this unique part of a big city? Will the important C-7 designation for the amusement sector remain intact? What kind of impact will be felt with the buying-and-selling of land, and the booming construction of co-ops and condos? All of these come together in an excursion into a world that brings together a glittery past, a struggling but ever-hopeful present, and a 'yellow brick road' into the future.

TOMORROW: New developers have flooded the entire peninsula and the areas north of it, all part of C.B. #13, all with new – and some time proven ideas. Hotels? Expanded amusement areas? Water Park? Restaurants offering an international variety of foods? Streets and promenades reminding the world of the garish, gaudy, and groundbreaking Coney of old, but with the new twists and turns of ultra-modern concepts. None of it forgetting the ongoing, proven excitement of the Cyclone, the Wonder Wheel, and all of their crowd pleasing neighbors. Lights!! Cameras!! Action!! All of it linking to areas that are homes to all ethnicities, some newer to Brooklyn than others, but all working together. There will be debates over future projects? Will the new plans work for all? There are certain to be discussions over rumors and real data concerning newer residences that would join the extant buildings in an economically growing area that must not forget its long-time residents. The future means a balance between the past, the current, and the future – all riding on waves of optimism washing in from the Atlantic Ocean and Gravesend Bay. The excitement of a renewed Kaiser Park, the happiness over the clean-up of the entire Coney Island Creek, eventually returning it to use by kayakers and environmentalists, a healthy home for birds, fish and nature's growths. The removal of toxic materials on the old Brooklyn Union (KeySpan)

site that will produce still more space for environmentally friendly uses. There is the question of construction – lots of it – will it be good or bad for the existing communities? All of this is part of an invigorating period in the history of this world-famous ‘Island’ of fun, frolic, year-round and summer residences, healthy young people, relaxed seniors, diners and chill ride aficionado. Much more is involved, envisioned, dreamed... and the Century is just beginning!

Things are changing rapidly within the boundaries of C.B. #13.

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Although the neighborhoods of Brighton Beach, Coney Island, Sea Gate, Gravesend, Bath Beach, and the portions of C.B. #13 that include Bensonhurst and Homecrest have remained active with growth over the years, the current explosion of interest has had its spark as the result of timely incidents and plans. One looks at Brighton Beach’s resurgence as the result of an eager new populace from the former USSR, but the area also is still home to an older elderly Jewish population, to African-Americans, and those whose heritages go back to Puerto Rico, to Pakistan, to South America, to Mexico. One then looks at the work of Brighton Business Improvement District, to the Brighton Neighborhood Assn., and to the roles played by scores of active civic and religious groups. The formation of the CIDC by the NYC Economic Development Corp., working with the Community Board, Astella Development, and Coney Island associations, churches, residences, and more, has produced a most-positive proposal for that area, but all people are involved in the discussions and the proposed new Coney elements. But, then, changes have always been part of the peninsula’s history, from the late 19th Century when rabbits roamed the landscape and those first vacationers ferry-ed down to the shoreline. Soon, the island was no longer an island, with land created to link it with the rest of the City of Brooklyn. Within a few years, throngs had discovered this brand new American version of ‘Shangri-La’. With time came the hotels, the amusements, the honky tonks, the beer halls, the rooming houses, the boats, the piers. Summer colonies led to permanent developments. As the Brooklyn Bridge link was established, the area continued to grow. The now-permanent citizenry was joined by millions of tourists, visitors, entrepreneurs. The Vitagraph Movie Studio in Midwood used this picturesque vicinity for film after film after film. Since that time, the streets of C.B. #13 have remained a magnet for filmmakers, young and established, famous and on-the-rise. Cameras, directors’ chairs, and movie vans are a constant.

There was a large change after World War II ended. The magnet of the suburbs altered lifestyles as much as the onslaught of TV aerials. The Half Moon Hotel closed, later to be torn down to make room for an addition to the Metropolitan Jewish Geriatric Center. Pools, bathhouses, skee ball and poker roll games, the SodaMat, penny arcades all slowly vanished. Screams were no longer heard coming from the Parachute Jump. The Cyclone roller coaster remained a lure, but its compatriots e.g. the Tornado and the Thunderbolt lost out to time, as did Steeplechase’s grandiose park with its famed horse ride, its walkway gusts that sent the movement of women’s skirts into urban myths of laughter and delight, zany mirror images, and activities to cause screams of giddiness and fright. Brighton Beach Avenue saw empty storefronts developing. The spirit remained but the rust had set in. Soon the area’s popular theaters were forced to close – gone were the Loew’s Coney Island, the RKO Tilyou, the Surf, the Mermaid, the Tuxedo, the Oceana, as well as those stages that drew different ethnic audiences. This metropolitan social ‘dip’ could be heard when the shore areas were referred to as the ‘outer parts of the outer borough’. But nobody can underestimate the energies of Brooklynites, and, so, within years a turn upward became apparent.

Community Board #13's areas consist of an elongated peninsula with additional neighborhoods just north of the Belt Parkway and Coney Island Creek. All of it, however, is within steps of Brooklyn's southern water-defined shores. Thus the Office of Emergency Management (OEM) has underscored the potential problems, facing all of C.B. #13, with the changing weather patterns that 'could' produce additional and more intense nor-easters and hurricanes. At this time, supported by OEM and by Councilman Domenic M. Recchia Jr., a C.B. #13 CERT Team is already in operation should any troubled hours face this part of the borough. The geographic boundaries of C.B. #13 are defined on the west by Gravesend Bay; on the south by the Ocean; on the north and west by Corbin Place, Avenues X and Y, 26th Avenue, and 86th Street. The communities keep an ever-vigilant eye on any construction and/or shoreline changes that might impact, positively or negatively, on the neighborhoods. For example, a new Waste Transfer Station is earmarked in C.B. #11 but yet only one or two blocks from the 26th Ave. terminus of the Board.

Questions were sent to the Dept. of Sanitation by C.B. #13 re concerns about impact on other areas; and DOS answers then were provided quickly. Board members, particularly those living closest to this station, are intent on monitoring to see if there is any changes in the environmental and ecological lifestream of C.B. #13. But there remain concerns over such issues as off-shore borrow pits should there ever be plans to reopen them for use. The emerging new economy of the peninsula relies on clean beaches free of leakage from barges and issues involving pollution and other health threats. The toxic waters of Coney Island Creek, long of considerable concern, are now being cleansed, in phases, by KeySpan, under a State mandate. Land used by that facility on both sides of this waterway is also being cleared. The progress of the work is watched closely with its area ramifications including the anticipated 'move' of the C.B. #13-C.B. #15 Sanitation Garage to part of the land site. One can envision kayaking and fishing and other activities on the Creek in the future, and one thinks of, at least, part of the land for positive use in the ecological sphere. Yes, there is another concern about what the rest of the former KeySpan land will be destined. DEP is now developing a 'long term control plan' that, hopefully, includes the dredging of the Creek from the Stillwell Ave. terminus of KeySpan's responsibility to the rest of the Creek's flow into Gravesend Bay. Both Kaiser and Bayview Parks are found on the south shore of the Creek, and Parks Department work continues on the development of both. Kaiser Park, a highly utilized park, has already seen the creation of an excellent new running track and abutting playing fields as part of Phase 1 of plans originated by the Parks Dept. with Councilman Recchia. The development has drawn huzzahs from residents – and festivals have already been held there, many assisted by the civic-based Friends of Kaiser Park. Upcoming, in Phase 2, is the construction of a new Park House, urgently needed by ballplayers, strollers, tennis players, and visitors.

Now in a new and spacious office at 1201 Surf Avenue, overlooking the heart of the Coney Island amusement district – and the site(?) for future development – C.B. #13 finds itself in a convenient spot to check and double-check work on the various problems and complaints that are registered at the office. The refurbished Stillwell Terminal is only yards away from the office; Nathan's is nearby; Coney Island U.S.A.'s headquarters is across the street; and one can view the Cyclone, the Wonder Wheel, the Parachute Jump, and other sites. It is only a short 'hop' to Brighton Beach Ave., to Cropsey Ave., to the Belt Parkway, and other pivotal players in the future of this part of Brooklyn. The small staff is not only involved with solving phoned-in complaints but in visiting civic groups, remaining involved in all planning enterprises, taking part in neighborhood activities and special events, and more. It is a busy part of the City.

What are the subjects of the most complaints received? Bays closed to swimming, with lifeguard

shortages, prior to July 4th, is a particular annual issue. But year-round calls are received regarding clogged catch basins and sewers; traffic problem; garbage-strewn private and city lots; parking enigmas; homeless shantytowns; Boardwalk trip hazards; legal and possibly illegal construction activity; zoning misadventures; overzealous street vendors and illegal sales on sidewalks; beach conditions; flooding and fears of the results of inclement storms; much more including the omnipresent cloud of rumors. The communities of C.B. #13 are all multi-ethnic and multi-economic. The most recent Census figures appear to be quite 'off' with the suspicion that large numbers of newer immigrants simply were not counted. Thus, the numbers as issued by the Census give no real account of the needs in the areas. Funding of programs e.g. youth activities seem out-of-whack with less populated vicinities seeming on the larger fiscal assistance list. Indeed, the NYC Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD) appear to be particularly in the dark as to the needs of C.B. #13's young population.

The JCC of Greater Coney Island, as an example, is a far-reaching organization that offers widespread programming for young people as well as seniors, but its budget slashing is extremely dangerous to its effectiveness. Many other older and young groups, be it the Carey Gardens' Boys Girls Club, once an outreach of the Madison Square Boys and Girls Club and then dropped by that Manhattan-based operation, is operating but nowhere near it's the potential it showed in the past. Surf Avenue's Hirschmann 'Y', once a formidable center for civic events, for sports and theater, for arts shows, and more, was dropped years ago and is now home to an agency. Thus, a new Center, one of the first achievements of the CIDC inroads and to be discussed later, is of paramount importance. Some of their Housing Authority sites are used by the public, but others are in need of renovation and/or outreach to a public beyond their individual buildings. If sports' needs and events are sparse, then one looks askance at the even-less opportunity for those who are artistically or culturally interested. The Oceana Theater, the last of the neighborhoods' movie theaters shuttered as the screening site for Hollywood epics. Today, the ground floor of this former cinema palace serves as a restaurant/catering facility, while a second floor, created from the old balcony, plays home to arts and other events that are Russian-oriented. Outdoor concerts, featuring performing from past and present, draw tens of thousands of people to the Bandshell of Asser Levy Park every summer. It is hoped that these throngs spend time at the area's restaurants and amusements after the shows and/or return for further activities in the area at a later time. Indeed, the arts owe a great deal to the neighborhoods of C.B. #13, from the early days when the tunes of Gershwin and Berlin and Kern and Harry Warren were performed on local stages by the stars of the era, to the later years of literary, theatrical, and filmic history, as well as to the world of Broadway and the recording studios. Geraldine Fitzgerald, the late stage-screen star, worked with local young people and adults alike, in the late 60's, on the Everyman Street Theater Company.

The result was an original street theater musical based on the Everyman saga, and the result was so well received that it was done off-Broadway with the cast of Coney-Brighton-Sea Gate-Gravesend young people. It also became the very first event staged outdoors at the Lincoln Center Fountain, leading to that cultural center's idea for its now-annual 'Lincoln Center Out-Of-Doors Festival'. Yet, despite neighborhood alumni that includes stellar names like Louis Gossett Jr., Barry Manilow, Neil Sedaka, et al, the cultural scene and opportunities for art work that can spark educational growth and civic pride are missing today. The nearest live theater is Ryan Repertory's Harry Warren Theater on Bath Avenue, two blocks out of the C.B. #13 district, but one that attracts C.B. #13 audiences to its off-off Broadway home in Bensonhurst. There is an enormous interest in the arts just waiting to be re-tapped in the area. Will it be at the old Shore Theater Building? The landmarked Boardwalk Child's Building? Another structure in the area? All of them? Possible.

GRAVESEND/HOMECREST/BATH BEACH

A widely diverse population can be found in the areas of Gravesend, Homecrest, and Bath Beach, the neighborhoods in the northern sectors of C.B. #13. The Belt Parkway, Gravesend Bay, and Coney Island Creek geographically separate these communities from the southern areas. Throughout these neighborhoods, one may see many older and newer one-and-two family homes, as well as middle income high-rises buildings. But the specter of over-construction now looms as a considerable concern for the long-timers who have kept these areas clean and airy. As-of-right construction, led by perhaps over-pushy developers who cajole people into selling their homes, threatens the stability. At present, there is a feeling of open space between homes, notable is Little Dreier-Offerman Park, on Cropsey Ave., recently rehabilitated and located in the Contello Towers vicinity. Here, one finds pleasant surroundings for children as well as bocce courts for the older citizenry. Late night hours, though, do produce loud music from teens that have few other places to congregate. Complaints are sent to the Board office and to the 60th Precinct.

Not far from the Contello-Waterview Buildings, the latter which borders onto 26th Ave. (the end of the C.B. #13 areas) stands the Marlboro Houses, created with nice open spaces and civic amenities. But in recent years, the Housing Authority complex has had its share of problems. Resident groups are very active, but help is needed. Some of the well-placed outdoor sections and playgrounds need overhauling. Some improvements have been made, but not enough. One sun-baked concrete area, once an area for roller skating, is located near Avenue X and is shoddy and ignored. City services, likewise, cannot get the best grades, with residents' complaints concerning DEP, Parks, Police, DOT, and DOS, and, of course, the Housing Authority itself. Hidden by its grassy lawns are contemporary problems of drugs and gangs. Though things have improved considerably in recent years, some of these issues are underscored by concerns registered by Marlboro residents. Two major high schools stand tall with fine histories within blocks of Marlboro, but both have had problems in more recent vintage. Lafayette High School, in the headlines with sometimes over-baked journalistic fury, had been back on the track with its superb sports field, indoor art shows by students, and even theater. But racial issues within its large populace reached the media; incidents were reported. There is no excuse for the outcomes of intolerance, but there is little doubt that the media frenzy worsened existing situations and undermined the school's abilities to reach out and solve the problems. A multi-racial student program proved of enormous value, but there have been conflicts between administration officials and teachers running the program. Nevertheless, Lafayette has begun to regain its long-held position as one of Brooklyn's finest schools. John Dewey High School, with a fine campus, is a newer school with excellent landscaping and an open-space feel, but it, too, has had growing problems in recent years, and here, too, the situation can be reversed. One recalls that, only a few years ago, a large group of students became involved with the environmental issues of its neighboring Coney Island Creek! Programs were begun and such innovative actions should be encouraged rather than sent to the scrap heap. At the eastern part of the Board stands the esteemed Abraham Lincoln High School, which, like Lafayette, has been removed from the infamous list of poorly operating high schools. At this educational facility, one finds a large field, redone by Donald Trump in honor of his father. Many extra-curricular activities have been held here, and the students offer a treat to the community every year with a Halloween event staged by its Key Club that invites young people from throughout the C.B. #13 area. Classrooms are decorated by students with holiday themes; games, candy, and laughs are the hallmark of this program that brings together the school's students and their neighbors in a unique, fun filled way. Security systems operate in all of these schools and at Brighton's Grady High School. This school, too, has had a fine reputation, and, for years, motorists could rely upon the automotive

students to fix their cars with greater accuracy than they might get in a local garage! Grady Field, adjacent to the school, is needed, and has been used by such teams as the local Grace-Gravesend contingent, but plans for its rehabilitation seem to have stalled. It must be noted that crime and other problems at these schools has dropped thanks to the hard working personnel from the 60th Police Precinct, Transit District 34, and Housing PSA1. Crime has dipped throughout C.B. #13. This situation does not mean that further additions are needed for adequate personnel at these units.

Throughout C.B. #13 are many elementary and parochial schools, and all are serviced by one library – the Ulmer Park Branch of the Brooklyn Public Library on Bath Avenue. C.B. #13 worked with the BPL, several years ago, to see that the structure was refurbished. It still is too small for the wide population with which it must deal, students and residents alike. Currently, an unresolved conflict remains between the landowner of the site on which Ulmer sits, and the BPL itself. This problem must be solved; no closing of the library should ever be considered. It is imperative to solve the problem, solidify the workings at Ulmer, and, perhaps, in the near future find a way to expand it via a second floor or additional space. Elsewhere in C.B. #13, the Coney Island Branch and the Brighton Beach Branch are highly active and always busy.

Traffic questions always befuddle the residents of the Cropsey Avenue corridor. Major changes occurred with the arrival of Home Depot and the displacement of an entire block of small houses. Today, there have been changes. On Bay 53 and 52 Streets, next to the Depot's huge parking lot, new homes are seen. West 22 St. has been created to carry trucks and cars from the Belt into the lot. Some truckers and shoppers try to avoid the Cropsey/Bay 54th St. entrance to the lot by cutting down Bay 53rd Street, creating pedestrian hazards. The local residents have reported such a problem, and the Board has talked directly to the Atlanta office of Home Depot to assist in alleviating the danger. A traffic barrier triangle, with grass, stands at the W. 22 St.-Shore Road site, and local residents wanted to Green Thumb it, but a group from Staten Island's Parks Department has set up a space on the triangle on which work is proceeding. However, the remainder of this lot is garbage strewn, much to the additional consternation of the residents who had had a happy, cooperative plan for the small greensward. Across from the Depot is Linens 'n Things with a large parking lot, and the newest addition – a drive-through Starbucks. Nearby are the Retro Diner and a Burger King. A Large Pathmark has long stood adjacent to all of these sites, and it, too, has a large parking lot. With all of this action in this minimal area of Cropsey, new lights have been installed. More is expected along this loop from the Belt to Neptune Ave., although a proposed Staples seems to have fallen through with another big name slated to enter the area. (This last named enterprise would rise on a site that still holds two dilapidated and abandoned houses, along with a former school bus parking site that would be used for the business' visitors). With all of the growth in this Cropsey link – the stores and the nearby Coney Island 'funland' – it remains somewhat of a traffic nightmare. Many auto shops dot this same Cropsey thoroughfare between the Belt entrance-exit and Neptune Avenue, and they more often are riddled with cars double- and even triple-parked. Lanes are thus narrowed, and traffic backs up. Then, too, a long sought left turn traffic signal remains a 'must' at the southern tip of Cropsey as it reaches Neptune. There is no alignment with the streets heading to the amusement district, and motorists attempting a left turn to head eastward are interlocked with cars heading into Cropsey from narrower Coney streets. DOT has improved this intersection greatly in the past, but the remaining major problem is the left turn signal. There is no doubt, however, that the future of the peninsula will create more and more traffic issues. A suggestion that a Stillwell Avenue South exit from the Belt be created has been thumbed-down for a number of reasons. A full study of the area has been done NYU Wagner Capstone project, work-

ing with the EDC. It is worth studying so that some of the ideas can be considered.

The at-press-time considered Waste Transfer Station (WTS) just north of Contello Towers and Waterview is about two blocks into another Community Board, but its impact will be watched closely by the residents of this neighborhood. Of concern are potential problems emanating from the WTS and by the truck traffic to and from the site. But there will be careful watch on the environmental impact(s) considering the waterways that possibly would be affected. Nearby is the still-undeveloped Large Dreier-Offerman Park, used, these days, by soccer and baseball leagues almost exclusively (The annual Irish Fair held here may not be in the works for '06 although no definite decision has been reached). The park has enormous potential, and a Master Plan was to have been created by the Parks Department, but it has not yet been presented. The park site had once been considered by Family Golf, but that enterprise hit bad times and plans were dropped.

The eastern end of Coney Island Creek stretches towards Shell Road and the neat Beach Haven Houses, along with blocks that are residential and others that have busy commercial operations, including auto shops and an indoor soccer-tennis bubble. Also at this end are the Gil Hodges Little League Stadium, the Hits 'n' Hoops indoor family/sports facility, and more. The elongated former Brooklyn Gas Works, later Brooklyn Union Gas/Brooklyn Union/KeySpan site is located between the Shell Road and Stillwell Avenue area, and it is now being cleansed and cleared by KeySpan. Part of this landmass will be used for a new Sanitation Garage for C.B. #13 and C.B. #15 trucks. All of these vehicles must enter and exit the site from Shell Road;

any potential entrance/exit from Stillwell has been studied and found impossible to create. Thus, Shell Road will be a truck thoroughway. Many discussions have been held, and concerns voiced on the possible expansion of Shell and/or other modifications to alleviate problems that might arise from normal auto traffic, traffic emerging from the Belt, and trucks entering and leaving the site. One must look at the full picture here – the garage, the Cropsey and Shell routes, the nearby Harway Terrace, Contello Towers, Waterview, Luna Park Houses, etal. Traffic safety, convenience, correct usage and signage, and more, can make the entire project work for all. Just north of the KeySpan site is the large railroad yard, and its part of the geographic puzzle cannot be minimized.

BRIGHTON BEACH

Things appear to be in a constant state of flux within the Brighton Beach community, between Corbin Place-Ocean Parkway-Boardwalk-Brightwater Court-Belt Parkway. Two decades ago, the Brighton Beach Avenue thoroughfare was on a difficult downward spiral with empty stores and dashed dreams. Things then took a giant step into a new decade with the arrival of former residents of the USSR, who sparked resurgence in the area and particularly along the Brighton Beach Ave. shopping route. Restaurants by the dozens, many with spangled entertainment opened, some of them forced, by the lack of sidewalk or on-site parking, to offer valet service. Soon other stores opened and/or were given a renewed lease on their life. This economic whirlwind, with its new residential growth, was unprecedented in its history. The apartment houses looming between Brighton Beach Ave. and the Boardwalk still housed elderly Jewish populations who had settled in the area decades earlier. But the Riegelmann Bungalow area indicated the first challenge to the established neighborhood. Developers and speculators swarmed into the vicinity. Some of the bungalows had been transformed nicely into year-round residents; others were the victims of absentee landlords or abandonment. At the same time, the developers managed a 'gold rush' into other streets, buying up one-and-two family brick homes. The result of all this was the emergence

of taller condos and co-ops with the newly-arrived immigrant populations moving in. All of this massive development had brought havoc to many parts of the area – parking, in particular, became worse and worse in a neighborhood already faced by an epidemic of ‘missing parking-itis’. Shoppers, from neighborhoods other than the immediate Brighton Beach area, drive around-and-around the blocks looking for parking. They are joined by large measures of beachgoers and diners also looking, often in vain, for a place to park. The only municipal parking lot is located between Brightwater Court and the Boardwalk, with approximately half of it supposedly set-aside for local residents who pay for its use. The rest is for the use of whoever can find a spot. BUT desperate motorists park anywhere, the result being the lack of parking for the very people who pay for the privilege! Complaints are heard almost daily. There are many other problems that are heard on a day-to-day basis at the Board office, as well as with the enterprising Brighton Beach B.I.D. office and at the Brighton Neighborhood Assn. storefront. There have been scores and scores of complaints that are directly related to the zoning of the areas which permit larger structures on what had been lots that housed one and two family abodes. People cringe as buildings go up next door, disturbing easy access to fresh air and a bit of greenery here and there.

The downzoning issue had been discussed at many meetings and with city agencies, but, at press time; no steps have been taken to deal adequately with any part of the concrete crowding of the neighborhood. On Brighton Beach Ave. itself, the problems are manifold and seemingly difficult to correct. Double and triple parking is evident throughout the daylight hours, with buses adding to the blocked roadway that runs beneath the elevated MTA tracks. The MTA has cleaned up this stretch of the Brighton elevated system and is slated to work now on the Ocean Parkway viaduct, the sturdy structure that harbors the Ocean Parkway station and that looms as one of the most visible entranceways to both the Brighton Beach and Coney Island areas. Phase #1 includes work on the tracks to end the problem of leakage onto the parkway beneath it – a spot that sees ponding during the warm weather and frozen street areas during the winter!!

Not all of the merchants on Brighton Beach Ave. are members of the B.I.D., and some of them create additional problems. It is widely believed that some of the fruit stores and eateries, along this route, wait until the late hours before dumping grease and rotting vegetables into the nearby sewers. On a hot day, in particular, the results are stench that are repulsive to the tens of thousands who shop in the vicinity. The street has Zero Visibility tolerance, as does Surf Avenue, but despite regulations or vague definitions of rules, war veterans, for example, set up sales tables along this crowded thoroughfare. Is this allowable? Is it a negative factor for pedestrian movement? Private carters of trash have not been innocent of mismanagement either. Trash may be left on the streets for time spans far longer than they should. The Dept. of Sanitation struggles to keep the streets clean, and DEP is almost always ‘on call’. Then, too, all of the traffic on these streets results in a mass confusion for motorists, some of them not ‘in the know’ about how to get in and out of the Brighton area where streets criss-cross at angles and where the Neptune Ave. egress at Brighton 11th Street has been blocked so that autos are forced to manipulate their zig-zag way back to a means to reach Neptune Ave. and a route out of the neighborhood. The worst intersection, of many, is the one at Brighton Beach Ave. and Coney Island Ave. where the ‘el’ turns and where cars appear to almost aimlessly seek ways to make left and right turns. Pedestrians seem to hold their breath while crossing. Road markings add to the confusion, as do the cars parked in areas that block the view at turning zones. The site is also one used by bus drivers taking people to and from Atlantic City and other venues. And yet people continue to re-discover the wonders of the site, with its fine restaurants that include the publicized Tatiana and Winter Garden, both offering al fresco dining on the Boardwalk; the National, the Odessa, and others.

Among the landmarks that have disappeared is the fabled Brighton Beach Baths, now the site for the spacious Oceana development, with its tall structures looming in a fenced sector in and around Coney Island Ave.-Brighton Beach Ave. Muss Development has not even completed the full site, but it has brought a huge new population to the neighborhood. A children's park and a sitting park have been created on its Brighton Beach side as one of the amenities, but parking for other residents in the abutting area remains very strained. Plans for a restaurant around the corner at the start of the Beach-Boardwalk have been boo-ed by the area, largely due to the resultant additional traffic woes. The project, as it now stands, is not in the offing. This entire neighborhood cannot strictly be entirely called 'Russia By The Sea' – it is also home to those whose heritage come from Pakistan, South America, Asia, Turkey, as well as the longer-standing populations of African-Americans and Puerto Ricans. Neptune Avenue has become the main 'drag' for these residents. New stores are opening face-to-face with the as-of-right construction of developers. Crowding is more and more evident.

But all groups seem to live easily side-by-side, with numerous synagogues, mosques, and churches dotting the streets. Still, the era of the Brighton Beach Theater (live performances), the Tuxedo and Oceana Theaters (Hollywood films) are distant memories. Currently, the structure that housed the Oceana Theater is used for catering and Russian entertainment. Sadly, the enterprising and entertainingly talented Brighton Beach Ballet, offering splendid work, has been forced out of the area due to lack of space and is now home-based at Kingsborough Community College in Manhattan Beach – NOT a part of C.B. #13.

As it has in the past, the most important element throughout southern Brooklyn's 'boom town' resurgence is the beaches and the Boardwalk that link Brighton Beach with Coney Island and Sea Gate. The Parks Department is applauded for doing so much with its lack of adequate personnel. There is a vigilant struggle to keep both clean, especially on summer weekends. The Boardwalk, as is noted often, is blighted by nails that pop up from the surface, by holes and rotting wood strips. Keeping up with the needs is a mammoth job, and the local Parks' workers are diligent in trying to keep pace. Of course, the fact that the sand is up against the wooden walkway is a hindrance, furthering the quick aging of the wood itself by its damp nearness to the boards. The fill beneath the famed pedestrian, salt-breezy route prevents any further singing of Under the Boardwalk although there must be constant watch to prevent the homeless from creating encampments beneath it. The homeless have been known to initiate situations that may result in fire damage to the Boardwalk and to any nearby structures. At night, homeless may be seen sleeping in the Boardwalk pavilions or under the walk. Other complications are evident.

The lifeguard issue has been a thorn for those in Brighton Beach and Coney Island, with bays 'closed to swimmers' during periods when there were insufficient lifeguards to watch over the entire beach. There have been person-to-person confrontations if and when people sit on these 'closed' bays. It is especially unfortunate because so many elderly people may have to walk blocks before finding a sandy area on which they can sit... or even put their feet into the water! Sad.

The Parks Department continues its publicized search for lifeguards each and every year, and one hope that the current '06 contingent remains strong in the future. Note that the bays closest to the W. 37 St. terminus of the beach/Boardwalk remain closed to swimmers due to undercurrents and

other oceanic ills caused by the U.S. Corps of Engineers' extension of the T-Groin separating Coney Island from Sea Gate. This, too, as has been mentioned, must be corrected quickly.

CONEY ISLAND/SEA GATE

The Boardwalk-Beach link between Brighton Beach and Coney Island remains one of the most famous in the world, but the problems continue re lifeguard safety, beach clean-ups, etc. Further problems erupt due to the lack of BATHROOM FACILITIES. New washrooms were created on the Boardwalk in the amusement area and the frontage near KeySpan Stadium and the amusement sector, but there are none the further west one goes on this stroll, posing a health and sanitation problem. In sad fact, the Boardwalk bathrooms are forced to close as early as 6-7-8pm during the summer, with tens of thousands in need of them in the hours beyond those times (e.g. Fireworks nights, ballgame evenings, and the late hour visits to the rides and games and food of Coney's most noted part). As a result of the Corps' work, which had been designed in part, to preserve the beach and to prevent sands from moving from the Coney side to the Gravesend Bay side, major ills developed. Beach level bathrooms were buried. The W., 37 St. groin was made too long; sand drifted from Sea Gate to the Bayview sector on the Gravesend Bay/Coney Island Creek north. Thus, Sea Gate lost its beaches, making it greatly susceptible to nor'easters and even a smaller storm. A hurricane would be devastating! Plans for T-Groin work to be re-started to half the creation of Bayview sand dunes and other ills seems to have stalled due to funding lacks. The results can create major hardships for many at the western ends (north AND south) of the peninsula.

The amusement district of Coney Island has held its own, despite changing times and other lures. And, now, it faces a future that can create a revitalized 'Coney', one that brings together past, present, and the future in an amazing array of old and new attractions and construction. The Coney Island Development Corp. (CIDC), created by Mayor Bloomberg with the NYC Economic Development Corp., has initiated a master plan that continues to undergo changes and development with new thoughts and visions on its implementation. Thor Equities has purchased a great deal of the amusement area, and its plans may or may not coincide with the projected future as seen by CIDC after countless meetings with the residents of the areas that make up Coney Island, with merchants, with amusement operators, with churches, with city agencies, and among its own members. Some 'plus' factors are already seen as part of the main reasons one seems tens of thousands of people in the area during warm weather – people returning to the beach and Boardwalk, tourists and new visitors who find Coney waiting to entertain, enthrall, and chill them. A new intergenerational Community Center is one of the first items to get a go-ahead and an issuance of an 'RFP'. It will take up the slack of needed civic activities in the western portion of the peninsula. Then, too, with the thrust of Borough President Markowitz, the world-famous landmark, the Parachute Jump, has been cleaned and become a multi-colored beacon to shine into the night throughout the year. Other landmarks are part of the CIDC overview – the Cyclone roller coaster, the Wonder Wheel, and the former Child's Restaurant Building on the Boardwalk. While talks continue on all fronts, including those between EDC consultants, Thor Equities and others, one welcomes the rejuvenation of the Stillwell Avenue Terminal, the gateway to this wonderland. Here is a structure linking 'what was' and 'what is', with its solar powered overhead and its revamped concourse with large spaces for stores yet to be named. Stillwell Avenue, itself, between Surf and the Boardwalk is apt to be a walkway of lights and attractions, while the area around the Parachute Jump will house a park that will include the restored B & B Carousell (sic). Also redone is the West 8th Street station. The Aquarium has plans on the horizon to ultra-modernize its facility, and its link to the whole 21st Century 'newness' is imperative. Thus, it leaves the question as to whether or not

the West 8th Street overpass from the W. 8 St. Station to the Boardwalk is actually needed. The structure MUST be razed; it is in terrible condition. It is also too low for the modern trucks that bring produce and other items in and out of the area. Plans are on the table for its replacement. Should it be built, or will all be better served if it disappeared from the landscape? It is generally believed that the northside of Surf died as a result of the initial construction of this span which meant that people could go straight to the Boardwalk and avoid the amusements on Surf. With its razing, people would return to the street, making decisions as to whether to go to the Aquarium, AstroLand, Deno's Wonder Wheel Park, or any others of the many attractions. And what is left of the northside of Surf – a C-7 zone? It is filled with non-complying furniture stores, one that even places mattresses and furniture in front of its building throughout the year!! Now, a car 'dealership' with no sign on its premises has opened at W. 12 St. and Surf. Does it belong there? If not, will it last as long as the mattress store? Fortunately, a dangerously set-up flea market operation, at press time, has finally been shut down by a day-long operation of the 60th Pct., the Fire Department, C.B. #13, the NYC Dept. of Health, the NYC Dept. of Consumer Affairs, the NYC Dept. of Buildings, DEP, etal.

It is obvious that the parts of C-7 zoning of the Coney Island district, a rare and valuable situation for the maintenance of an amusement zone, will be challenged over the years to come, with discussions of all kinds in the near future. What kind of amusement section is in the final Thor projection? What changes will have to go before the Community Board and, then, travels through the City channels? What kind of plans will be eventually discussed for the still-privately-owned Shore Building, once the great Loew's Coney Island Building with its large theater and office space? Will there be a hotel built in the area, or even more than one? What kind of new housing will be proposed? So much more is involved that it is well nigh impossible to guess the amount of debates and meetings that lie ahead with C-7 on the agenda as well as height and density of new buildings, use of older structures, and more. Once upon a time, the peninsula was filled with rooming houses, with bathhouses and pools, with theaters of all kinds, with a wondrous 'Toonerville Trolley' that ran along Railroad Avenue (not existing anymore between Surf and Mermaid), with carousels, auction houses, beach chair and umbrella rentals, with Boardwalk carriages, and much that can never be replaced. But what is placed on the map, most agree, should adhere to the image that people all over the world expect from Brooklyn's own paradise of frolic and smiles.

There is much more to be considered. The CIDC concentrates on the entire Coney area. Today, the summer bungalows may have vanished, but there are tens of thousands of people living in the subsequently-constructed buildings including the Trump Village and Warbasse Houses (many populated by seniors and the later Russian émigrés), by Coney Island Houses, Ocean Towers, O'Dwyer Gardens, Gravesend Houses, Scheuer Houses, Haber Houses, Sea Park, Luna Park Houses, Carey Gardens, and more! There are many more recently constructed one-family homes dotting the entire peninsula that are the results of the work of Astella Development. All of the residents and merchants of these parts of the community must benefit from the changes to the peninsula. Then, too, Mermaid Avenue is alive again with thriving businesses as well as homes. There are lots dotting the street, some Green Thumb operations and other HPD or privately-owned. What happens on this street is of urgency to the solvency of the neighborhood. The population of the western end of Coney now consists of a wide variety of ethnic and religious backgrounds – African Americans, those from USSR backgrounds, Puerto Ricans, Mexicans, Asian, Arabic, and Italian, Jewish. Quite a mix and all of it working well. On Surf Avenue, the fabled Half Moon Hotel, with its famed façade on the Boardwalk, toppled years ago to make room for an addition to the Metropolitan Jewish Geriatric Center. Other senior residences and centers may be found nearby. But young

people have fewer places in which to find after-school refuge, a situation that should, at least, partly be aided by the construction of the new Community Center. Housing Authority centers are vital as well as after-school programs. But none of the youth programs receives enough funding to operate to the peak efficiency needed by the young in Coney Island. Yes, drugs and prostitution are still found though the work of the 60th Precinct had provided positive actions against these inroads into the stability of the area. Bus service to and from the Stillwell Terminal still causes concern. There is a lack of adequate service at various hours of the night and weekend. Dollar cabs may be of help, but they are also criticized by many. On days of special events at the ballpark and the amusement area, there are special concerns about traffic in and out of the zone. The aforementioned Cropsey Avenue and its entrance and exit to the Belt become jam-packed. Residents in the western end find themselves, at times, taking double and triple the time to drive from the Belt to their homes. Further study must be done on car movement and parking as Coney Island resumes its giggly place in the universe of famed get-away spots. Much work has been done by such organizations as the Friends of the Boardwalk, the Friends of Kaiser Park, among many others. They also need support. Tenants' Associations are in the forefront of watching and action. Block parties, during the summer, and other neighborhood and church events are common throughout the year. It is a busy and healthy atmosphere that has been created.

The problems of seniors, as they are elsewhere, remain paramount in this neighborhood. Car services abound as do Access-a-Ride demands, and other important elements in the life stream of a community. Coney Island Hospital, serving this area among others, has a new ultra-modern addition that has pleased residents. Its E.R. is crowded but effective. The hospital's off-shoot, the Ida Israel Center, on Neptune Avenue is a highly utilized health center, although there is a parking problem for those working there. (Side streets nearby often are entryways to shantytowns that arise near Coney Island Creek.) Health issues are well-known but often hidden throughout Coney Island. The AIDS and HIV Positive population is present. Numbers are not good for pre-natal or post-birth needs. Amethyst Women is attempting to deal with women who have drug and other problems that include spousal abuse. A home is needed for its most effective services. Local church and the active Salt and Sea Mission (also in need of a home) are on the streets to try to assist with problems of homeless and disenfranchised.

One ongoing annoyance is a busy thoroughfare that is not a real thoroughfare at all. There is an 'extension' of West 6th Street that runs from Sheepshead Bay Road to an area near Surf Avenue. It is used by cars going to and from Trump Village, the Dept. of Motor Vehicles on West 8th Street, and more. The rear of the 60th Precinct and the Fire Department look out onto this 'street' as does a supermarket at the southern-most end at Sheepshead Bay Road. BUT this route is owned by the Transit Authority with its overhead 'el'. A car-towing business and an entrance/exit to the W. 8 St. Station are located at its south terminus. Potholes and riddled sections are rampant, and vehicles bump their way along the 'street' often conflicting in the two-direction set-up. Pedestrians using it are vulnerable. What is to be done with this 'street'? It is obviously needed and cannot be fenced off without further dire consequences. Yet it must be paved, with adequate signage and monitoring.

The Number One Capital Budget Priority for C.B. #13 remains the long-delayed PUMPING STATION, even more critically needed as Coney continues its growth. Flooding and sewer back-ups are omnipresent in the neighborhood, and the pumping station already is overdue. Without it, all can expect further disruption in the environmental interruptions caused by the antiquated underbelly of the neighborhood's system. Also on the top of the list is the awaited SANITATION GARAGE, which will now be built for C.B. #13 and 15 trucks on a parcel of the KeySpan prop-

erty, still undergoing a prolonged state-mandated clean-up of land and Creek waterway. The first ULURP regarding the garage took place, to Board approval, in the 1980's. A new ULURP, with new facets, has been approved in the last year. Homeowners adjacent to the old garage are among those eagerly awaiting the move of the facility to a better site.

The problems of Sea Gate are also of an enormity, but much is held back as a result of the fact that it remains a private community. City services, now, do more than in the past for this westernmost area of the peninsula, but there are concerns that are phoned in by residents and leaders alike. Some of the construction looks conspicuously illegal, and Department of Buildings is phoned. Sewers and streets are not always servicing in an agreeable and healthy manner. Of course, there exists the terrible threat of storm surges and the damage that can easily be wrought upon the sea-front homes. Few have anything but terrible nightmares about the Nor-easter that tore into the neighborhood over a decade ago, with videos of the surf gobbling up homes and streets. Sea Gate is a most pleasant, tree-lined, quiet community, but there are threats to its very existence.

CITY SERVICES – POLICE

The 60th Precinct, dealing with the impact of everything described, is a remarkable, excellently run operation. The Board is co-terminus with this Precinct, and the communication and cooperative ventures between them seems unparalleled in effectiveness. There is swift enforcement when calls are received, and the men and women of the force have a fine rapport with much of the community. The work of the precinct house, with Transit District 34 and Housing PSA1, has seen crime numbers topple in spite of the larger crowds and populace of the District. Transfer District 34 awaits its new home in the Stillwell Terminal (it is housed, now, in headquarters created at the corner of Neptune Ave. and W. 6 St.), and PSA1 is home based on Mermaid Avenue where it can quickly respond to the needs of the larger buildings within blocks of its headquarters. The Summer Detail deployed to the Precinct is of enormous assistance considering the massive crowds in the area on a warm day as well as the scores of special events that fill C.B. #13's days and evenings. The Detail is needed on Surf Ave., the Boardwalk, Brighton Beach Ave., and provides strong presence at such page one activities as the Mermaid Parade, the Hot Dog Contest, Siren Festival, Brighton Jubilee, as well as the throngs that arrive on Coney from day care centers, summer camps, holiday-ers, and more! While it is true that the men and women of the summer detail may not know all of the ins and outs of the regulations of a C-7 zone, as an example, they are always of help by simply being-there and assisting. But there are so many other things happening on almost a daily basis within the District that it is wise to consider expanding the force throughout the year. Along with the happier events, there indeed are drug-related incidents, accidents, prostitution, traffic snafus, potential gang activities, as well as bike, marathon and swimming races that take place. Nonetheless, the 60th Precinct is lauded by people; its Precinct Council is a strong one, and its link with the C.B. #13 office has resulted in numerous ensemble actions that are pro-community. The Community Relations' outreach men and women are always on top of area events, and a needed presence is always there. The Crime Prevention team, and other units, knows the communities well, and respond as quickly as possible. Cutbacks, in any respect, would be unwelcome. When things work well in a busy hub, it is unthinkable to cut numbers. The shadow of drug activity in high-rise buildings and the ever-growing populace indicate needs for MORE not less on duty at all hours. The 60th Precinct, the local Fire Department, along with Councilman Recchia, and the Office of Emergency Management have spearheaded an initial thirty-plus member Community Emergency Response Team (CERT). There are many more volunteers and prospective individuals interested in working with CERT. It is a tribute to an involved citizenry to see such interest. BUT

the Precinct must be kept up to date with communication needs e.g. computerization, cell phones, lap tops, small vehicles for use on beach, Boardwalk, and streets. It is unfathomable that the always-on-the-move men and women of Community Outreach, when needed at a second's call, must search out for an available vehicle. They should have one at their disposal at all times. The men and women of the force must be on the ready at all times.

CITY SERVICES – ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The modern day turnaround of the Brighton Beach-Coney Island-Gravesend-Bath Beach areas have been spurred on by excellent leadership from such units as the Brighton Beach Business Improvement District (BID), Astella Development Corp., Coney Island Chamber of Commerce and Coney Island Board of Trade, the Brighton Neighborhood Assn., Neighborhood Improvement Organization, among others. Small businesses have started to flourish again on Mermaid, on Surf, as well as bustling Brighton Beach Ave. They need continued support as big businesses 'eye' the area. There is continued evidence of more and more interest in the C.B. #13 area as can be shown by the arrival of Home Depot, Linens 'n' Things, a drive-through Starbucks, and many others yet to come. Thor Equities may well have additional plans that yet have been scanned by EDC, CIDC, and local enterprises – no business should feel threatened by the larger corporations that may be looking at Coney Island or the former KeySpan land, to name but two of the obvious ones. Will the C-7 zoning in Coney Island, for another example, hold fast against the soon-to-be-present Thor Equities and others? Will the family-run businesses languish healthfully in the shadow of 'big boxes'? There remains a firm community concern, in every area of C.B. #13, to protect those who have held on during the slower days as the neighborhoods move into this still-to-be-defined latest era of growth!

CITY SERVICES – PARKS

It is more than obvious that there simply are not enough men and women on hand to take care of all of the Parks' needs in C.B. #13. No matter how hard personnel try, it is virtually impossible to keep everything as good as one would wish. Of course, as has been mentioned, there are the beaches and the Boardwalk. Add to the list the Asser Levy Park with its oft-used Bandshell; parks that include Dreier-Offerman, Grady, Kaiser, Little Dreier-Offerman, Six Diamonds, Avenue Z Park, Nautilus Playground, among others. ALL must be maintained. Dissention results when groups and Parks collide with plans, including those for the still-undeveloped Dreier-Offerman. The handball courts on Surf Ave. and the Boardwalk are a city treasure with some of the best players around finding their way to them. A professional Volleyball Tournament is slated for this summer of '06, along with the new lighting of the Parachute Jump. Parks will have major role playing in the future of Coney Island. There is also the maintenance of the landmarked Ocean Parkway Malls. Kaiser Park is a good example of the hard work and the long attempts at its rejuvenation. In recent years, after a longtime of neglect, Kaiser is alive and busy with more work to come. Councilman Recchia took the reins and the Kaiser work has already produced a new and excellent running track and field. Upcoming is work on a modern park house, desperately needed for several reasons, the least of which is not the bathrooms that are now non-existent in a widely uses outdoor area. (The extant park house is now totally unusable and dangerous.) The tennis courts, though, have proven to be of paramount interest for years and years. There are disputes at Kaiser between those with tennis permits and those who seem to take over the courts as if exclusively theirs. There is no easy solution without personnel on hand at all times. The Parks will also be deeply involved in maintaining a bike path that will soon run along the rear of the beach area, removing bikes from the Boardwalk where they create a hazard. There will also be walkways for the seniors and infirmed to reach

the water's edge. Parks must watch the swimming races, the marathon running events, and other sports attractions. Yet, there are just not enough on staff to assist in all of these needs, despite the enormous capability of those already at their posts. The Boardwalk work, alone, poses an enormous amount of time, money, and commitment. A small portion was recently redone in the amusement area, but it was not handled to the best of the Parks' needs, with less-than-perfect wood used at the last minute in order to finish the project in time for the summer crowds. The Steeplechase Pier, perhaps a key player in the area's future, is, at least, half in terrible condition. Help is vitally needed by the Department of Parks and Recreation. Brooklyn is far from only Prospect Park and Brooklyn Bridge Park. Coney Island explodes with a call for added personnel.

CITY SERVICES – FIRE

The neighborhoods of C.B. #13 are composed of old and new buildings, of restaurants and on-street snack bars, of an elongated wooden Boardwalk, of whiz-bang amusement park rides and auto body shops, of solidly built high rise structures and newly-constructed units that seem to arise overnight. All of these require a vigilant and ever-watching Fire Department, and C.B. #13 has been fortunate in the personnel within its borders. Yet, one never forgets the impact of 9/11 and the toll it took, and is still taking, on the firefighters who rushed to the site, many never to return. Rumors of terrorism remain embedded in the psyche of countless residents, especially in vicinities that attract large crowds. The Fire coverage in C.B. #13, and its EMS components, is lauded. Response has been immediate when calls of possible troubles are called into 311, 911, the Board office, or the desks in the offices of local legislators. Fire has worked diligently in assisting the area's first CERT team. Yet, it must be acknowledge that the fire personnel reside in firehouses that are aging and should be upgraded whenever possible. Totally involved in the community, the Department has been in the forefront of assisting residents with smoke and carbon monoxide alarms, as well as with programs to inform people of the perils that could create fires. It is true, however, that fire personnel are often shifted from the local firehouse to firehouses in other areas, including some in Staten Island. There should never be an occurrence when a community is denied protection from some of its finest watch persons. Equipment must always be upgraded, and houses should never be emptied of those who know the community the best.

DEPARTMENT OF HOMELESS SERVICES

Throughout the City, the problems of how to deal with the homeless are still enigmatic. What can be done to 'turn around' the lives of those who live on the streets? What can be done to indicate to these people that there is hope when they avoid the shelters that they believe only offer cots and potentially dangerous conditions? C.B. #13, at the end of the subway line and close to the ocean, remains filled with open spaces that are 'attractive' to the homeless. The Volunteers of America have the city contract to work with the local areas, but much more needs to be done to solve the problems. The homeless in C.B. #13 are visible everywhere. For years, a prime hideaway was beneath the Boardwalk, and fires erupted as the homeless tried to keep warm during cold weather. Flames have been an everyday threat along the beachfront. Attempts have been made, often successfully for a while, to keep homeless from gaining entry into areas beneath the Boards, but they know how to shovel their way beneath the woodway and rebuild their makeshift shelters. In the past, it has been possible to find beds, working TV's (tied into city lines), hot plates, and more in beach areas in and around Coney Island Ave., Ocean Parkway and Brighton 1st Place, among many others. Homeless have been fed by well-meaning people from a Bensonhurst church that comes down on Saturdays to hand out food, on the street, at Coney Island Ave. and the Boardwalk. Sadly, the homeless must eat out-

doors on the street, atop or leaning on parked cars, or in untended nearby hallways. Residents have complained about this condition for years. The Coney Island Gospel Assembly has attempted to give shelter to homeless men, and the Salt and Sea Mission has been working, with very little funding, on a great many outreach, day by day, activities. Yet, homeless are still readily seen on both city-owned and private lots, in areas along the Coney Island Creek, on Ocean Parkway benches, in Boardwalk pavilions, in parks, behind Home Depot, in 'abandoned' buildings, even those that are supposedly sealed. Some of the homeless are on drugs, others are mentally ill, and still more who are lost in the framework of social services. All are in danger. But those who discuss issues will reveal their terror of going to shelters where their few possessions may be stolen. There are always plans for 'new ways' to assist these lost members of our society, and hope must be maintained. In the meantime, better ways of reaching out must be created using the abilities and knowledge of local churches, the Mission, the 60th Precinct, and the Board office which receives data on the homeless regularly.

CITY SERVICES – CULTURAL AFFAIRS

In the past, the neighborhoods of C.B. #13 were home-bases for the cultural growth of the city. Live theater, serving a wide range of ethnicities, were found easily. Tunesmiths tried out their new songs in the many restaurants and live theaters that dotted the landscape from Brighton Beach through Coney Island to Gravesend. The arts were a method of communication between peoples from all parts of the world, and the shorefront was a perfect place for all of it to come together. Movie theaters stood proudly (as the glitzy Loew's Coney Island and RKO Tilyou) and immigrant-friendly (the Mermaid and Surf). Today, the situation is quite different. The arts, which can spark educational interest in young people who may not be athletically inclined, are missing from the scene. There are no movie theaters. One has to search for a place where one can see artwork. The Brighton Ballet was forced to move to Manhattan Beach. The Everyman Company of Brooklyn, which set off a national frenzy for similar projects, was an enormous success under the guidance of professionals working directly with local citizens. It, too, is gone. Nonetheless, the arts are everywhere in search of nurturing. The Russian populace of Brighton is setting some activities going at the Millennium Theater (in part of the once important Oceana movie theater). Dance groups in Coney Island, once given some small support through the New York State Council on the Arts and the New York City Dept. of Cultural Affairs, have folded their tents. Now is the time to get things going again – and giving them a sense of importance. Growth is everywhere within C.B. #13, and cultural activities must be part of the emerging populations and the potential of new development. Close by C.B. #13 is the active Ryan Repertory Co., and it could be called into service. The Everyman Co. of Brooklyn could be revived, along with companies that specialized in Afro and Caribbean dance programs. What are needed are additional boosts to offer groups a chance to start up. The area has many visual and performing arts awaiting a chance to be part of this new era.

CITY SERVICES – HEALTH

The neophyte of the area is the newest facility of Coney Island Hospital, and its inception has been applauded. It is a comfortable facility, well-kept, and a good omen for the future health needs of C.B. #13. More work is expected at the Hospital. Additional aid should be given to the Ida Israel Center on Neptune Avenue, an offshoot of its parent Hospital. There are critical issues to be faced in the areas – drugs are still a threat; the aforementioned poor pre-natal care leads to potential birth defects. Seniors face anxieties over needed medical care and the mandatory medications that are involved. HIV-Positive is a hidden menace, and the longer people avoid the first steps to control, the longer they may infect others. Fears, also, can be found, particularly among seniors, of a short-

age of flu vaccine. Naturally, there are some unspoken anxieties of Bird Flu, and other ailments that the media warns them about. Still other problems remain unsolved, and one of the most frightening to people is the population of rats within C.B. #13. Calls come into the office often regarding large rats seen even in the daytime hours. Weed-filled lots, some of them used by homeless, are breeding ground for rats. Rats have been seen even in areas adjacent to such sites as Trump Village, Avenue Z Park, Brighton Beach Avenue, and areas beneath the Belt Parkway and along streets leading to Coney Island Creek, as well as streets in every area from Sea Gate to Homecrest. The 'why' does indeed include the sad fact that C.B. #13 is still a 'great place' for those dumping their trash and garbage? Although it is not as prevalent as it has been in the past, the dumping is still a problem and an invitation to rat multiplication. The Department of Sanitation has attempted to clean up areas that have been victimized by the uncaring who scuttle their garbage in the area, but, here too, there is a need for more personnel to handle the issue, and trucks that do not break down at regular intervals. The Health Department, too, must respond to the call for aid. It has been reported that old methods of rat poisoning no longer work and that the rats have developed immunity. But there are newer approaches to the program, and information about these methods should be known to the area. Furthermore, these new developments may indicate that the residents must deal with more effective means of handling trash and recycling materials. This information must reach the public in the many languages that are predominating in the neighborhoods of C.B. #13.

CITY SERVICES – YOUTH

It can be argued that some of the worst cases of bureaucratic errors can be traced to the agencies working with the needs of young people. The future adults emerging from C.B. #13 have been treated shabbily, and the opportunities for many of them to gain the experiences necessary for success and achievement as they grow older are missing throughout the neighborhoods. DYCD decisions have been widely criticized in C.B. #13 – and with very good reason. For years, representatives of the Board had met with DYCD to work on more effective means of backing programs that can motivate youth in the most positive manner. There are many struggling groups in the area that are attempting to do their part but which are given miniscule support or, worst case scenario, no support at all, from DYCD or any other supposedly helpful units of government. The last meetings between Board reps and DYCD seemed fruitful, at first, but went down the tube. Several members were asked to read the RFP responses from local groups – without even visiting the sites and without any discussions with the District Manager or any others who might know the worth of the organization(s) under consideration. Quite a contrast from the years during which members visited EVERY site and thoroughly analyzed which deserved the support. To make visits verboten by those reading the RFP's is ridiculous – and what is even worse is to have these people read mounds of paperwork only to have their input tossed into the trash bins and completely shunted aside. What happens? Local worthy youth associations suffer – and may even fold. At the same time, a group like Music Outreach, which in a perfect, well-funded world seems fine, gets chunks of money for quick work in a handful of local schools sans any real adequate follow-up. The result – more frustration for young people. To create interest in music and then have absolutely no local groups funded to keep this interest ongoing is an insult to the residents. A better system should be in place. Generations have been lost due to poorly planned outreach programs for young people, or by good projects that have been too-quickly jettisoned. Funds are needed for the groups serving Brighton Beach, Coney Island, Gravesend, Bath Beach, Homecrest, and their adjacent areas. Check the background of successes, in the past, like the Everyman Company. After its summer work resulted in performances at Lincoln Center, on the off-Broadway stage, and on TV, several of the young people, hitherto never exposed to such a program, actually enrolled and were accepted

at Juilliard. That is the result of agencies working correctly with the communities. What promises can be made for the new Community Center slated to rise in Coney Island? What can be said to the constantly-threatened well-being of the JCC of Greater Coney Island, the Brighton Neighborhood Assn., the Grace-Gravesend Athletic Assn., the Carey Gardens Boys and Girls Club? Youth DARES, the Sharks, among others? Why are they in constant anxiety over their futures while organizations, with professional consultants doing their applications, are the recipients of the few dollars made available, in this city, for its large population of young people on their way into an adult world? Some added points are necessary. Because there are so many potential sites for sports that are still ill-kempt, a constant flurry exists over who is using 'what', the most obvious actions are those seen at Dreier-Offerman Park. But there are important fields at Abraham Lincoln High School and Lafayette High School. Who may use them? The erstwhile full-sized field used by Grace Gravesend on KeySpan land has disappeared into the morass of the cleanup of toxic land and the Creek. The nearby, smaller Gil Hodges Field on Shell Road serves the team, as do other shared sites. But the Ty Cobb Field, near Marlboro Houses and the property of the Transit Authority, is not in good shape. Nor is the Grady High School Field where work had started and then had stopped. One excellent step in the right direction was shown by the Abe Stark Ice Rink. Dennis Quirk, running the establishment, has provided outreach to the Coney-Brighton communities this year in a strong attempt to reach-out with the added help of C.B. #13. It brings the Rink back into the forefront of possible fine use by neighborhood youth. He is to be admired for his work.

Many questions must be answered as the neighborhoods of C.B. #13 face tremendous changes in the coming years. It is all the more urgent that all of the interrelationships of agencies and community residents, with the Community Board, be understood. Nothing exists unto itself. Everything must merge into a positive stride into the 21st Century plans.

Marion Cleaver

Marion Cleaver
Chairperson

Chuck Reichenthal

Chuck Reichenthal
District Manager