



City of New York Community Board #1, Queens

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NEEDS STATEMENT FY 2016

INTRODUCTION

Community Board 1, Queens' District covers the area bounded by Bowery Bay on the north, on the south by Queens Plaza North, Northern Boulevard and the LIRR Tracks, on the west by the East River, and on the east along the west bound curve of the Brooklyn Queens Expressway to the Grand Central Parkway and 82nd Street. We service the communities of Astoria and portions of Long Island City, Woodside and Jackson Heights.

Our zoning is mixed with residential, manufacturing and commercial areas. There are two Industrial Business Zones within our boundaries, and two Business Improvement Districts. We have major shopping areas along Broadway, Ditmars Boulevard, Steinway Street, 30th and 36th Avenues and Northern Boulevard.

The District abuts LaGuardia Airport, along with several major roads that provide access through our community to and from Manhattan, Brooklyn and the Bronx. We also provide the only land access to Rikers and Roosevelt Islands. District 1 is home to the largest number of energy power plants that provide electricity to New York City.

We are the most culturally diversified District in New York City. We strongly feel that the results of the 2010 census does not reflect the accurate growth of the Borough of Queens and certainly not District 1.

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Our community has many desirable qualities, including the beautiful waterfront, cultural establishments such as the Museum of the Moving Image, the Noguchi Museum, Socrates Sculpture Park and a replica of an ancient Greek Amphitheater at Athens Square. We are also home to the Kaufman Astoria Studios, one of the largest film and television production centers on the east coast. Our cultural diversity provides an epicurean delight for the multitude of diners that live in and visit our District. This past year, Council Member Jimmy Van Bramer designated 35th Avenue between 33rd and 38th Streets as the Kaufman Arts District, currently including the Frank Sinatra High School of the Arts, Kaufman Studios, Museum of the Moving Image and the Queens Council on the Arts.

Mount Sinai Hospital of Queens, the only hospital serving our community and surrounding area, including Roosevelt Island, broke ground for the construction of a 6 story ambulatory building. This addition will expand the Emergency Department, and diagnostic radiology services for outpatients. It will also include seven (7) new state-of-the-art operating rooms, primary care and multi specialized physician practices. This new addition will be a most welcomed asset for our community and it is eagerly anticipated.

Department for the Aging

Our District has a large population of seniors, many of whom are homebound and depend on home delivered meals, home health care and visiting nurse services. Home care for our frail and elderly is less costly to our City and more desirable to many in need. These services must be maintained and expanded when fiscally possible.

Increased rents for those living on a fixed income are forcing many seniors to move from apartments, and the community, that they have lived in for many years, some a lifetime. The development of affordable housing for seniors and the physically disabled living within our District is great and we are very supportive.

Buildings

The need for affordable housing in our District has produced a market for illegal apartment conversion. It has long been our Board's opinion that legislation should be considered to legalize apartments that meet all safety regulations. This will provide safe, affordable housing and add to the City's tax base. Conversely, more inspectors are needed and stiffer fines must be levied to those who violate their building permits and Certificate of Occupancy.

Additional Building Inspectors are required, specifically on weekends and evenings, to address complaints regarding new construction and conversion sites that are not adhering to Building Codes. The community is often frustrated when a violation is found, summons issued and the violation is not rectified. The flagrant disregard for summons is of great consternation for our community. A stiffer means of enforcement would better serve the community.

Consumer Affairs

Our District has the greatest number of licensed and unlicensed Unenclosed Sidewalk Cafes in Queens. While the Board appreciates the ambiance that these cafes bring to our community, we realize that the quality-of-life of our residents must be maintained. We stress the need for Enforcement Agents, specifically in the evening and on weekends to monitor the licensing codes and padlocking of habitual violators. Those cafes that are unlicensed should be issued a summons and have their outdoor seating confiscated.

Economic Development

District 1's commercial/manufacturing/industrial areas play an important role in the stability of our community. Two Industrial Business Zones have been designated within our manufacturing/industrial areas, as well as, two Business Improvement Districts (BID): Steinway Street between 35th and 28th Avenues and the Long Island City BID which incorporates the Queens Plaza North area.

The commercial strips must be supported by City services e.g. curb and sidewalk repair and tree maintenance. More frequent Sanitation Basket Pick-ups and graffiti maintenance is required, as well, for our commercial areas. Although cycling is encouraged it is important to recognize the need for parking spaces for the survival of our commercial area that must compete with malls and cyber shopping. Tax incentives are necessary to ensure that jobs are maintained and businesses remain.

Environmental Protection

During the past year, there has been two major rezoning in the vicinity of Hallet's Cove (1st to 9th between 26th Ave. & Astoria Blvd). The zoning change for both projects will permit the construction of residential (approximately 4,000 Units) with commercial development in an area previously zoned manufacturing. Also, throughout our District, multi-family dwellings are replacing one and two-family homes. This new development has put a strain on our infrastructure, particularly on our combined and storm sewers. The City must plan for the increase in higher density development.

Also, our District host the greatest number of power plants in the City, we abut LaGuardia Airport, the Grand Central Parkway, the Brooklyn Queens Expressway and the Robert F. Kennedy and Queensborough/Koch Bridges. Exhaust and air fuel fumes have contributed to our District's reputation as one of the highest respiratory distress related areas. Monitoring of our air quality is essential to our health and well-being.

Fire

Due to our close proximity to Manhattan, the Bronx and Roosevelt Island our Fire resources are stretched to supplement fire protection to the residential and business communities in those areas. The new development of high-rise and multi-family dwellings where 1 and 2 family homes existed has created an even greater demand on our fire resources. We must be vigilant in our support of our current Fire facilities and the "Bravest" who put their lives on the line each time they respond to an emergency.

Forestry

Currently, Queens County has the greatest number of trees of all the boroughs. The removal of dead trees and large tree stumps must be given a priority in the City's budget. The pruning of our street trees, every 7 years, is insufficient for the benefit of the trees and safety of our streets. More frequent maintenance will save our City from lawsuits resulting from falling branches and trip hazards.

Housing

Our District has five New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) developments. They are Astoria, Queensbridge North and South, Ravenswood and the Woodside Houses. Funding from Federal/State/City sources for after school and senior citizen programs are essential to addressing the large population of both the senior and youth in these housing units.

New York City is in an "Affordable Housing Crisis" and our Board supports and stresses the inclusion of a greater percentage of affordable units in construction of new developments.

Parks & Recreation

Our increased population has created a greater need for the development of our open spaces. Many of our playgrounds require renovation, with the inclusion of safety gates that would prevent, primarily toddlers, from leaving the playground. Bicycle paths along the waterfront, through our Parks, offer a safe and beautiful route for cyclist while providing a splendid view of the Manhattan skyline.

We eagerly anticipate the construction of a performance space, in the dormant diving pool area, of the Landmarked Diving Pool in Astoria Park. This venue for live performances will be a show place for our community, as well as, the entire City.

Our Board strongly supports the hiring of additional personnel to maintain the City's investment in our recreational spaces.

Police

Residential development has increased in our District impacting on all services, particularly the Police. We have an increase in night life, approximately 160 establishments in our District, that impacts on the quality-of-life of the surrounding neighborhoods. We urge the enforcement of regulations pertaining to cabarets and bars i.e.: excessive noise, drugs and serving alcohol to minors. The MARCH Program (Multi Agency Response to Club Hotspots) has been effective in monitoring those establishments that violate the law. This program must continue. More Police are needed on the streets.

Sanitation

Our Board has supported the relocation or expansion of the existing QW-1 Sanitation garage. The facility was built in the 1930's and the population of our community's needs and has changed drastically since that time, as has the Sanitation's vehicles. Additional

space is needed to meet an increase in the size and the number of vehicles utilized at this site.

More litter baskets are required on our commercial strips. Also, we need greater enforcement of litter laws. Merchants and property owners bear the burden of being ticketed for litter that is indiscriminately dropped by pedestrians or motorists.

Transportation

Community Board 1 acknowledges the need for safe passage of cyclists through the City and we support and encourage sidewalk bike racks to accommodate cyclist. However, we have serious concerns regarding the elimination of parking spaces, particularly in our commercial areas. This action creates a hardship for businesses that desperately need parking to accommodate patrons.

New development has brought more residents who depend on public transportation. In addition, many commuters from Nassau and Suffolk counties drive as far as Astoria/Long Island City and park their cars and board the train to Manhattan. Additional cars are needed during rush hours to accommodate these commuters and to encourage public transportation.

Respectfully submitted,



Vinicio Donato
Chairperson



Lucille T. Hartmann
District Manager