



# THE CITY OF NEW YORK MANHATTAN COMMUNITY BOARD NO. 3

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## **District Needs Statement for Fiscal Year 2013**

Community Board 3 Manhattan covers the Lower East Side and part of Chinatown. Its boundaries are 14th Street on the north, the East River on the east, south to the Brooklyn Bridge and Fourth Avenue and Bowery on the west, extending to Baxter and Pearl Streets south of Canal Street. It is a community filled with a diversity of cultures, religions, incomes, and languages. Its character, drawn from its heritage as a historic first stop for many immigrants, continues to the present day. Community Board 3 is one of the largest and most densely populated districts, the fourth highest in the city for population density, with over 162,000 people. Community Board 3 residents are very proud of its historic, diverse, and densely populated neighborhood. We also recognize that the very characteristics that make it unique also make it challenging to plan and ensure services for all our residents and businesses.

The District is changing in many ways. At the 2000 census, 38,000 required income support--23% of our population. We now have 82,000 people receiving income support 50% of our population. This is due to the number of people receiving Medicaid only. Thirty percent of our residents have household incomes under \$19,000 while over 15% are over \$110,000. Our District has the second highest income diversity ratio in the City. Our infant mortality rate has risen from 8 to 14%, and we have the fourth highest percentage of seniors living below the poverty line. The district continues to attract more people and businesses that support the growing market-rate housing and high-end retail, but many people within this community continue to live on the edge of homelessness and economic survival.

Our demographics illustrate our diversity, the fourth highest racial diversity in the City, and reflect our immigrant population. Our population is 40% white, 36% Asian, 22% Hispanic, 9% African American, as well as other parts of the world represented in smaller numbers.

Community Board 3 has worked to retain affordable housing and local businesses as well as serve the needs of the newcomers to this community because it recognizes that the displacement of long-time residential and commercial residents has caused great loss to this community. Many small family-owned stores, especially those that serve local retail needs, arts businesses, and nonprofits have closed and been replaced by an ever growing number of bars and restaurants. Families have been displaced from their

homes because they cannot afford increasing rents. Community-based organizations, which provide essential services for community residents, struggle to provide more services and to afford their own costs with fewer resources. The growing need to provide for our lower income residents in a gentrifying district as well as provide services for all residents under the most dire budget cuts will make the next fiscal year extremely challenging for Community Board 3.

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### **Economic Development**

For the past several years, Community Board 3 has watched its local economy change from a diverse retail economy to a destination nightlife zone. In areas of the district which are residential, businesses once served local retail needs and in commercial areas, there was once a variety of niche destination retail, such as lighting, restaurant supplies and dry and other diverse goods. As more and more nighttime businesses have entered the district, however, rents for commercial properties have exponentially increased, resulting in the demise of many retail businesses and leaving streets with little or no daytime foot traffic because storefronts are now shuttered during the day. Small retail businesses have also suffered as online shopping increases and corporate big box rental move into the neighborhood. Community Board 3 has conducted several surveys to assess storefront vacancy rate versus the percentage of liquor licensed establishments. On Avenue A alone, 9% of storefronts are vacant while 36% of active businesses are liquor licensed establishments. Consequently, these depressed areas of empty storefronts during the daytime offer little attraction to new daytime tenants, our residential areas are devastated by this lack of local retail services, causing food deserts, loss of employment opportunities for local residents and other losses.

Our property owners share in perpetuating this condition by allowing storefronts to remain vacant rather than renting them to retail tenants at lower but still profitable rates. This community board has observed that it is possible to rent these storefronts. Commercial properties owned by cooperative residential buildings are renting storefronts to daytime retail businesses successfully and achieving the preferred solution for this community, that being more butchers, bakers, green grocers, shoe repair stores, dry cleaners and other stores that provide retail goods for residents.

Community Board 3 has also surveyed merchants and discovered that rents, taxes and utilities present the biggest challenges to their maintenance of viable businesses. In particular, property tax increases passed along to commercial tenants have proven to be a heavy burden, often resulting in the inability to continue operating.

Community Board 3 needs programs and solutions to attract a diversity of retail businesses and to allow for affordable storefront rents. We have studied the economic development efforts of our federal, state, and city economic development agencies and have worked with local agencies. However, we have not found programs and services productive for our businesses. We urge local, state and federal agencies, including the Economic Development Corporation and Small Business Services, and elected officials to create programs which provide financial, tax and other incentives and strengthen our infrastructure through capital improvements and marketing to attract and maintain more diverse businesses.

### **Housing and Land Use**

The crisis in affordable housing within Community Board 3 continues to worsen. Years of gentrification, rising rents, limited dividend, and project-based Section-8 housing for market-rate housing, and a shortage of Section-8 vouchers contributed to this problem.

Affordable housing projects and other housing programs are disappearing from our community. Our country, state, and city face incredible budget constraints brought on by this devastating recession, which has resulted directly in cut backs by government agencies. Fortunately, Community Board 3 has managed to avoid the widespread foreclosure crisis. Nevertheless, we must remain aware of the possible problems should unemployment rates continue to rise and not entirely forget goals to attain additional affordable housing funds.

With new sources of affordable housing unlikely, the preservation of affordable, safe housing for low-income, moderate-income and middle-income families, and senior citizens remains a priority and is essential to preserve the diverse character of our community and the well-being of our residents. The City must redouble its efforts to focus its resources on protecting housing for its residents. Adequate funding to community housing advocacy and legal groups is essential to safeguard existing affordable housing. These groups provide essential assistance to tenants who are fighting the lack of basic services, building code violations, and threatened evictions that are part and parcel of concerted efforts to replace long-term neighborhood residents with market-rate tenants. This harassment harms rent regulated tenants. Because our community groups often work in concert with the Department of Housing, Preservation and Development, reduced funding to such groups prevents them – and HPD – from staving off the displacement and homelessness of our residents and in the long-term forces the City to expend greater funds to find displaced residents alternative shelter.

Agencies can issue violations, but there are no other measures for the city to take corrective action. Landlords are receiving violations from the Department of Buildings, but are not correcting the violations. This is sometimes done to eventually create unsafe buildings that will necessitate vacates of tenants. This in turn allows the landlord to renovate the buildings for high-income tenants.

Legislation is needed to force landlords to cure violations to ensure the safety of the tenants and also to preserve affordable housing. New development has often favored large-scale development, including the construction of luxury housing and hotels, whose scale is contextually incompatible with surrounding buildings and fails to address community housing needs. The Department of Buildings (DOB) has increased fines for and monitoring of noncompliant development, but more effective plan examination and increased enforcement is necessary so that noncompliant development does not go unchecked. The lack of monitoring continues to threaten our community. Systemic change that will enable DOB to follow up on violations and ensure that violations are corrected, including follow up of Environmental Control Board violations, is essential to ensure that violations are not merely absorbed by developers as part of their cost of doing business.

To protect our existing housing, agencies must work cooperatively to ensure adequate code enforcement so that serious violations are promptly corrected. Strict code enforcement and multilingual outreach and services are vital. Community Board 3 recognizes that NYCHA is the largest provider of affordable housing within the City. Although NYCHA residents must pay their fair share of expenses, they cannot be expected to shoulder the entire burden. NYCHA's increased fees for essential services such as garbage disposal and rising rents have created uncertainty for NYCHA residents who are unable to pay these extra expenses and fear that NYCHA is abandoning its mission of public housing in favor of privatization. Our city officials must effectively lobby state and federal governments to ensure that this does not happen.

At a time when housing costs continue to rise, the conversion of subsidized housing to market-rate housing decreases the availability of urgently needed affordable housing. Tenants who were previously the beneficiaries of state and city Mitchell-Lama programs and federal mortgage and

rent subsidy programs, e.g. project-based Section-8, have lost such protections or are at increased risk of losing them. Although these projects may contain tenants of varied incomes, a large minority of tenants of subsidized housing are poor and low-income tenants. Absent such subsidies, many long-term tenants would be unable to remain in their homes or in our community. Specifically, we are opposed to any proposals to “block grant” the Section-8 Voucher Program. The diversity of our neighborhood must be maintained by ensuring that affordable housing is accessible. Community Board 3 opposes cuts or limitations of the Section-8 Voucher Program and other aid programs that increase the availability of affordable housing. As our district continues to struggle with finding a balance between its history and its growth, we must prioritize protecting affordable housing for our residents. This is a basic need for our community and will also protect the diversity and character of the neighborhood.

Although Community Board 3 is now located in the economic exclusion zone of the 421-a tax abatement program, we still support revisions to the program that would: 1) eliminate the use of negotiable certificates, 2) mandate that developers provide 30% of affordable housing on site to qualify for property tax exemptions, and 3) mandate that developers taking advantage of both 421-a tax abatements and inclusionary zoning bonuses should allocate 40% of the on-site units for affordable housing.

### **Nightlife and Licensing**

The Lower Eastside and East Village are now nightlife destinations for people from other areas of the City and outside the City, State and Country. As a result, there has been a great increase in the population of people who enter these neighborhoods to patronize nighttime businesses. Hundreds of restaurants and cafes, serving beer, wine and liquor, populate most of the streets in this district. Bars, lounges, clubs, music and multi-level venues with ancillary or no food service are now located in much of the East Village, Lower East Side and many parts of Chinatown. Numerous large and boutique hotels, which include restaurants, lounges, bars and outdoor spaces accessible to the public, are also open or under construction in the East Village, Lower East Side and Chinatown. Eating and drinking establishments continue to open on avenues and on residential side streets whose commercial storefronts once contained only small retail businesses. More businesses have applied to upgrade their liquor licenses and alter or expand their method of operating in an effort to attract more patrons. Many are also seeking to commercially use outdoor space, such as backyards, side yards and rooftops.

While eating and drinking establishments provide economic, cultural and other benefits to the City and State, so many establishments in such close proximity has caused late night noise, increased vehicular and pedestrian traffic, increased rodent and sanitation problems, crime, and other quality of life concerns of residents and other businesses. Further, while sidewalk cafes add vitality and movement to streetscapes, an increase in the number of sidewalk café permits issued to eating and drinking establishments in Community Board 3 has effectively pushed the growing patron population onto sidewalks resulting in increased sidewalk congestion and noise. Residents complain to 311, the police and the community board about noise and congestion from patrons standing in front of nighttime businesses and moving between businesses, from music and people coming from businesses, and noise as a result of the commercial use of outdoor areas. The businesses on residential side streets are not legally zoned for commercial use but were grandfathered as commercial for local retail needs and the noise and traffic that exists from eating and drinking establishments now located on these streets has caused great tension between residents and businesses. Some of the benefit derived by this community from these licensed businesses is offset by the cost to its residents and the City from the increase in service delivery issues resulting from these conditions.

Issues of noise, disorderly conduct, traffic congestion and overcrowding are severely taxing the resources of our already overburdened City agencies, such as the New York Police Department,



Department of Environmental Protection, Department of Sanitation and Department of Transportation, and community board staff, all of whose existing infrastructure cannot now adequately address these conditions. Community Board 3 has the highest number of commercial noise complaints in the City, and the 311 system has been overwhelmed by weekend commercial noise complaints citywide. As a result, many residents complain that the wait time to make a complaint via 311 is a half an hour or more. This district is the second highest in Manhattan for failing rat inspections. Food and garbage from the numerous eating and drinking establishments is a contributing factor to the rodent problem. Police officers are expected to respond to the majority of these growing complaints and conditions, however, the staffing at our precincts continues to decrease yearly. The police cannot address the noise and congestion from the many people now moving between businesses at night and much of the noise from the cars, taxis and buses now overwhelming the street infrastructure cannot be addressed as service delivery issues.

Given that this district is suffering from such conditions while the City is capitalizing on the reputation and revenue that the nightlife industry has provided, the City needs to implement more effective policies governing enforcement, as well as provide more staffing and resources to its agencies, including increasing police staffing and returning specialized units such as cabaret units to police precincts, to address the growing noise, congestion and other issues resulting from the growth of nighttime businesses. Allocation of resources for increased weekend and nighttime enforcement by all agencies would assist in addressing complaints regarding specific establishments when they are made, as well as noisy and congested conditions generally. Community Board 3 believes that allowing a pilot paid detail program at the Lower East Side BID to assist agencies in addressing these conditions will also benefit residents and businesses. The City should create legislation that would restrict sidewalk café on sidewalks and in areas whose use cannot accommodate them rather than allowing them on any sidewalk where there is an 8-foot clearance. Community Board 3 also urges the City to create legislation to differentiate between businesses seeking to obtain permits to extend food service to sidewalk seating and those seeking to extend their bar space outdoors. Businesses should also be required to create waiting areas within their sidewalk café boundary.

Community Board 3 has spent most of its time and resources evaluating over 300 liquor license applications within the past year to address complaints about existing licensed businesses and to provide opinions to the New York State Liquor Authority regarding pending license applications. Opinions often include agreements negotiated between the community board and applicants which the New York State Liquor Authority will then include as conditions of any approved liquor license. While Community Board 3 will attempt to resolve complaints about businesses and minimize the potential impacts of expected businesses through agreement, it does not have the resources necessary to address these enforcement concerns, process the 1,000 liquor license applications it receives and address all of the community concerns regarding businesses and applications.

### **Youth and Education**

Community Board 3 has an increasing need for youth and education programs ranging from pre-school programs to after-school programs for adolescents and teens to youth employment programs and the addition of more middle schools participating in our existing teen job training programs. Presently, there are 8,200 children in District One public schools, 1,000 District One children in schools outside the district and 1,100 District One children in alternative education, such as private or parochial schools.

While Community Board 3 recognizes that there are diverse factors influencing the families who have chosen to send 20% of eligible District One children outside of this district, by establishing more specialized programs, strengthening moderately performing traditional schools and allocat-

ing resources to schools with the greatest need would attract more District One children who may be unable to attend existing oversubscribed specialized programs in area schools or who do not have confidence in the traditional school programs within District One, raise district wide scores and increase enrollment and parent involvement.

The formation of viable School Leadership Teams to encourage collaborative decision-making by parents, students and faculty is also critical to the improvement and success of our district public schools. Further, Community Board 3 strongly opposes the transfer of our local school buildings to special programs, such as citywide gifted, talented programs and charter schools that do not continue to preserve a significant number of seats for and serve the needs of children residing in this district.

One major step toward attracting district families was the Department of Education's new admissions policy that: 1) establishes Pre-Kindergarten as a point of entry to the school system and eliminates the need for re-application for Kindergarten and 2) gives siblings priority for placement in a school where an older sibling is enrolled, thereby reducing childcare, transportation, and economic burdens on families with multiple school-aged children and fostering parent involvement in schools attended by all siblings. A major step that is still needed in the admissions process is to provide a mechanism that assures the maximum diversity in all district schools.

While many District schools appear to be "underutilized" according to the DOE statistics, those measures do not take into account the actual space required to provide a quality education to children particularly our highest needs students who often require supplemental service ranging from speech, to occupational and physical therapy, guidance and other supports, in addition to enrichment and academic interventions that help them maintain their interest and motivation at school as well as to succeed academically.

DOE's inability to properly project enrollment growth, and the mis-measurement of the space needed in our schools has resulted in chronic school overcrowding across the city and in our schools. There is not a single new school planned for our district in the city's five year capital plan, despite rapid development. In a September 2009 report, entitled "School Daze: Fuzzy Numbers Mean Overcrowded Schools", the Manhattan Borough President, Scott Stringer and his staff documented the "vast mismatch between new residential growth and the city's plans for building new schools." Extensive housing developments on the Lower East Side and in the East Village, combined with the flawed methodology of the DOE's School Construction Authority are likely to result in continued growth in the local school-age population. Without the addition of new school buildings, we can expect the neighborhood to experience the same type of school overcrowding felt now in nearby-districts. Schools in the West Village, Tribeca, and Eastern Midtown, like many in the Upper East and West Side, have experienced large numbers of students on waiting lists for Kindergarten for the past three years.

In District One, we already see early warning signs of school overcrowding. As class sizes increase citywide, the greatest increases in Kindergarten class size in New York City are taking place in District One, which are up 22% since 2007.

In 2009, seven of the 30 District One schools were enrolled at or over capacity, according to the DOE's own methodology; some 15 elementary schools had more applicants than seats available; 5 schools had waiting lists for entry, and an additional 5 schools exceeded the SCA's recommended capacity levels of 85%, a level that allows schools to program critical enrichment and intervention programs. As the increased enrollment bulge rises through the grades, more and more of schools will become overcrowded, yet the proposed budget cuts will lay off 1/12 teachers, increasing class sizes, and further overcrowding schools.

Many of our schools are now forced to provide mandated special education services in hallways and in closets; and there is not enough room for students to take gym at the mandated state minimum amount. Furthermore, many schools in Community Board 3 are lacking proper gym facilities. This is a priority necessary to foster physical health and fitness at an early age, which will continue to be beneficial as these children become adults. Family academic advisement and counseling, as well as tutoring and remediation, would benefit students in our district, particularly those seeking post-secondary education or job training opportunities. Further, there must be more diversity training for staff and students in our district to foster a safe and healthy environment for students of all ethnic backgrounds, economic status, sexual orientation and gender identity.

The past two years has seen an increase in teen crime in Community Board 3. This is reported to be mostly geographically (turf) based and includes younger teens than usually seen in this activity. The NYPD, NYCHA, the District Attorney's office, and community non-profits are currently grappling with this problem. We have seen problem areas particularly at First Avenue and 14th Street, Campos Plaza, Smith Houses, Coleman Park, Gompers and in the vicinity of these locations. There is a need to create a tracking system which will pin point violence and the type of violence.

All agencies working with this population agree those proactive programs are needed. The at-risk youth particularly need employment and training opportunities and other programs other than just sports programs. Families of these youth also are in need of intervention and support system programming. Community-based after school programs such as Out-of-School time and Beacon community centers are vital to promote positive self-esteem, youth development, and leadership skills among young adults in our community.

At the present time obesity is near epidemic proportions with school aged youth who face early health problems. Youth need to be exposed to learning how to establish and practice smart fruit and vegetable eating habits for a lifetime. Education plays an important role in encouraging youth to adopt good eating habits. Even though parents play an intricate role in this education process, which is the starting point, it should be a joint effort with one reinforcing the other. Youth want to be fit and healthy; however there is a need for early intervention. Teaching youth the importance of eating fruits and vegetables can provide energy, assist with weight and may protect them from illnesses. The Board of Education should include nutritional education in the classroom with the goal of students turning their nutritional knowledge into real world practice. In addition, the Board of Education should create nutritious snacks and meals.

School aged youth rely on community based programs such as Out-of-School Time (OST) and Beacon community centers in the after school hours, on weekends, and on holidays. OST and Beacons are vital in providing youth a safe place to learn and grow, promoting positive self-esteem, fostering youth development, and developing leadership skills. Due to the challenging fiscal climate, both OST programs and Beacons received funding cuts. These free programs remain vital for parents to continue working – knowing that their children are in a safe and engaging environment.

Older youth and at-risk youth particularly need employment and job training opportunities such as the Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP) and the Young Adult Internship Programs (YAIP). This year, there are only 28,000 SYEP job slots available citywide – the same number of job slots in 2004. Community Board 3 hosts several SYEP contractors, including Chinese American Planning Council, Henry Street Settlement, and Grand Street Settlement. Providing youth with job opportunities leads to positive outcomes – such as higher lifetime earnings, higher rate of high school graduation, and higher rates of school attendance.

## **Human Services, Health, Hospitals & Seniors**

There continues to be urgent health concerns in this community. The triple threat of city, state and federal budget cuts further comprises the urgent healthcare concerns of our community. The proposed cuts must not only be restored, but funding should be increased to insure that essential services are available to everyone.

With the economic downturn and the hospital closings, more people are becoming dependent on Health and Hospital Corporation facilities, while the system is being scaled back. These cuts will impact the ability to provide care for people with health needs. Furthermore, with the recent closure of St. Vincent's Hospital, nearby hospitals are experiencing severe overcrowding. With no hospital located within Community Board 3, it is essential for greater investment into community based primary care organizations within our community district.

Many residents, within this district, do not seek regular preventive medical care; one in four does not have a regular doctor. More than 16% are not insured or under-insured. Many use emergency rooms as their first medical alternative, although this area has numerous other medical facilities. There are no hospitals located in Manhattan Community Board 3. Assessment of emergency services is essential to determine the possibility and need for an urgent care center should be pursued. Gouverneur has four satellite clinics in the area and Ryan-NENA, Betances, Charles B. Wang and Community Healthcare Network are other healthcare centers within Community Board 3. Easily accessible are New York Downtown, Beth Israel and Bellevue hospitals. With improved community education, all of the facilities could be better utilized by community residents for regular health and mental health care visits. Health programs within these facilities must be ready to respond to large immigrant, non-English speaking and undocumented population within this area.

Second, the community cancer-related death rate is greater than the New York City average, yet fewer area residents have cancer screenings than the New York City Department of Health suggests. There is a need for more education stressing the importance of early screening especially for breast and prostate cancers.

## **Health & Obesity**

New York State has a childhood and adult obesity and overweight crisis. In 2003, it ranked second highest among all states in total adult obesity related medical expenditures. The prevalence of obesity among elementary school children in NYS has increased dramatically. In New York City, more than one in five public school children are obese and/or overweight. As compared to other counties, Manhattan has the lowest prevalence rate. At the neighborhood level, studies demonstrate that the availability of healthy food, the physical environment, and the area socio-economic status explain the variations in weight and obesity. In Community Board 3, 50% of the population receives income support, and this population may have little or no access to healthy food in the area. It is imperative that our youth and families are exposed to and encouraged to healthier life styles as well as to strategies to sustain those changes. A comprehensive approach would entail involving strategies engaging families, the school district, as well as health care centers in the community.

## **HIV and Substance Abuse**

We have known from the beginning of the HIV epidemic that sharing needles is associated with HIV and other infectious diseases, i.e., HEP B and C. In New York City, the proportion of new HIV diagnosis among injection drug users fell from 6.7% in the first half of 2008 to 4.6% in the first half of 2009. This decrease can be accounted to the impact of needle exchange programs in the city as well as in the Lower East Side. Despite this success, overall, there is still limited access to syringe access, disposal, and needle exchange programs, as well as referral and linkage to HIV prevention services, substance abuse



treatment and medical and mental health care. Due to the fragmented framework from which many programs exist, Community Board 3 strongly advocates for the allocation of funds to enhance existing programs and to develop new programs which will address the needs of this particular population.

### **Mental Health**

The community continues to face the challenges of providing appropriate mental health to its residents, specifically, the Chinese and Latino populations. There is a gap of mental health services to the pediatric and adolescent population and to the LGBT community. Bilingual/bicultural mental health providers are paramount to the Latino and Chinese population. In addition, there is a lack of culturally appropriate resources to address the psychiatric needs of children and adolescents on the Lower East Side.

### **Seniors**

Based on NYC Center for Economic Opportunity data, 34% of people aged 65 and over in Manhattan, live in poverty. Community Board 3 has the second highest rate of poverty for people over 65 in all of New York City.

Community Board 3 supports the continuation of services that allow senior citizens to remain in their homes and communities by providing meals, healthcare, recreational activities and affordable housing. The closing of senior centers should not be an option. Expecting seniors to walk or to be transported to other centers 10-12 blocks away is unreasonable. The seniors who will no longer have senior service activities available to them will lose their motivation and ability to engage in certain things. This will include, but is not limited to socialization, recreation, case assistance, health and wellness programs and other services. This will lead to the physical and mental deterioration of seniors who will not be able to avail themselves of service.

Now that Lillian Wald is the only senior center still open in that area, the Department for the Aging needs to greatly increase the number of lunches allotted to that center to make up for their past shortages, but to also accommodate the seniors from the closed Riis Center. Senior centers are not just Bingo and a hot meal. Accessible senior centers are essential to the lives of these poor and elderly people.

There are also many seniors who live alone, with no family or friends nearby who they can turn to for support and help. Programs like the Visiting Neighbors not only can provide for them, but can also benefit the young people who help our shut-ins. For seniors who live alone and have been recently discharged from the hospital, discharge planning is essential for full recovery.

### **Homeless Services**

We see increasing numbers of people on the streets, and last winter the shelters reported that they were filled to the maximum very early. We have many people on the street who are mentally incapacitated, but evaluated as harmless to themselves. DHS homeless outreach has capacity and mandate to have only chronically homeless on their caseload. This does not allow for concrete outreach to newly homeless while they may be more willing to accept services. The number of people needing homes points to the need to continue and increase programs to place people in housing with continued assistance.

### **Other Related**

Abuses of the elderly and domestic violence are problems within this community that do not receive sufficient attention. Multilingual education about these problems is needed in order to reach all of the populations within this district.

New York City should work closely with the Federal government to ensure that all 9/11 related health treatment and related services continue to be funded, and that the outreach be provided to lo-

cal community based organizations, health service providers, and worker representatives. The public needs to be clearly informed on the qualifications and accessibility of 9/11 related medical care.

### **Police Department**

We are concerned that local precincts are losing staff as the population of our district is growing. Community Board 3 is within the jurisdiction of the 5th, 7th and 9th Precincts, Public Service Area 4 (PSA 4). Our district is an increasingly popular nightlife destination, so we feel there is a need for a dedicated cabaret unit as part of the local precincts. This would benefit the owners/operators of nightlife establishments as well as the neighbors. Common sense enforcement is more likely to be routine if specialized officers are dispatched to deal with complaints. Their ongoing relationship with the establishments would allow cabaret unit officers to distinguish between problematic operators and nuisance complaints, to the benefit of everyone.

The City needs to expand the force of Traffic Enforcement Agents (TEAs) deployed by NYPD's Lower Manhattan traffic command. Increased infrastructure construction (water tunnel, E Houston reconstruction, etc) is causing/will cause congestion due to constricted traffic patterns and construction movements. TEAs are also needed to support DOT's initiatives: bike lanes, bus lanes, pedestrian safety measures.

There has been a significant increase of bicycling in recent years, so there is now a need for enforcement of traffic laws regarding dangerous and illegal cyclist behavior such as driving against traffic, sidewalk cycling, red light running and failure to yield to pedestrians.

We strongly support both the Auxiliary Patrol Units and the multiple precincts covering specialized Rescue Units currently known as Auxiliary Police Support Unit (APSU) who are the auxiliary arm and adjuncts of the NYPD Emergency Service Unit (ESU). We urge their immediate reinstatement to their full emergency, lifesaving duties on the street and their complete revitalization and restoration of equipment, vehicles, training, status upgrade and medical care and NYPD ESU oversight for the Auxiliary Police Support Unit. There are never enough trained, uniformed volunteers in times of crisis – particularly during this time of decreased staff.

### **Fire Department**

The response area of nine fire companies in four battalions currently serves Community Board 3. The neighborhoods of the Lower East Side and Chinatown are some of the most densely populated areas of the city and contain hundreds of tenements over a century old that are structurally vulnerable. In light of multiple alarm fires in our district in recent years, as well as the thousands of emergencies that the FDNY respond to on a normal basis, Community Board 3 opposes any cuts to first responders, including potential fire house closures. Public safety depends on it.

### **Sanitation**

Community Board 3 has the lowest percentage of acceptably clean streets for Manhattan community boards as reported by the DSNY Scorecard. This points to the great need of increase series in Community board 3. Because we are also the second highest community board in Manhattan with failure for rat findings, we also need complete replacement of baskets that attract rats as well as increased cleaning and pick up.

Our district is growing as a destination nightlife district, but we do not have the sanitation infrastructure to accommodate this. The Department of Health has stated that the number of eating/drinking businesses contributes to this problem, but there is no plan to deal with the problem. The City considers that this unplanned business growth contributes to the tax base, but the revenues are not used to provide services to accommodate this growth.

We are also a very densely populated and still growing residential area. There are many old tenements without access to indoor storage or compactors. Because of the residences and nightlife, we are left with many plastic bags of garbage as well as overflowing baskets and open “rat-restaurant” baskets that contribute to a serious rodent health problem.

Enforcement is needed for garbage storage and removal by street vendors. Policy concerning vendors must be reviewed and modified so that vendors are able to operate consistent with regulations.

### **Transportation**

The most important transportation problem within Community Board 3’s boundaries is the lack of adequate public transportation; however, inadequate public transportation is exacerbated by the intense traffic congestion on our streets. The closure of Park Row and the congestion through and around Chatham Square continues to be a major challenge. Community Board 3 urges the City and its various agencies to improve the environment for public transportation within Community Board 3 by taking strong, creative measures to reduce traffic congestion.

### **Public Transportation**

The Community Board 3 district is underserved by public transportation. We continue to oppose cuts in service on any bus route within the district. Despite the district’s density, many of our residents are poorly served by the subway system and live more than half a mile from the nearest subway stop. The eastern and southernmost residents of the district will continue to be denied public transportation until the MTA restores or extends cross-town bus routes, especially on Grand St. The recent implementation of bus service cuts (June 2010) has had an immediate and negative impact on the already limited transportation options in the district and further reduced access to the disabled.

### **Private Bus and Van Services**

There has been a dramatic increase in the number of companies providing transportation services with coach buses using the streets in Chinatown and the surrounding neighborhoods to layover and to load and unload passengers. The use of passenger vans contributes to traffic and parking congestion, especially in Chinatown. The operation and idling of diesel buses on the narrow streets of the district creates health and safety problems. Community Board 3 welcomed the narrowing of South Street, which has reduced bus layover there and increased public access to the waterfront, but it is critical that the City implement a realistic bus storage plan to avoid unplanned dispersal of coach buses in our neighborhoods.

Community Board 3 needs regulatory/enforcement reform at all levels of government to manage the interstate bus industry (generally referred to as “Chinatown buses”) and its inevitable growth. In order to improve traffic flow and public safety, the City needs a plan to manage several overlapping issues—bus storage (parking/layover), operations (loading/unloading) and inspections (safety/pollution). Successful management of these issues will only succeed if the plan is comprehensive and enforceable. Community Board 3 believes the city should limit the number of bus companies and buses allowed to operate in the area. In addition, locations for loading and unloading must be restricted and designated.

NYPD does not enforce idling laws and they cannot do so effectively. The city must have an enforcement mechanism that will focus and enforce idling regulations. Follow up of DEP violations for idling shows that these are often dismissed.

### **Illegal Parking**

Produce wholesalers and private limousines routinely violate parking regulations and monopolize small streets and sidewalks, causing sanitation, parking, safety and transportation problems. Enforcement is needed as well as a plan to allow these wholesalers and limousines to comply. They

are all small businesses that serve the community and cannot be driven out of business by targeted enforcement without giving them an option to comply with regulations.

Parked cars displaying dashboard placards from City agencies routinely saturate the streets of Chinatown and other locations in Community Board 3. The large number of these illegally parked cars threatens public safety by obstructing access for emergency responders, disrupts businesses by blocking deliveries and customers, and restricts disabled access. Enforcement of existing laws concerning placard parking is critical at fire hydrants, corners, crosswalks, curb cuts, on sidewalks, and in No Standing zones. There has increased enforcement in the Chinatown area, but this type of enforcement is needed in other areas of Community Board 3. The NYPD needs to devise and enforce policies that will eliminate illegal parking permit abuse by law enforcement and court employees.

### **Sidewalk and Road Surface Conditions**

Sidewalks and curb cuts are in disrepair which is a particular hardship for people who rely on wheelchairs for mobility. It is very disappointing that the City was not able to meet their agreement to make pedestrian walkways handicapped accessible by 2010. We encourage an expedited schedule for the remaining installations, since missing curb cuts reduces access to mass transit and causing safety issues by forcing people to travel in the street/busy traffic. Curb cuts that do not meet smoothly with the street bed should be repaired and missing curb cuts should be installed.

Community Board 3 has many roads that need milling and resurfacing—but crews have not been assigned to this District. We have community complaints and are aware of milling and resurfacing needs and increased drainage problems and ponding conditions.

### **Pedestrian Safety near Bridges**

The areas around the entrances to the Williamsburg and Manhattan Bridges are particularly dangerous for pedestrians. Delancey Street is an unsafe environment for pedestrians and cyclists because it is one of the widest streets in Manhattan with heavy traffic volumes to/from the Williamsburg Bridge. The bridge entrance (the intersection of Delancey and Clinton Sts) is unsafe because of conflicts between pedestrians and cyclists riding too fast coming off the bridge.

### **TLC Enforcement**

The destination nightlife areas in Community Board 3 have become areas of severe traffic congestion on the weekends, particularly Saturday nights. Much of this traffic is comprised of taxis and Community Board 3 has continued to receive numerous complaints of taxi horn honking that continues into the early morning hours and disturbs the quality of life of residents who cannot sleep. This is another situation in which unplanned business growth contributes to the tax base, but the revenues are not used to provide services to accommodate this growth and maintain quality of life for residents.

### **Bicycle Facilities**

There has been a significant increase of bicycling in recent years, largely as a result of progress implementing the 1997 NYC Bicycle Master Plan. DOT should continue to include reduction of pedestrian-cyclist conflicts as a design consideration of all bicycle facilities. The increased use of bicycles city-wide has given rise to the need for bike parking. The lack of adequate bike parking facilities is an impediment to bicycle usage and also results in bicycles chained to public street fixtures and obstruction of sidewalks. DOT should augment its CityRacks Program, which allows the public to request bicycle racks one at a time, with planning efforts to systemically identify areas with a need for more bicycle parking and suitable locations for installation.



## **Environment**

The demands of climate change and environmental health needs require community participation in concert with a reorientation of government agencies towards environmental planning. Community Board 3 has few City resources allocated to reduce air pollutant exposure and asthma triggers despite a disproportionate amount of air pollution sources from the expanded 14th Street Con Edison fossil fuel power plant and vehicular congestion from its three bridges, transportation corridors (e.g., the FDR Drive and Canal Street), vehicle idling, and curb-side “Chinatown Bus” operations. Air pollutant exposure is compounded by the heat island effect of roads, artificial turf, and bare roofs, which raise temperatures and elevate ozone levels. Shockingly, unlike other areas of the City, the extent of these environmental health hazards within our district is largely un-documented.

## **Parks/Recreation/ Cultural Affairs/ Landmarks**

Community Board 3, like most districts in the City, does not meet the City Planning Commission’s guidelines for per capita open space. The open space/population ratio is approximately 0.7 acres per 1,000 people. By comparison, the Governor’s Open Space Report recommended 2.5 acres per 1,000; and New York City averages 1.5 acres. The open space that we do have is not evenly distributed throughout the district. The area west of Avenue A and the Chinatown area lack adequate open space. Compounding this deficiency is the increased use of existing parks by individuals and groups for organized events from both inside and outside the community. Increasingly, groups from outside of our district are using Community Board 3 parks. While we do not seek to exclude outside groups from our parks, we do feel that priority should be given to local groups. Our emphasis on local groups includes a re-examination of Park Department policies that restrict the use of parks and play areas during daytime hours. There are seven Jointly Operated Playgrounds (JOPs) in Community Board 3 co-located with the following schools: PS 110, 63, 20, 140, 137, 134, and 188. These sites are important to their attached schools for playground use during the school day and to the surrounding community at all other times. The Community Board insists on policies that foster the most open use of facilities by residents of the community while respecting safety concerns. Any agreements between Parks and other entities should be brought to Community Board 3 prior to finalization.

A few community gardens have been transferred to the Parks Department, but at the same time, the fate of many others is still uncertain. For sites not being transferred to the Parks Department, the City should consider transferring them to local community organizations that can maintain the locations as permanent open community space. Once open space is lost to development, it is very unlikely that it will ever be replaced.

It is one thing to have land set aside as a park, but our parks also need constant maintenance by trained DPR professionals. The number of park workers is at a 30 year low and funding for park maintenance is equally scarce. Many of the parks in our district have suffered from years of neglect and deferred maintenance, and now are experiencing increasing levels of usage. Increasing the number of full time, permanent park workers and staffed playgrounds will allow for fuller use of our parks and play areas.

In addition, Community Board 3 has found that Parks buildings in our community have been used as storage for equipment and supplies for Citywide Parks operations. Given that Community Board 3 already has so few open space and community facilities, our local parks should not bear this unfair burden of being storage for other neighborhoods. Parks should allow the public to reclaim use of the Parks buildings, particularly those within Sara D. Roosevelt Park, by redistributing storage more fairly to outside areas and programming public use of those buildings.

Community Board 3 parks has the second highest failure rate for rat findings, and have continued to

be overrun with rats year after year. The two worst parks are Columbus Park and Tompkins Square Park. This is aggravated by some specific conditions such as the underground space beneath Peter Cooper Park and the dense grass coverage on the Essex strip at Seward Park. Although the grasses are beautiful visually, they must be replaced so that the park can be better baited and maintained. The Parks Department has only one full time exterminator, which does not allow for adequate baiting. Also, no pesticides are used in the district parks due to the presence of hawks nesting.

Although many of the Parks staff has been trained to meet the need of more extermination, they do not have the years of experience and expertise that comes with experience. More full time experienced extermination and staff to maintain and clean the parks is necessary to protect the health and public safety of the community. Until it has enough staff to adequately deal with the problem, Parks should work with the Health Department for regular and frequent strategic baiting. The rodent problem is also exacerbated by the Parks practice of leaving garbage in plastic bags on the sidewalk for pickup – sometimes for hours or overnight. Parks should work with other agencies to resolve this issue as well as provide better storage for garbage. Attention should be given to rat-proof wastebaskets and working with food vendors and providers to ensure clean up.

The permitting procedure for recreational permits has improved in having fields accessible to local groups and for fair distribution. Community Board 3 asks that Parks Department continues to maintain this fair distribution of park permitting time for local groups and to upgrade its computer system to improve its permitting process.

Parks also needs improved procedures for park event permits. Community groups complain that information and approvals are not communicated in a timely manner. The Community Board has suggested that small, non-recurring events, such as school end-of year parties and similar events, be handled in an expedited manner. A birthday party for 3-year olds may not necessitate review by Parks.

Also, Parks needs to ensure review from the NYPD and the Community Board for larger events. A concert permitted for the same day as a large parade that requires police staffing might end up with potential problems. Additional Park Rangers and sound monitoring equipment are needed to deal with the negative effects of these events on the residents surrounding Tompkins Square Park. PEP officers, on a regular, sustained basis, need to be assigned to the major Community Board 3 parks. Tompkins Square Park in particular can use a temporary sound barrier that can be set up for these concerts to mitigate the noise to the surrounding residential buildings.

Toilets in Community Board 3 parks and playgrounds are badly needed. There are several locations of which the Parks Department is already aware, but some of the longest standing needs are the toilets in Luther Gulick Park, Corlears Hook Park, and Sol Lain Parks. The lack of functioning toilets in this park is exacerbated by its proximity to the East River Park amphitheatre. The numerous concerts in the amphitheatre and the continuing overflow of pedestrians through Corlears during concert season make this a higher priority. Since 2008, Parks has not yet advised Community Board 3 of progress concerning toilets in most parks.

Our Council Members, the Borough President, and the Parks Department have funded Phase I of the Seward Park renovation. Phase II of the renovation is a top priority for the Board. It deserves funding by the Borough President and Council Members to complete the renovation for a much underserved area.

The Mayor's vision for a Manhattan surrounded by parks at the water's edge will be severely tested if Consolidated Edison does not widen the north-south pathway at 14th Street. Consolidated

Edison made a commitment to accomplish that goal. We call on the Parks Department to assist in achieving that goal.

At the request of Parks, Community Board 3 approved an expansion of Tanahey Park. The Board was also promised that basketball court and hockey rink improvements would occur to allow the local community to productively enjoy the park. We urge Parks to implement these improvements as soon as possible. Additionally, Coleman Oval needs a basic level of amenities such as trash cans and benches to support the skateboard and dog run facilities.

In recognition of the history of the whole Community Board 3 area, a Landmark Subcommittee was created to address the various issues concerning the possible landmarking of individual properties or designation of historic districts. Community Board 3 anticipates working closely with all parties involved in this issue including, community organizations, government agencies, and officials.

Community Board 3 asks that the Landmark Commission expand its survey of ideal sites for landmark preservation similar to the one it has already done for the East Village. Such landmark studies should include Chinatown and the Lower East Side, in light of the recommendations for Special Districts coming out of the Chinatown Working Group.

### **New York City Libraries**

Community Board 3 has five branches of the New York Public Library (NYPL) system: Chatham Square, Hamilton Fish, Ottendorfer, Seward Park, and Tompkins Square. While we appreciate the renovation of our libraries, private donations and discretionary funds from our elected officials have paid for much of the work. Community Board 3 branches have the highest levels of use in the City. The libraries are especially necessary to our many low and moderate income residents who depend on the libraries for access to books and film and who use the library as their only quiet place to read or do homework or other work. In addition, we are seeing many residents who have laptop computers, but cannot afford internet fees, use the library for internet access. In the last year there were 1,127,098 visits to Community Board 3 libraries. This is a decrease of 7% over the previous year—due to the busiest branch, Chatham Square, being closed for 37 days. We believe this shows that while the libraries are open, they continue to be increasingly well used and very important to our community. It is not only imperative to keep our libraries open six days a week to serve our residents; we need to expand funding for expansion of collections, automation, staffing, and programming. In light of increasing youth violence experience by the community in the past year, Community Board 3 requests more youth programming in libraries as a way to engage youth in meaningful activities. Certain programs, such as the art space in Tompkins Square Park, should be supported with more programming and expanded to other libraries. The arts and cultural programming for local libraries in this neighborhood is extremely important to many neighborhood residents, particularly families with children and seniors, who cannot otherwise afford access to commercial venues. The libraries offer free access to the arts that many could not afford to experience or participate in otherwise. Including arts programming, funding for the libraries will benefit many of the underserved low income communities of the Lower East Side.

### **Waterfront**

Community Board 3 established a Waterfront Task Force in 2003 to formulate a viable plan for the area from the Brooklyn Bridge north to East River Park. The Task Force recognized that our waterfront has been a focal point for generations of Lower East Side families, but also an area that has been long neglected by the City. We now have an East River Park esplanade that is being improved to make it safe and attractive. But large portions of the Community Board 3 City-owned piers are underutilized; and the esplanade South of the piers is in need of repairs to improve safety

and add amenities to increase its usefulness. We would like to reclaim the waterfront for public use, keeping in mind the primarily residential nature of the adjacent community.

Through a series of community meetings begun during the latter part of 2003 and continuing through early 2005, the many constructive and creative ideas expressed by community members for the waterfront were shared with the NYC Economic Development Corporation, Department of City Planning and other City agencies. These ideas were generally approved by the Community Board in July 2004, and the City's Concept Plan was approved by the Board in September 2005. This approval was given with the understanding that Community Board 3 will be treated equally and equitably with Community Board 1 in all waterfront planning. Many of the community's ideas have been incorporated in a broad waterfront plan encompassing the area from Battery Park to East River Park to be funded by the Lower Manhattan Development Corporation. It was anticipated that the long-term portion of the plan would be completed over a three- to five-year period ending in 2010. Unfortunately, the City is behind schedule. Some areas are in design stage and construction has started in one area. A few improvements have been provided along the esplanade, including the removal of Jersey barriers, the installation of planters, and the widening of the esplanade (accomplished by the narrowing of South Street).

The Community Board is very concerned about the future of Pier 42, the only sizeable area in this community that extends over the River. We agree with the Concept Plan that the shed area of Pier 42 should be removed and allow for community revisioning to go forward. We strongly urge and expect that the relevant City agencies will raise the necessary funding to complete this improvement and stabilization, within the 2014 timeframe, so that Pier 42 will never be lost as a crucial amenity to this community.

Community Board 3 recently supported the long-awaited design concept for the esplanade between Pier 35 and Pike Slip. This design reflects Community Board 3's input, based on results from many facilitated community meetings described above to gather input from the community at large, for amenities, lighting, plantings, grading, a pavilion with community use space, ball courts and game facilities, and passive recreation uses. Community Board 3 continues to prioritize improvement and access to its Waterfront as a necessity for the community. We look forward to working with relevant City agencies on the esplanade from Pike Slip to the Brooklyn Bridge, most of which is now being used as a temporary staging area for several projects to improve the Brooklyn Bridge.

### **Arts & Cultural Affairs Task Force**

Our district has long been a historic incubator of the performing and visual arts, with a higher concentration of artists and arts organizations than most districts. The arts serve as an important means of expression, preservation and exploration of our diverse community and cultures. District arts venues remain closely tied to our diverse culture and balance the scales of gentrification by providing local, often low cost, access to burgeoning arts expressions that arise from the community's unique cultural characteristics. Cultural venues have a powerful synergistic relationship with neighborhood small businesses, and are economic drivers to our local neighborhoods. Fourth Arts Block alone, using the US Department of Commerce's conservative economic multiplier of 2.01, estimates that their member arts organizations generate more than \$24.8 million in annual economic benefits for local restaurants, shops, and support services. When networked across the Lower East Side, the economic impact of neighborhood arts groups is over \$50 million. Yet the district has lost many arts venues in the last decade, which have closed or moved to the other boroughs, due to real estate competition and speculation, the statistics and economic implications of which have been analyzed by such advocacy organizations as the New York Theater Awards. Affecting the stability of the critically important but often under-valued arts sector is the fact that artists and organizations are often not at the table when economic impact and quality of life issues are brought before elected officials and City agencies. President Obama addressed this chasm



with the creation of an arts platform prior to his inauguration. And although the economic impact of the Theater District is widely recognized, it is not recognized that areas such as the East Village and the Lower East Side have become locally, regionally, nationally, and internationally recognized as performing and visual arts destinations, a crux for cultural tourism. Community Board 3 calls on City agencies to include commercial and nonprofit arts venues and organizations in their economic planning and development policies. It calls on artists and arts organizations to collaborate with social service agencies for the mutually beneficial provision of access to art activity as a means to reduce crime engendered by boredom, and to help prepare a changing work force to think and act flexibly. It recommends that City agencies work in public-private partnerships to provide reasonably priced electricity and water to community gardens so that they become true community centers for culture, focused on art activities which do not disturb, but enhance, urban life. It recommends continued lobbying for the expansion of subsidized rehearsal space for music, dance, theater, and performance art so that artists and their audiences are attracted to the district, and retained, not driven from it.

Apart from economic impact, the effect of the arts on quality of life in the district cannot be underestimated. In fact, access to the arts has been included in an amendment to the U.N. charter as a human right. Arts in the schools and in after-school programs in the district exist under extremely fragile conditions. In a Town Hall on the subject organized by Community Board 3 at Rutgers Houses, it emerged that the need for more such programs, and the stabilization of these and of existing programs, is the lynchpin activity of the Task Force. Arts and arts organizations are sometimes unaware of policies or resources in such areas as land use, low-income housing, tax credits for commercial property owners making subsidized or free space available to not-for-profit organizations, access to public buildings, health insurance, and capital support, which can sustain artists and organizations. Non-traditional allies of a comprehensive local cultural policy such as the Federal Justice Department and the NYPD are examples of potential collaborations which can have an impact in the areas of education, crime prevention, improved quality of life, and arts organization stability. Creative cities are those which attract and retain not only the best artists and creative industries, but also the best businesses and their employees. As the Community Board representing this vital arts cluster, attracting visitors locally, city-wide, regionally, nationally, and internationally, Community Board 3 calls for the building of coalitions among arts and cultural organizations, other not-for-profit organizations, community and senior centers, elected officials, and government agencies to identify the conditions ideal for artists and arts organizations, the instability or loss of which must be prevented, to take their place at the table as vital resources of and contributors to the community. Linkages exist among arts and non-arts agencies and organizations, and individual artists. Funding to turn these linkages into viable projects cannot be further reduced without ongoing negative consequences for artists, youth, seniors, the educational system, small businesses, visitors, and others. On the contrary, funding, whether from traditional, e.g. New York City Department of Cultural Affairs, or non-traditional, e.g. the Department of Justice (lack of employment opportunities + lack of after-school activities = more crime) or the Metropolitan Transit Authority, or entities involved with the development of low-income housing, which should include housing for artists (most of whom qualify as low-income), must be enhanced, given the far-reaching implications of a healthy creative economy.

The image shows two handwritten signatures in black ink. On the left is the signature of Dominic Pisciotta, which is written in a cursive, flowing style. On the right is the signature of Susan Stetzer, also in cursive, with a more distinct and angular script.

Dominic Pisciotta  
Board Chair

Susan Stetzer  
District Manager