

Statement of Needs

Community Board 7/Brooklyn submits the following “Statement of Needs” in compliance with the procedures for the establishment of a budget for the City of New York. The contents of this statement result from local citizen complaints and testimony given at prior year budget hearings, information from CB7 Committee Chairpersons as well as from various forms of analyses of City agency service delivery provided by the District Manager.

Community District 7, located in the western section of Brooklyn, is a mixed residential, industrial and commercial area. The home of an ethnically and economically integrated population, the District is comprised of two main communities: Sunset Park and Windsor Terrace, but recently other community identities have gained popularity and become more established, including Greenwood Heights, South Park Slope and East Windsor Terrace.

Sunset Park consists of a strong residential community, two viable commercial strips, 5th and 8th Avenues, as well as a large industrial area. It is bifurcated by the Gowanus Expressway and is bordered to the south by the Long Island Rail Road cut. The 23-acre facility, Sunset Park, has an Olympic-sized swimming pool, a recreation center and a large open space with spectacular views of the harbor.

Windsor Terrace and the northern part of our community consist of a smaller residential community than Sunset Park, with three commercial strips on 5th and 7th Avenues and Prospect Park West. Windsor Terrace is surrounded by the natural boundaries of Prospect Park and Green-Wood Cemetery, which has the highest elevation in Brooklyn. The Gothic Brownstone “gatehouse” at the cemetery’s entrance is a New York City landmark and the most widely known symbol of the community.

Traditionally, the District has been home to generations of immigrants, Irish and Italian and Scandinavian in the early 20th century and before. Mid-century saw an influx from Puerto Rico, then the Dominican Republic and from central and South America. The 1980s saw the beginnings of a great increase in our residents from China and the 90s began a large influx from Mexico and the Middle East. Our community is extremely diverse and yet our populations live mostly in peace, making for a family-friendly neighborhood.

For years our community was the back end of political districts for elected officials who lived outside of our borders and our community suffered with placement of negative-impact facilities, such as power plants, sanitation facilities and a federal prison. Beginning in the early 1990s that began to change as local leadership began to come from our community and we were able to defeat a plan for a municipal sludge facility proposed for the water front.

The past few years have seen great strides in our community. We defeated a floating power plant in 2004 that would have been taller than any building in the area and longer than the Titanic. We rezoned most of our residential community in 2005 and 2009. After a 40-year effort, we finally built a local high school in 2009 and followed that up the next year with a new elementary school. Our waterfront park is currently under construction. We finished our 197-a Plan, which calls for the enhancement of our industrial waterfront, improved environmental performance and additional recreation opportunities on our waterfront and it was passed by the City, with the Chairwoman of the City Planning Commission calling it a “tour d’force.” New businesses are bringing investment and jobs to our waterfront. The Community Board, along with six community organizations, negotiated a reduction in emissions from two of our local power plants. We are home to a new bio-technology center. Clearly, positive changes and investments are being made in our community.

Community Boards have had to endure reduced budgets for more than a decade. Despite additional costs, such as increased postal rates, new computers, websites and occasional unfunded, but approved, raises, we have had to self-fund all of these changes and reduce our staff. Every year we have been asked to do more with the same amount and we believe it is finally time for Community Boards to receive a budget increase, which we have not received since 1990, other than the occasional cost of living adjustment for staff. Since our last OTPS (non-personnel budget) increase our staff has been reduced from seven to three to accommodate increased costs for running the office.

The culmination of the Community Board’s Statement of Needs, and the subsequent budget prioritization, will reflect our vision of an improved quality-of-life for our residents, merchants, elderly and our children.

Public Safety

Captain James Grant has been the commanding officer of the 72nd Precinct for a year and a half. We have been impressed with Captain Grant’s openness and communication and we believe these personal attributes have had a positive impact on the precinct and have helped to drive crime (as measured by CompStat) down to record lows in our community. We applaud Captain Grant and his officers for their hard work and dedication to public safety. However, we believe that there are still areas in which the NYPD can make significant improvements, particularly with quality-of-life violations and visibility.

Our beat officers serve many important functions in our community. Not only do they protect the public, but they also promote positive police/community relations and the visible presence gives a positive perception of a safe environment where people might want to open a business or raise their families. Economic development and a growing, healthy community cannot take hold without the visible presence and responsiveness of our officers.

A pattern of sex crimes in the community two years ago brought to light a deficit of personnel resources, particularly as our population increases and local night life becomes more popular. The past decade has seen the number of officers at our precinct reduced dramatically and resources have been stretched. Residents would like to see an increase in visible patrols and we believe that only way to do that without harming the rest of the community is by increasing the number of officers at our precinct.

It should be noted that while many populations of our community want to see more vigorous policing, a recent poll of young people in our district showed a concern about overzealous policing and stop and frisk policies.

Drug dealing and prostitution continue to be a concern in Sunset Park. Aggressive policing and arrests have forced much of these activities indoors, making enforcement more difficult. Our Board appreciates the strong efforts made by the NYPD to arrest the perpetrators, but more needs to be done, especially with the proliferation of adult entertainment establishments along 3rd Avenue. We also note the recent prostitution arrests at numerous massage parlors in our neighboring community of Bay Ridge and we have similar concerns in our district. We have recently shared information on a suspect massage parlor and a hotel with hourly rates to the precinct and we strongly believe these businesses, and others, aid and abet prostitution in our community. Additionally, we are greatly concerned that some of the sex workers may also be the victims of human trafficking and we strongly urge the District Attorney to vigorously prosecute anyone involved in human trafficking.

Gang and gang-related crime and violence continue to be a concern. Often gangs are associated with a certain ethnic group or national origin, sometimes making investigation and infiltration difficult. The City must provide additional resources for gang enforcement in our community. However, other strategies must be implemented to keep youth away from gangs. Additional age-appropriate facilities must be brought to our community, including youth programs and recreation areas.

CB7 is pleased that the State Liquor Authority has been pursuing more cases recently, but we are still unhappy with the number of problem businesses that continue to get liquor licenses and renewals despite community and local opposition. The people in the community are the best judges as to whether or not a business is a nuisance and more accommodations must be made with regard to the community's wishes. Additionally, we call upon the precinct to more vigorously enforce quality-of-life complaints surrounding popularly nightlife establishments in the community, particularly public drunkenness and fighting, vandalism, public urination and noise. We have noted an increase in these types of quality-of-life complaints in areas of increased night life.

For years we have been told that crossing guards are assigned to communities based on a particular formula. This seemed strange to us as our population has increased by 50% of the past 20 years and the number of schools increased and yet we still receive the same allocation of crossing guards. This year we asked for the formula the NYPD uses to make assignments and, suddenly, there is no formula, but the local commander can request additional crossing guards from One Police Plaza. This deception must end and the NYPD must assign additional crossing guards in our community, particularly with so many of our schools located on truck routes with increasing truck volumes. Two new schools have opened on 4th Avenue since 2009 and two additional schools, one on 4th Avenue and one on Caton Avenue are being built and we anticipate them opening in the next two years. If we do not receive an increase in our crossing guard allocation, crossing guards have to be taken from other schools in our district, stretching resources and putting children's lives in danger. Vigorous enforcement of traffic laws around our schools must also be undertaken.

Enforcement of traffic laws on 4th Avenue, in particular, is of great interest. Community Board 7 recently approved changes to 4th Avenue to promote pedestrian safety and to slow speeding vehicles. However, this must be coupled with speeding and double parking enforcement to ensure safe streets. Although the precinct has claimed hundreds of double parking summons on 4th Avenue, we do not believe this effort has had an impact on drivers' behavior, as of yet, and we call for an increase in enforcement.

Speeding on residential streets and trucks wandering off of designated truck routes have become two of our most prevalent constituent complaints, which is why so many constituents have petitioned for speed humps on their blocks. This must be prioritized as we have had too many residents killed in the past few years by drunk drivers, trucks and speeding vehicles. This cannot be tolerated and the precinct must make major improvements in traffic enforcement. A car can kill just as many people as a gun. Drivers understand that the chance of being caught is minimal, increasing a perception of poor enforcement activities and dangerous roads. Private buses, especially ones that travel to Atlantic City, have also been growing in number in our community and we often receive complaints of them traveling off designated routes as well.

Transportation

Transportation issues continue to be amongst our most pressing. This is because we are home to two major highways, a large industrial area that requires trucks and because transportation issues have a strong impact on public safety and the quality-of-life in our community.

Nowhere is this more evident than on 20th Street, a narrow, two-way truck route that suffers because of the lack of highway entrances. 20th Street is the legal truck corridor for vehicles to travel to the Prospect Expressway entrance on 7th Avenue, and to and from central Brooklyn via Caton Avenue. This section of 20th Street is now mostly residential and the subsurface of the street is still cobblestones, which cannot handle the weight of modern trucks. We have great concerns about the street's integrity as well as the effects of the vibrations on homes. Two years ago, after much hounding by the Community Board, DOT undertook a study to find an alternative to 20th Street. Due to strong community opposition, however, our Board turned down that plan. We were pleased to recently learn that DOT has not only recommitted to studying this corridor, but has expanded the project to look at all the truck routes in our community (and beyond) and we are hopeful that this study develop into a plan that will improve efficient travel while lessening impacts on pedestrians and residential sections of our community. We strongly urge DOT to conduct a comprehensive study that does not short shift our community as the laughable Brooklyn Truck Route Study, completed five years ago, did. Of course, without enforcement the chances of a positive impact are terribly lessened and we urge DOT to find resources and to help the NYPD crack down on trucks travelling off-route.

State DOT also plays a crucial role in how trucks access our community as most come via the Gowanus and Prospect Expressways. Unfortunately, constant repair of the Gowanus and terrible traffic on both highways, encourages drivers to get off the highways and travel local streets. In addition, a lack of appropriate highway entrances and exits, coupled with our large industrial area, mean that we constantly have problems with off-route trucks looking for ways to get around traffic. These additional trucks on our streets, with more coming due to economic development along our waterfront, means additional conflicts with and dangers for pedestrians.

City DOT, however, has recognized these conflicts and has worked with the Community Board and others to develop a traffic and pedestrian safety plan for 4th Avenue that has reduced the number of traffic lanes from three to two (north and south), widened the pedestrian medians and vehicle turning lanes, added high visibility paint and plastic bollards and promises aesthetic enhancements in the near future. We have been pleased with the rapidity in which changes were implemented, after a year of community workshops and study and ultimate approval by our Board. Additionally, our neighbors in Board 6 have approved a similar plan for their section of 4th Avenue and Board 10 is considering a plan, as well. Previously, DOT added pedestrian count-down clocks to 3rd and 4th Avenues and we anticipate

more count-down clocks throughout the community. We have asked for, and not yet received approval for, expediting the installation on Caton Avenue and Prospect Park Southwest.

Additional pedestrian safety enhancements are anticipated on 4th Avenue and 38th Street, adjacent to PS 24 and a highway exit and at 3rd Avenue and 60th Street, adjacent to PS 503/506 and a highway exit. State DOT has also committed to improving the pedestrian crossing at six intersections beneath the Gowanus Expressway. Needless to say, our Board is very happy that DOT has prioritized pedestrian safety in our community. We would like a similar prioritization by State DOT in improving the lighting beneath the Gowanus Expressway for drivers and pedestrians alike.

The devastation by Hurricane Sandy last year opened our eyes to a host of infrastructure deficiencies which need to be addressed. Mobility was severely limited as much of the subway system was shut down, tunnels were closed and streets were clogged with private vehicles. This situation was exacerbated locally by the lack of ferry service and the elimination of the B-37 bus two years earlier. The hurricane highlighted the need for redundancy and alternatives in our public transportation infrastructure. Next month the R line subway, due to repairs necessitated by the hurricane, will be truncated with no direct travel to Manhattan for 14 months, creating a hardship for local commuters. We have asked the MTA and the City for additional public transportation options for our residents. Just this week, the MTA has announced the return of the B-37 bus along 3rd Avenue. We are hopeful the City will look to bring ferry service back to the 58th Street pier as soon as feasible and, perhaps, at 39th Street in the future.

There are other improvements which need to be made to our public transportation system to improve public safety and mobility and to make the option more attractive to those who may be convinced to leave their private vehicles at home. Each of our stations should have bright lighting and security cameras and, ideally, be staffed. Additionally, Community Board 7 has long called for secondary egress at all of our subways stations for safety and mobility purposes. We also call on MTA to install elevators, particularly at the 59th Street, 36th Street, Prospect Avenue and 15th Street stations. MTA currently plans only one elevator in our community, at 59th Street, by the year 2020. Until more elevators are installed the options of our constituents with mobility issues will be significantly limited.

Our Board is happy that we are finally part of the process for approving bike lanes and note that, while we may have questions or suggestions, we have approved every lane that was presented to us by DOT. We believe that necessary, redundant transportation options require viable bikeways and we are happy to host the office and shop of Citibike, NYC's bike sharing program, although there are no bike share stations in our community. We are also pleased that private companies are examining bringing car sharing businesses to NYC, as well.

After years of waiting (and another year of construction behind schedule) the City finally finished the second phase of 5th Avenue reconstruction two years ago, between 24th and 34th Streets. This long awaited project was absolutely necessary for a street in terrible shape and finally allows for an efficient, safe and smooth roadway. The next phase, encompassing 34th through 64th Streets, through the business corridor, is currently scheduled to begin in FY20. We have no confidence that the project will begin on time as it has been delayed many times since it was originally supposed to begin in 1988. When the project finally begins, the department must take the needs and concerns of the businesses along our major commercial corridor into account when developing the construction plan. Our Board is concerned about the potential harmful effects on businesses that could come during the construction period. Special attention must be paid to other major roadway projects, including the Gowanus

Expressway, to ensure that the construction periods do not overlap and thereby create additional burdens on our community and infrastructure. Last year, for the first time in over 20 years, 5th Avenue between 36th and 50th Streets was repaved. However, 50th to 65th was not done because DOT had no contracts for night work. With CB7's approval of the 5th Avenue shared bike lane, we let DOT know we would not accept new pavement markings between 50th and 65th Street until the street was repaved. DOT has now informed us that they anticipate repaving the rest of the corridor this year. The bike lane has been painted up to 50th Street and we expect it to continue to 65th Street once the street is repaved.

2nd Avenue is another corridor calling out for attention, particularly around Lutheran Medical Center in the 50s and near Industry City in the 30s.

Sanitation

Our Community Board finally realized our long-advocated policy to reduce the number of street sweeping days in much of the district, thanks to legislation championed by Councilmembers Gonzalez and Lander. However, as was anticipated, less street sweeping has led to a slight reduction of our cleanliness rating from the low 90s to the high 80s. DSNY believes that the areas adjacent to our commercial corridors on 5th and 8th Avenues have had the greatest deterioration and need for additional attention. We have suggested enlisting the Sunset Park 5th Avenue BID and individual business owners to join the adopt-a-basket program. Additionally, we suggested printing DSNY code books in Chinese for merchants on 8th Avenue and having enforcement personnel meet individually with business owners to help teach them about cleaning sidewalks and sanitation routing times. Of course, this would be in the interest of their customers, as they would have more days on which they could park locally. Ours was the first community to reduce its street cleaning days due to the legislation and it was gratifying to hear the Sanitation Commissioner, in the press conference to announce this change, acknowledge that reduced street sweeping days can mean less congested streets and less air pollution, an argument we've made for years.

The reduction of our cleanliness rating may also be tied to DSNY's discontinuation of night time enforcement. Last year the MTA spent thousands of dollars cleaning out decades worth of trash from the Long Island Rail Road cut, but even as this work was taking place, illegal dumping continued unabated at night, sometimes leaving workers to clean areas they had already completed. We asked DSNY Enforcement to keep an eye on these areas at night, only to learn there was no more night time enforcement. In our community, with many chronic illegal dump out areas: LIRR, the Green-Wood Cemetery fence, beneath the Gowanus Expressway, alongside the Prospect Expressway, our large industrial area, night time and weekend investigations and enforcement is essential and must be brought back.

It is important to note that the reduction in street sweeping did not result in a reduced budget for our local sanitation department, but a reallocation of our resources to better meet the cleaning needs of the district. Our Board understands that we can revert to the old regulations if our streets become dirty again and we take that as a challenge to work with DSNY, our elected officials and the local community to make sure that we keep our streets clean.

Community District 7 continues to host more than its fair share of sanitation facilities. In addition to numerous private carters and recyclers, we are also home to the SIMS recycling facility, which will take most of NYC's recycling garbage; the garage for BK-7 and BK-10 (which serves CB10); the Hamilton Avenue Marine Transfer Station; IESI, a private company that takes 1000 tons of city residential trash.

We recently learned that the Economic Development Corporation has accepted a proposal to put an industrial grease recycling facility in our community, as well. All these facilities require additional trucks in our community and, unfortunately, sometimes we are taken advantage of. Many of the private municipal waste truck drivers take liberties by parking beneath the Gowanus Expressway, or along 3rd Avenue or next to Green-Wood Cemetery. This illegal, and potentially health-hazardous behavior, must be curtailed by vigorous and sustained enforcement.

We also acknowledge that a change in City leadership and policy could result in DSNY not fulfilling its promises to our community. Just two years ago, DSNY threatened a change in the City's Solid Waste Management Plan during budget negotiations which would have meant delaying some new sanitation facilities in other parts of the City while moving full steam ahead on the Hamilton Avenue MTS in our district. This would have meant even more garbage for our community as the City would have been forced to continue to send residential garbage to private facilities, such as IESI, while bringing the MTS back online. While this did not come to be, we do not appreciate being used as a pawn by DSNY during negotiations. Our community deserves better from DSNY. We endure enough from this agency.

DSNY must make an effort to shore up the salt shed on the 52nd Street pier in our community. The shed is open and has many obvious holes in the roof and building. We are concerned that the salt can easily find its way into the local water. Immediately adjacent to this facility is the new Bush Terminal Piers Park, which contains important and delicate tidal ponds. It would be tragic if the lack of maintenance on the salt shed was responsible for destroying this fragile, recovering eco-system.

Parks and Recreation

All too often in times of fiscal restraint, the Department of Parks and Recreation is the first agency to realize drastic cuts. It is the belief of some that if recreational monies were drastically increased, there would be no need for increases in the Police and Corrections Departments. It is with this in mind that Community Board 7 requests increases in funding for recreation programs, especially at the Sunset Park Recreation Center.

Parks are oases within the concrete City where people of all generations, socio-economic status and ethnic and national backgrounds can gather, relax, play or simply enjoy a more pastoral setting within the City. They are for mental rejuvenation, physical fitness and stress relief. However, during difficult economic times our parks see an increase in use because of limited personal recreation funds, but often experience a decrease in programming and upkeep. Together these facts spell trouble for our parks as overused equipment falls into disrepair or natural settings are overtaxed. Unfortunately for local parks, the City's main parks seem to get all the attention while our facilities become eyesores. Facility upgrades are left to our Councilmembers' discretion and ability to negotiate and while Councilwoman Gonzalez especially has done a great job bring these funds to the community, we believe it is unfair to her to have to concentrate funds in parks that should be funded directly by the agency.

However, we would be remiss not to acknowledge Councilwoman Gonzalez' largess. This year alone, we have seen the rehabilitation of the Sunset Park soccer/softball field and Slope Park and anticipate the opening of Bush Terminal Piers Park (partially funded by the Councilwoman) in the autumn. We also anticipate rehabilitation for Sgt. John Allen Payne Park, the Sunset Park spray shower and playground in the next few years.

These upgraded facilities are vital for our community because the district has a desperate need for additional park space and recreation programs. Our community has only 0.45 acres of parkland per thousand residents, well below the City's standard of 1.5 acres. We insist that our limited parks are maintained regularly and their space used for maximum efficiency due to our critical need. Additionally, although the Department of City Planning lists more than 25% of our District as green space/parkland, more than 95% of that total is privately owned Green-Wood Cemetery, which provides no recreation space. This categorization by DCP seems laughable and insulting.

Over the past few years several community groups have been formed to plant gardens and to clean and invigorate our parks throughout the community. This is most obvious in Sunset Park and at Butterfly Garden and a few community gardens. Our Board applauds these volunteer efforts and we ask the Department of Parks and Recreation to support these organizations as much as possible. Volunteers for the South Slope Dog Run did a remarkable job organizing, with more than 200 active members, and lobbying to create a dog run along the Prospect Expressway. It was an impressive effort in creating a community facility. We note, though, that the space used for the dog run was unused parkland. It is difficult to approve of other proposed dog runs, such as one proposed for Sunset Park, because of the relative lack of local park space. While we would like to accommodate dog owners and see the merit in dog runs, we do not want to take precious space away from our parks' human users.

In the recent past, the department allowed the roof at the Sunset Park Recreation Center to deteriorate to the point where it needed to be replaced. Maintenance could have saved the roof and saved the City money, but without an appropriate requirements contract, a million-dollar reconstruction was necessary. Community Board 7 requests that maintenance requirement contracts be put in place and fully funded to prevent future waste of our precious few capital dollars. Maintenance is especially vital because of the constant reduction of parks capital and expense funding.

CB7 is also pleased that, after years of discussion, construction has been completed on the Park Slope Armory which is another recreation center that serves our community, although it is located across the street from our District, and will also provide opportunities for local schools to use their facilities as well.

Sunset Park High School was built next to John D'Emic Park on 3rd Avenue, which we note has a play area for young children. We do not believe this is appropriate in its current facility considering the ages of the young people attending school right next door. We urge DOPR to work with the Department of Education to re-imagine and rehabilitate this park to serve the needs of the older children, perhaps with facilities that can enhance the physical education programs at the school. Facilities for younger children should be maintained, but access should be restricted by fencing it off.

Several other parks in our community are in great need of rehabilitation as well, including Martin Luther Playground, Rainbow Playground, Sherman Street Playground and portions of Greenwood Playground.

Environmental Protection/Resiliency

The sewers, watermains and catch basins in this community are among the oldest in Brooklyn. There are a number of sewer collapses and undermined roadways reported to the Board each year. Several street reconstruction projects have been on our roster of Capital Budget requests for more than twenty years. The heavy volume of traffic, particularly on 3rd, 4th, 5th and 8th Avenues, major thoroughfares and truck routes, causes severe wear and erosion on these streets and off-route trucks put an additional heavy burden on our side streets, which were not meant to accommodate such heavy vehicles.

Our old streets and infrastructure are crumbling and additional contracts and resources must be made available for trenching activities. While the City occasionally paves streets, we are fearful that the underlying causes of the street degradation are not being addressed and repaving merely covers over the problems. We believe that DOT and DEP must address these concerns much sooner and more comprehensively, otherwise it may simply be a waste of funds as streets keep sinking despite new asphalt. In just the past few weeks, a pipe thirty feet below 43rd Street broke leaving residents and businesses on the block without water, sewer and other city services and promising months of construction and a lack of access, as well as other hardships, on the block.

The topography of our community is such that all waste water, above and below ground, runs downhill from 6th Avenue to the waterfront, putting an abnormal strain on existing sewers and roadbeds, as well as clogging catch basins along this route with street debris.

During heavy rain events, much of the water in these pipes will go into the harbor through combined sewer overflows (CSOs), rather than to the Owl's Head Sewage Treatment Plant. One of these CSOs is located within the boundary of the future Bush Terminal Piers Park. Our Board believes this CSO must be relocated instead of being allowed to continue to dump untreated sewage and runoff within a public recreation and environmentally-sensitive area. We note that five CSOs in Brooklyn are being shut as part of a pilot program, but none in our district.

Our Board wants DEP to intensify their catch basin cleaning program in our community, particularly along 3rd and 4th Avenues. These high volume avenues collect an inordinate amount of garbage that clogs the catch basins, which is responsible for flooding the roadways. Residents adjacent to 3rd Avenue are particularly concerned about the catch basins and downspouts from the Gowanus Expressway in the 50s and 60s.

We also receive numerous complaints about amplified noise originating from both businesses and private residences. Unfortunately, both the NYPD and DEP are responsible for investigating noise complaints and often they do not have the manpower, equipment or training to handle these concerns. This is a growing problem as nightlife increases in our community, particularly during the summer months. DEP and the NYPD must do more to ensure that every precinct has noise meters and has numerous officers, especially during the night shift, who are trained to use them. These agencies must be vigilant in enforcing the law with regard to this increasing quality-of-life concern. Our office received complaints that the NYPD and DEP are unresponsive to these complaints and sometimes use the other agency as an excuse.

DEP must also monitor and keep the community informed about the emissions spewing into our air and the cumulative impact from the Gowanus Expressway, our garbage facilities, power plants and many other negative-impact facilities. Our community straddles a major asthma and lead poisoning corridor and the City must do more locally to combat these diseases, educate the public and reduce and eliminate the major sources. Similar worries have also been expressed by residents about electro-magnetic fields from our power plants and cell phone towers. Our Board requests that the department monitor and study these impacts, as well.

While we are happy that the City takes climate change and adaption very seriously, and EDC does make accommodations within their property contracts along our waterfront, we are concerned that such efforts are not necessarily comprehensive and seem to be done in a piecemeal fashion that only seems

to take into account properties that are up for sale or lease. For example, while the turbines of the Astoria and Narrows Power plants, at 28th and 53rd Streets, are located on barges and rise and fall with the sea level and a new land-based turbine is being built above the flood plain, the power substation on 28th Street is land-based and without flood protections. So, in a future flooding event, we may be able to produce electricity at our power plants, but we may not be able to send it anywhere.

We believe a single agency should develop a comprehensive climate change/adaption/storm surge plan for our waterfront and other communities and think DEP would be an appropriate agency to work with local populations and develop such a plan. Many of our waterfront facilities are sensitive sites containing power plants and transformers, garbage and sewer facilities, fuel and chemical storage and biological agents. Hurricane Sandy has shown us the great urgency for flood barriers, bioswales, pumping stations and more appropriate building designs, particularly for our mostly industrial waterfront. Although topography will protect most of our residential community from storm surges, we have seen that water from heavy rain rushes down the hill toward the waterfront, undermining street infrastructure.

Education

This year we celebrated the first graduating class from Sunset Park High School, realizing a dream more than 40 years in the making. The high school was advocated for and its curricula design by the community and, through the leadership of Principal Corrine Vinal and Center for Family Life's Co-Executive Director Julie Brockway, we have a quality school with high standards for achievement and a higher graduation, college acceptance and attendance rates than average in the City. Sunset Park High School received a near perfect grade, the highest in NYC, under quality review this year. This wonderful institution is a tribute to the dedication of our constituents to the betterment of their community, particularly our children and was worth every hearing, argument and indignant letter sent to City and State officials.

The year after SPHS opened, we opened PS 971 on 4th Avenue and 63rd Street. Two other schools are under construction: PS 333 for 332 elementary school students located on 4th Avenue and 43rd Street and PS/IS 437 for 746 K through 8 grade students on Caton Avenue and East 8th Street. School District 15 is also looking at sites in Sunset Park for another elementary school. We note that our Board's Site Selection Committee found all these locations for the Department of Education and School Construction Authority. This school building bonanza belies the fact that our schools are overcrowded and we have not kept up with our needs, as our community's population has grown 50% in 20 years.

The lack of an appropriate number of school seats has also had an impact on our youngest students as our community has almost no pre-Kindergarten seats. We recognize the vital importance of early childhood education and this deficit of seats leaves our children, who are mostly poor and/or from immigrant families, at a terrible disadvantage. New seats also sometimes have negative consequences, as well. The new PS 333 will open in the building that used be home to the Sunset Park Head Start program, which had to move and whose 400 student population was cut in half. Appropriate space is often difficult to find in this community and there is much competition for space, as the numerous Charter School programs that have presented to our Board over the past few years can attest. Few have opened in our community, despite their intention to do so.

The Education Department and School Construction Authority must work with us to improve our school infrastructure in addition to finding sites for new state-of-the-art schools in our community. We have

recently learned that necessary repairs will soon be made to PS1, PS 154 and MS 88 facilities, but, of course, these funds are not enhancing the education of our children, it is merely rehabilitating older facilities. We recognize this necessity, but it is not a substitute for education funding.

With the ever-growing and diverse immigrant populations within our community, there is an immediate need for augmented bilingual/ESL education for our Latino, Asian, Middle Eastern and Eastern European populations. Additionally, English proficiency programs, perhaps through our schools using the very students who are mastering language skills, for older residents would serve a great need for our community.

With more and more emphasis being placed on computer literacy and language skills in the job market, it is imperative that funding for specialized education programs be augmented. Work skills and experience programs, such as SYEP and internships, must be expanded to prepare our students for the job market. We are very pleased that our high school's curriculum embraces such learning outside the classroom.

Health and Mental Health

The Gowanus Expressway and other factors, including poverty, contribute to a high rate of asthma in the Sunset Park community. Air quality monitoring and particulate matter standards must be implemented to keep the community informed about dangers and to fight the continued placement of undesirable and negative-impact facilities in the community. Additional resources must be made available to educate the public and help combat asthma and lead poisoning. The multicultural/multi-lingual nature of this District must be taken into account as well.

The Board requests that the department undertake a study of the air quality in the community and makes the major sources of our pollution public, as well as the amount and kinds of emissions that each major source emits over the course of a year.

Our Board would like to see the same effort put forth in identifying and mitigating our local sources of air pollution as the department put forth to combat West Nile Virus. The same holds true for anti-asthma programs. Many more in our community suffer from and die from respiratory illness than WNV.

Our Board recognizes that there are populations within our district that need access to drug and alcohol treatment outpatient and residential programs. We are very concerned, however, that State funding for these programs may not last and have a devastating impact on recovering addictions. Two years ago an important program closed in the community and while another program picked up the pieces and opened a new clinic, we have no data on the impact on patients of the shuttered facility.

Access to medical services has become easier in our community in recent years. We note that Lutheran Medical Center has opened a new full service clinic on 7th Avenue last year and have been operating a school-based health clinic at Sunset Park High School since the school opened. However, the closure of Victory Memorial Hospital and the imminent closure of Long Island College Hospital place additional burdens on our remaining local hospitals that must now stretch resources further. In addition, we are concerned about the impact of reduced Medicaid reimbursement (Federal legislation) rates and the potential of a reduced nurse to patient ratio (State legislation) may have on the economic viability of our remaining hospitals.

An issue that has been raised recently in several forums has been access to healthier foods. While our community now has at least three farmers markets over the summer, these are not necessarily accessible to all residents. Other times of the year, shopping opportunities for healthier foods are limited in our community, which does seem to have a variety of fast food options. We understand that there is an effort to start a food co-op in Sunset Park and Bay Ridge, but this will not solve the problem for all. We believe efforts should be made to encourage more and healthier food markets, such as fruit and vegetable stores, within our community. Additionally, the Health Department should do more to help educate residents, particularly parents, about nutrition.

This year our Health and Mental Health Committee held a meeting to discuss the City's response to West Nile Virus and our concern about the liberal use of pesticides and larvicides and the potential impact those chemicals may have on our residents. The use of defoliants in and around parks was also a point of concern. Our Board would like more information on the chemicals used in public places and their potential impact on people and animals.

Social/Human Services

We have been very impressed with the work being done by Promise Neighborhood, a working coalition started by Lutheran Family Health Centers to create a multi-organization continuum of services from the cradle to career, using the organizations that already exist in our community and to develop programs to fill in the gaps in the continuum. PN has already identified Early Childhood Services and GED programs as needs in the community that are not being met at the rate necessary for our large community and is planning accordingly.

Promise Neighborhood has come about because of the eponymous federal grant that allows communities to plan for and seek funds for community improvement. PN is currently working with local parents and students and dozens of local and regional organizations to develop such a plan and is seeking millions of dollars in implementation funds from the federal government a future round of grants. Their efforts have been unprecedented in many ways, including holding meetings in four languages, trying to encompass the entire community. This year PN has opened its first Promise Center in PS 503 to provide additional services to children and families and we are hopeful this program can be expanded to other schools in the community in the near future. Of course, without the Federal funding, these programs will be dependent on private grant funding.

Our senior center programs are also vital to our community as is our senior housing. Despite numerous programs and locations, they do not meet the great need in this community. Until recently, we were very concerned that we were going to lose one important program, United Senior Citizens of Sunset Park because of a dispute with their landlord, who did not want to replace an elevator after a senior died of a heart attack climbing stairs. Without the elevator or a viable place to move, USC may have had to close. However, DFTA and the Administration did a remarkable job of working with the leadership of the center and, thankfully, the program was saved and the elevator replaced. USC is a very active and community-oriented center, even starting the neighborhood's first Community Emergency Response Team, and would have been a terrible loss for the neighborhood. USC's failure to find an alternative site locally highlighted the dearth of viable sites for schools and social programs in the community.

Sunset Park Head Start is another vital program serving almost four hundred local families that we could have lost this year. After forty years at St. Michael's, they were informed that their lease would not be renewed. Fortunately, the program found a new home at Our Lady of Perpetual Help, but the number

of seats has been cut in half due to space limitations and it is no longer located in the center of our community, making for longer commutes for some.

An increase in voucher slots for day care services continues to be a major priority for our District. Working parents in this community need to be served immediately with regard to their day care needs and this community board will continue to cooperate with ACS to locate suitable sites for additional facilities, but more programmatic funds must be found, as day care slots and programs have been reduced city-wide over the past few years.

Housing and Buildings

We can see evidence of an improving economy and housing market by the number of active building permits in our community. There are currently more than 100 active sites, including some which have been dormant for years. Clearly, there is money being invested in local properties, but we are finding that it is often not on site home owners, but investors, who are driving these changes. Furthermore, it seems the rezoning of the bulk of Sunset Park in 2009 has changed the type of alterations that some are making to their properties. Prior to the rezoning we saw many more developers who looked to build taller. Now, often, we see properties where the basement has been dug deeper and buildings have been extended into backyards. This has led to concerns about the safety of living spaces in some of these renovated buildings and questions of legality under the zoning resolution.

Our Buildings and Construction Committee held an open forum on Illegal Construction and SROs and heard many complaints and concerns from residents. DOB, HPD, FDNY and the Mayor's Illegal Occupancy Task Force listened to our constituents and gave advice on what to look for and the best way to report specific suspected building violations. They also explained which suspected violations are prioritized, what constitutes evidence and how the 4th Amendment protects those who do not wish to allow access to their properties with a warrant and how difficult it is to receive a warrant for a buildings complaint.

Our Board was happy to learn that the Mayor's Task Force has expanded from a pilot program to a city-wide program. The program has DOB working with the FDNY to visit properties to ensure greater compliance with the building and fire safety codes for buildings with suspected illegal construction and divisions. We are often frustrated along with our constituents to learn that, despite complaints, cases are closed because an inspector was not able to gain access to a property. This policy unfortunately accommodates bad actors, those who do illegal work, by allowing them to bypass inspection simply by saying no. Hopefully, this program will eventually lead to the elimination of this problem as property owners are more apt to allow the FDNY onsite, as was explained at our forum.

Illegal subdivision is a big problem in our community as many apartments and housing have been illegally converted into multiple dwellings without proper permits and safeguards. A vigorous inspection regime must be implemented in our community otherwise more tragedies will occur, when emergency service personnel are unaware of haphazard construction and illegal walls. At the same time, we must recognize that it isn't the tenant, who is often poor, who is at fault, but the property owner. Unfortunately, it is the tenant that ends up homeless while the property owner receives a fine, should DOB actually make this finding. Reasonable accommodations must be made for the tenants in these situations, perhaps using the money paid to the City by the property owner. To not help the tenant with housing would be to victimize them a second time.

Additionally, it is also very frustrating to learn that a property owner who did not allow for an inspection of his property has been granted another building permit for the same property. We would suggest legislation that would prevent issuance of building permits for any property where a buildings inspector has not been granted access in the past until an inspector is allowed onsite to inspect. The issuance of such permits despite ongoing inspection problems is one reason why people get very frustrated with DOB and stop making complaints about properties, as it appears to some that DOB is more interested in building than safety.

Property values have more than doubled in our community in the past decade and housing prices have fallen at a much lower rate than most of the city in the recent housing downturn, according to a recent NYU Furman Center study. Together with having the second oldest housing stock in the city and a recently rezoned 4th Avenue, we believe that sections of our community may be ripe for development once capital is available again. We urge DOB to be careful and deliberate in auditing and inspecting plans and properties as another building boom appears to be occurring in our community. We do not want to have to monitor all of our construction sites again during the boom because of a lack of inspectors. We are pleased, however, that some self-certifying architects have lost privileges due to skirting the law.

The pace of the demolition and seal-up programs must be maintained, both in the number of attended buildings and the turn-around time for completion, if we are to avoid development of decay.

Youth

The population of the District has a large percentage of young people and programs for youth are greatly needed. Since our District has a minimum of public recreation space our children must rely on afterschool and other community-based programs for arts, entertainment, sports and academic help. Many of our residents fall beneath the poverty line and parents often have to work more than one job to support their families. These programs are vitally important to the life, learning and social skills of our youngest residents. The City must do more to support our children and our community-based organizations by providing additional funds.

It is imperative that we seriously consider the need for afterschool and vacation care for children whose parents work. Additional funds must be available to support organizations that provide these services and the City must find a way to create more day care slots for the local community and local day care facilities. This could have an added benefit of creating jobs.

Our local SYEP program is run through a program located at our high school and the school has an aggressive internship program for upperclassmen, but these options are not enough for a community with such a large youth population. The approximately 1600 SYEP slots are the same amount we had when the economy was good and employers were hiring young people. However, when the economy turned bad, there was increased competition from older workers for precious few jobs, increasing youth unemployment. These programs provide some of the few opportunities our young people have to gain work experience. They probably are even more critical under current circumstances.

CB7 held two gang awareness forums in the recent past for youth and parents to make people aware of the local gangs in the community and alternatives. NYPD and former gang members provided dozens of people with stark information. Awareness, avoidance and alternatives are keys to combating this

problem in our community and another reminder of the necessity of support and programs for our younger residents.

Economic Development

Our Board welcomes economic development along our waterfront, but insists that this development be limited to water-dependant and community uses. Our waterfront is our greatest physical asset with spectacular views and large areas ripe for development.

We strongly believe that any development in our community must be sensitive to our current residents and businesses. Should businesses be required to move as part of a major development, priority should be given to relocating the business within the community. Our priority is to bring additional jobs to the community, not to force some businesses to leave.

Our community has seen much of its potential wasted in the past from the placement of negative-impact facilities, such as the Metropolitan Detention Center, power plants and waste transfer stations. The community has received a disproportionate number of these facilities while many of the other neighborhoods in the City receive money to lessen the impact of such facilities or relocated them altogether. In the interest of equity of City services, we must insist that a moratorium on such negative-impact facilities be placed in the community so that we have the opportunity to determine how we may best develop some of our assets in the interest of the community and City. We must insist that fair-share principles are respected and that a local public hearing must take place and community benefits agreements are negotiated for each proposed facility before any new facilities are allowed.

There are many projects and proposals concerning investment on the Sunset Park Waterfront that could potentially bring in billions of dollars in infrastructure improvements and potentially thousands of jobs. These include, but are certainly not limited to, proposals to replace or rehabilitate the Gowanus Expressway, a major container port, Liberty Plaza (Federal Building #2), Brooklyn Army Terminal, Axis Auto Group at South Brooklyn Marine Terminal, Bush Terminal buildings, Moore McCormack, SIMS and our waterfront park. In the past, the Sunset Park waterfront was a vital link in the economic engine of Brooklyn, but hard times have befallen this area in the past few decades.

The Economic Development Corporation, which owns most of the land along our waterfront, has a willing and often, like-minded partner in Community Board 7, but often, and shockingly, not only leave us out of decision-making, but purposely keep us out of the loop. We were kept out of the discussion to bring BioBat, our biotechnology center to the Brooklyn Army Terminal and even left us out of ceremonial aspects, such as a ribbon cutting, in addition to meetings, despite the fact that this is exactly the type of use our board has promoted for our community through our 197-a Plan, a document often cited by EDC.

Furthermore, while CB7 has been a strong proponent of the rehabilitation of the 1st Avenue railway, the project has substantially changed since it was first approved by the board in 2005. First the northern part of the project, on 2nd Avenue, was eliminated. Then, the scope of the sewer project on 1st Avenue was scaled back so that it just includes 1st Avenue near 40th Street, not all of 1st Avenue from 39th to 58th Streets as we were originally told. EDC has deliberately chosen to withhold this information from us.

While we are heartened that EDC recognizes that we deserve the same access to our waterfront that other communities enjoy we are very disappointed that EDC has scaled back our park currently under

construction at Bush Terminal. At a time when hundreds of millions of dollars are being found for the creation the High Line and Brooklyn Bridge Parks, it is insulting that our playground, environmental center and active pier have been taken out of the first phase of the park due to a \$2 million dollar cost overrun in the environmental cleanup of the site. Adding to this insult is the fact that the City was responsible for the environmental problems because of a lack of oversight in the 1970s, when toxic materials were allowed to be dumped here. Furthermore, we note that no funds have been identified for the second phase of the park, calling into question EDC's intention of following through with their promise to the community. We understand that at some point EDC will want to turn this park over to the Parks Department. CB7 may not approve of that change of ownership until EDC fulfills its promises to the community and all capital funds have been spent. We recognize that the Parks Department does not have the capital funds to build this park.

Another opportunity for public recreation space lies at the waterfront side of the Brooklyn Army Terminal. This space is immediately adjacent to the 58th Street Pier, which is often used for fishing and public events, and is the only point of public access currently along our waterfront. We believe EDC can cede a few feet along the water at the BAT campus to almost double the amount of access to the water at a minimal cost to BAT and EDC and a great public space can be created for our community.

Additionally, another location for potential public access may be available at the South Brooklyn Marine Terminal if some space, such as the proposed Brooklyn Waterfront Greenway can be integrated into the economic development plans of EDC and Axis Auto Group, which is leasing the space and will bring 400 permanent jobs customizing cars and stevedoring. We have discussed greening the edge of this facility, perhaps all the way to the water. This property is next to the under-construction Bush Terminal Piers Park, thereby allowing a link of green spaces along our waterfront. We believe this integration of green space and economic development will be a model for similar development around the City.

Zoning and Landmarks

Our office has worked very closely with the Department of City Planning over the past few years to rezone large areas of our community. In 2005, we were successful in rezoning the Greenwood Heights and South Park Slope sections of our community. In 2009, we succeeded in rezoning the bulk of the Sunset Park residential community, all of the residential properties in East Windsor Terrace and we also passed our 197-a Plan to protect and enhance the manufacturing zone along our waterfront.

There are, however, three other areas in which we would like to see some changes. In 2011, our Board sent recommendations to DCP requesting a study of changing the zoning on 8th Avenue, the last part of the residential community of Sunset Park that was left out of the 2009 plan. This was because 8th Avenue straddles two community boards and it was necessary for Board 12 to actively pursue changes as well. Our Board has asked DCP to institute a height limit for all buildings on the avenue, but also allow for larger commercial buildings, reflecting the same zoning as the 5th and 13th Avenue commercial corridors and reflecting the reality of a booming commercial strip. Additionally, we have asked for a reduction of the commercial overlays allowed on adjoining residential blocks and have asked the agency to look at the possibility of rezoning the southern part of 39th Street between 7th and 8th Avenues from manufacturing to residential use, reflecting the substantial use change that is already taking place on the block. Since this block is only a block away from the subway, we felt it would be an appropriate location to promote smart residential growth. Our Board also requested the DCP looking into instituting new tools for developing affordable housing. We realize zoning is not a great tool for promoting affordability, as the building size bonus allowed on 4th and 7th Avenues in previous rezoning has resulted

in zero additional affordable units in our community. We are asking DCP to revisit the tools that they use. Unfortunately, we have been told by DCP that they do not have the resources to conduct the study at this point. Many rezoning efforts are pending throughout the City and, since we have had three rezoning in the past decade, they have other priorities at this point. CB7 is currently looking into finding its own planner to present a rezoning plan to DCP, rather than waiting for City resources to become available.

A second potential change would also need to include Board 6, as we are interested in protecting the view corridor from the Minerva statue in Green-Wood Cemetery to the Statue of Liberty. This would mean more changes in District 6 than it would for District 7 and so it is vitally important for Board 6 to be committed to such as plan, possibly through the City's 197-a process, to see it through.

Additionally, while our Board Members were happy that DCP is promoting a more active streetscape along the northern part of 4th Avenue through the Enhanced Commercial District, many were confused why it did not take the whole of the avenue within our community. We have recently written to DCP asking them to consider expanding the ECD south to 65th Street. We are concerned that the same conditions that were created during the redevelopment of 4th Avenue in Park Slope could creep into Sunset Park, should developers decide to make similar investments further south.

A new community organization, Sunset Parks Landmark Committee, has sprung up and received a grant from the Historic Districts Council to study the potential to landmark certain properties or blocks in the community. This group has emerged because of the numerous private housing redevelopment projects around the community that do not take into account historic preservation, often destroying the facades of beautiful, century-old limestone buildings. Zoning does not take aesthetics into account and perhaps the only way to preserve portions of our community is through the landmarking process. While CB7 awaits a proposal to vote on from SPLC, we do support their planning efforts.

We would also like to see the Landmarks Preservation Commission take a more active role in preserving a beautiful but deteriorating landmark in our community. We are gravely concerned about the condition of the old 68th Precinct on 4th Avenue and 43rd Street, a one hundred and fifty year old building that has been in disrepair for nearly 40 years. Landmarking can make a property much more expensive to maintain and in poorer communities, such as ours, it is more difficult to find those dollars. Therefore, we believe that LPC has a special responsibility to poorer communities to help ensure the maintenance of landmarked properties, otherwise they are quite likely to become eyesores or dangerous.

CB7 is also concerned that hotels are allowed as-of-right in manufacturing districts, as we believe this is a back door way to promote housing expansion. We have spent almost two decades promoting and trying to safeguard our industrial waterfront, through our 197-a study and plan, and wish DCP would close this loophole, which could have devastating consequences for businesses and local employment if additional hotels are allowed to open in our manufacturing area.

Consumer Affairs

Over the past few years our community has seen an increase in the number of applications the Board receives for internet cafes. Many of these businesses operate 24-hours-a-day and some are located within the commercial overlays on residential blocks. At times, these businesses can become hangouts or hiding places for truants. One business owner at a committee meeting even admitted that he takes

ten dollars a night for people who have no home, which would mean he's operating a transient motel. Last year there was a homicide from a fight that spilled out from one of these businesses.

Although community boards are allowed review of internet café applications, we only have fifteen days for review, whereas other agencies are given forty-five days. We do not believe fifteen days is enough time to schedule a public meeting with an applicant and have instituted a blanket policy of denial for all internet café applications until community boards are given more time for review. We believe at least thirty days are necessary, the same review period we are allowed for liquor licenses. The quality-of-life concerns of our local community must be addressed and the community's voice should have a much stronger say. Unfortunately, the community is given very little time to respond to the Department of Consumer Affairs.

Summary

We are of the opinion that this Statement of Needs reflects the basic requirements of our residents. The people of our community and the citizenry of New York are among the most heavily taxed population in the nation and, even so, forecasted budget deficits threaten to force budget cuts, which may force service delivery cuts. Our Board will not accept service cuts and this Statement of Needs serves as a blueprint for the improvement of services in our District.

We sincerely hope that agencies will give serious consideration to our needs and suggestions and that blatant rejection of programs and new policies will cease. It is our hope that individual agencies will stop telling us that something "can't be done" but will seriously pursue ways to implement our suggestions. Only in this way and with improved dialogue can we ensure the quality-of-life for our residents and the vital continuation of the City of New York.

Sincerely,

Daniel A. Murphy
Chairman

Jeremy Laufer
District Manager