



BROOKLYN COMMUNITY BOARD 14

FLATBUSH–MIDWOOD COMMUNITY DISTRICT

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BROOKLYN COMMUNITY BOARD 14 STATEMENT OF COMMUNITY DISTRICT NEEDS FISCAL YEAR 2013

OVERVIEW

Brooklyn Community District 14 comprises the vibrant and dynamic communities of Flatbush, Midwood, and eastern Kensington, located in the heart of Brooklyn.

Our district is renowned for its cultural and economic diversity, evinced by an extraordinary mix of housing, including landmarked Victorian-era homes on tree-lined streets in the north, newer masonry homes in the south, and throughout the district, solid, well-maintained apartment buildings constructed near mass transit during an era when spacious and comfortable apartments were the norm. This diverse housing stock continues to be renewed through ongoing condominium and cooperative apartment construction and numerous private home renovations, verifying that Brooklyn Community District 14 continues to be a wonderful place to live and invest for the future.

This investment extends to our commercial strips, which remain remarkably healthy, with the opening of many new restaurants and stores and a vibrant retail mall at the Flatbush/Nostrand Avenue Junction, which is southern Brooklyn's principal transportation hub. This mall, anchored by a Target department store, has stimulated other new investment nearby on Flatbush Avenue, one of the City's busiest commercial corridors. Elsewhere in the district, commercial development is just as active, with upscale restaurants and national chain stores springing up where none existed before.

Districts 14's educational facilities are renowned nationally and are considered among the best in the City, particularly Brooklyn College of the City University of New York, and flagship high schools such as Erasmus Hall High School, Midwood High School, and Edward R. Murrow High School. These are augmented by several excellent parochial schools and yeshivas.

Community District 14 is a great place from which to commute to work. Three parallel subway lines provide residents with convenient access to Manhattan and Downtown Brooklyn. The "F" train on the Culver Line serves the western portion of the district, while the "2" and "5" trains,

originating at the Junction, serve the eastern part. The central corridor of the district is served by the “B” and “Q” trains of the Brighton Line. Numerous local and express bus lines augment the subways and provide convenient service along the district’s principal commercial strips.

Our greatest resources, however, are our approximately 165,000 residents, many of whom have organized effective block, tenant and neighborhood associations, merchant associations, local development corporations, and other efforts to preserve and improve their communities. In some cases, such as our growing number of Business Improvement Districts and our long-standing neighborhood security patrols, neighborhoods are performing services that elsewhere City government is expected to provide.

Brooklyn Community Board 14 tries to give all community residents and merchants a meaningful voice in how municipal services are delivered to our district. The community board advocates for the district’s special needs and works for fairness in resource distribution, service delivery, and land use in all of our neighborhoods. The needs expressed in this document reflect this principle of fairness and our continued commitment to improve the quality of life for all who live or work here, while supporting orderly growth and change in the future. Our principal focus areas include:

- A need to ensure the safety, health and vitality of residential and commercial areas within the district;
- A need to restore and improve adequate and effective social and other services, particularly for the most dependent population groups such as the young and the elderly; and
- A need to ensure effective communication and cooperation on community betterment among all groups in the District 14 community.

Specific needs to address the above are grouped into the following seven program areas, though order does not necessarily imply priority.

COMMUNITY ENVIRONMENT

Street Trees: The district’s trees are an indispensable resource, something that the City has acknowledged with its unprecedented ten (10) year, multi-million dollar commitment to planting and caring for our street trees. They are vital to preserving the unique attractiveness of the district’s commercial and residential areas, which have a direct impact on investment and the City’s real property tax revenues. In addition, they are essential to reducing the City’s carbon footprint, removing carbon dioxide from the air and significantly reducing cooling needs during the summer.

NEEDED:

- Maintain or increase Parks Department Forestry and Maintenance personnel to care for the countless number of trees in our district;
- Increase frequency of current pruning program to restore health for existing trees and to prevent liability of damage to persons and property from falling limbs and branches; and
- Continuation of an adequately funded, staffed and equipped program to maintain and replace trees as needed.

Parks and Playgrounds: Our district is severely shortchanged when it comes to parks and recreational spaces. There are only three park facilities within our district: Kolbert Park in the southern part of the district, Deputy Inspector Joseph DiGilio Playground in the west, and the Parade Ground in the north, whose almost 40 acres of athletic fields and tennis courts are accessed by borough permit only and are not available for informal use by local residents. The only recreational facility within the Parade Ground available to the local community without a permit is the heavily-utilized Detective Dillon Stewart Memorial playground. In addition, the district is served by two small tot-lots, several school playgrounds, a short section of the Ocean Parkway malls, all of which collectively offer limited recreational use for walking, jogging, biking and skating, and Prospect Park to our north. But total park space within walking distance for most of our residents totals only a few acres.

NEEDED:

- Acquisition of property to create new recreational spaces for the community; and
- Designation of one staff member per park or recreational area to organize activities for the community.

Sanitation Services: Adequate sanitation services are vital to the maintenance of the quality of life in all communities of the City. Community Board 14 feels strongly enough about this to have established in 1980 and 1981, with the Department of Sanitation, its own plan for local sanitation services. This plan, approved by the Department, and emulated elsewhere, seeks to make optimum use of manpower and equipment while meeting the needs of individual neighborhoods and facilities. Since the original plan was implemented, it has been enhanced to take advantage of improved street sweeping efficiency and to accommodate the City's recycling program.

NEEDED:

- Continuation of the special school collection truck route, including a provision for pick-up of recyclables on a more frequent basis in order to handle the ever-increasing waste generated by the additional number of meals served to the youth;
- Continuation of “Operation Clean Stretch” to provide nightly pick-up of baskets and the collection of residential garbage on commercial strips within Community District 14 more frequently; and
- Allocate additional resources to address the particular sanitation needs of the northern part of our district, where the district’s largest apartment dwelling population resides and which generates the most residential waste in our district.

Air Quality and Water/Sewer Facilities: Maintenance of good air quality and adequate water and sewer facilities is essential to environmental health and the quality of life in the district. Consistently clogged and dirty catch basins, as well as air and noise pollution, counteract positive efforts made by the City and community.

NEEDED:

- Adequate funding, equipment and staffing for maintenance of water supply and sewer facilities to ensure long-term clean City water supply; and
- Adequate enforcement of air pollution and noise regulations.

HOUSING AND COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT

One and Two-Family Housing: The district is endowed with a unique supply of high quality one and two-family houses, which is a key factor in making it a desirable place to live. Programs to maintain and upgrade surrounding infrastructure must support direct preservation and improvement efforts as young professionals and young families are moving into our community. This district has experienced a trend of expansions of one- and two-family homes, particularly in the southern part of our district. Lastly, the preservation of this particular housing stock, both for aesthetic and historic reasons, is of paramount importance to our community. Initiated with the successful adoption of contextual downzoning in Midwood during 2006, a similar proposal by the Department of City Planning for Flatbush was approved in 2009 by the New York City Council.

NEEDED:

- Continued support and additional personnel for enforcement to ensure compliance with the contextual downzoning of the Flatbush portion of Community District 14; and
- Coordination by agencies to enforce against the proliferation of illegal curb cuts throughout the district. The Buildings Department issues a curb cut permit in most cases without inspections. Once reported to the agency and a violation is issued, however, there is currently no enforcement component to have the curb restored.

Multi-Family Housing: Interspersed with and adjoining its one and two-family residential areas, the district is home to a sizeable stock of multiple dwellings. Residents of these buildings range across all age and income groups. Such buildings are concentrated primarily in the northern section of our district in the Flatbush community, though examples also exist elsewhere. In addition, new condominiums are under construction throughout the district, adding to our housing stock and increasing the quality of housing in our community.

NEEDED:

- Continuation and strengthening of Citywide housing rehabilitation and tenant support services, in particular, the Neighborhood Preservation Consultation contracts for the Local Development Corporations within Community District 14;
- Continued and expanded funding of local development corporations and organizations to provide critically needed housing services;
- Continued funding for façade and street improvements to support housing rehabilitation programs;
- Support for more senior citizen housing to address the needs of older adults;
- A review and coordination of the maze of City agencies directly charged with all aspects of enforcing the recent down-zonings in our community; and
- Support for Quality Housing and Inclusionary Housing in selected medium- and high-density portions of the recently rezoned portions of Flatbush.

Commercial Revitalization and Economic Development: Maintenance of the health and vitality of the community depends not only on an adequate housing stock, but also on supporting the growing vitality of commercial areas, particularly Cortelyou Road, Church Avenue, Avenue J, Avenue M, and Flatbush Avenue, one of the City's longest commercial

corridors. Many new restaurants and businesses are opening up on Cortelyou Road, Newkirk Avenue, and Church Avenue, and the shopping mall in the Flatbush/Nostrand Avenues Junction, featuring a Target department store as its anchor tenant has become a vital commercial center.

NEEDED:

- Continued support for and expansion, where possible, of current commercial revitalization efforts; and
- Expansion of revitalization programs into areas where necessary and feasible, particularly the Flatbush/Nostrand Junction area, Cortelyou Road and Avenues J and M.

HUMAN SERVICES

As our population of both seniors and young families continues to grow, the delivery of services for seniors and youth is important to the overall stability and vitality of our community. Program areas which the board has identified as critical counterparts to physical improvements include:

Services for the Elderly: Community District 14 has a growing elderly population over 65. They range in capability from the relatively self-sufficient, to the homebound and very dependent. There are needs for all such groups, though they are certainly greatest for the more dependent.

NEEDED:

- Increase and/or restore funding to programs such as hot Meals-on-Wheels deliveries and to senior centers which provide essential services to the elderly;
- Programs which adequately address the needs of both Medicaid and non-Medicaid homebound elderly; and
- Necessary support for efforts to improve coordination of local delivery of services to the elderly.

Youth Services: Community Board 14's experience, along with that of the rest of the community, is that current services are not meeting the needs of youth for career planning and

development and recreational activities. There is a clear and imperative need to increase youth services to achieve the goal of supporting the future success of our youth and ensuring that they have safe, healthy and balanced experience growing up in our community.

NEEDED:

- A broad effort by social service delivery agencies to effectively provide information on available services to address the needs of client populations, including obesity-related health concerns;
- Outstation service delivery staff within the Community District. Programs are needed to provide pregnant and parenting teens with the resources to promote the health and well being. These programs are vital since many pregnant teens often find themselves without a support network when critical problems arise; and
- Continuation of Crisis Intervention programs to address service needs.

Health and Hospital Services: Adequate hospital services are essential in any community, particularly in an area such as Community District 14, which has an increase in younger families and the elderly. With the closure of Caledonian Hospital, there remains a disproportionate dearth of medical care and coverage in the northern portion of our district.

Furthermore, the spread of the West Nile Virus must be aggressively combated in light of our population of seniors and young children, who are primarily susceptible to infection.

NEEDED:

- Adequate hospital facilities to serve all Community District 14 residents.
- Continue and expand all efforts necessary to combat the spread of the West Nile Virus.

PUBLIC SAFETY

Fire Protection: Community District 14 generally, and in particular the north Flatbush area, requires optimal fire protection because of copious multiple dwellings and century-old housing. This is essential to prevent fires, save countless lives, and preserve the historic and landmarked elements of our community for future generations.

NEEDED:

- **Keep open all present fire engine and ladder companies that serve our district;**
- Maintain or increase personnel and specialized equipment for local fire operations.

Police Services and Neighborhood Security: The men and women of the 70th Precinct have been serving our community exceptionally well, keeping crime and quality of life problems at historic lows. We cannot be grateful enough for the job that they have done. However, as crime begins to increase, they must have the modern facilities and resources necessary to fight crime in the 21st Century more than ever before, primarily in the form of a new 70th Precinct house. Furthermore, residents of Community Board 14 have, on their own initiative, developed various forms of community-based security services to assist in crime-fighting efforts. These programs must be supported by modernized police services to ensure that an effective overall Criminal Justice system supports the efforts of the local precinct.

NEEDED:

- ***Continue to ensure funding for the acquisition of property for a new 70th Precinct facility. The existing physical plant is undersized, antiquated, and deteriorated. Its neighbor, the modern United Cerebral Palsy (UCP) complex, has enlarged and expanded their facilities. This has sequestered one of the most active New York City Police Department precinct facilities in the midst of the largest concentration of handicapped people in Brooklyn;***
- Continue funding for and focus on the special crime prevention needs of the more densely populated neighborhoods in the Impact Zone portion of the district; and
- Development of specialized programs to combat illegal drugs sales within the district.

TRANSPORTATION

Transportation is, by nature, a support service, which enables a community to function. Our district needs to make optimum use of existing facilities and support community and public agency efforts in all other areas, such as commercial development, housing, social service delivery, recreation, and so forth. The central location of Community District 14 makes its local streets and avenues part of the daily commuting path for tens of thousands of Brooklyn residents. This places a great burden on the local roadway infrastructure. Needs identified in particular program areas are as follows:

Street System: Many of Community District 14's streets need more short-term and long-term attention. On-street parking is scarce, and off-street parking is even harder to find. Buses,

trucks, and commuters comprise the heaviest users of our roadways each morning, and traffic jams exist on even tertiary roads. The level of maintenance for our roadways, however, does not match the wear and tear that they experience on a daily basis. Major arterial routes are in need of resurfacing and reconstruction, such as Flatbush Avenue, one of the borough's oldest and heavily utilized roads, along with Ocean Avenue. Traffic engineering services must be sufficient to assure safe and effective use of streets by all users—vehicles, buses, bicycles and especially pedestrians. Traffic management programs must support local revitalization efforts and focus on the most congested areas.

NEEDED:

- Immediate attention to street improvement programs for the district's most deteriorated and hazardous streets;
- A program for night street resurfacing on commercial strips;
- Adequate staffing and equipment with particular emphasis on increasing Highway Operations "maintenance gangs" to conduct routine street maintenance;
- Focus on traffic planning resources for better management of our streets in congested commercial areas, specifically, Church Avenue, Avenue J and Foster Avenue within Community District 14. We believe similar programs should be developed for other commercial streets as well;
- Continuation and expansion of sidewalk façade improvement programs for commercial streets; and
- Continuation of funding of programs to repair sidewalks in violation in the district.
- Continue to monitor coordination by City agencies and utilities on Capital projects, working with the community board to minimize duplication and conflicts with scheduled projects.
- Coordination with the Department of Buildings to prevent the installation of illegal curb cuts throughout the district, diminishing on-street parking availability. There is currently no enforcement component to have the curb restored, once a violation is issued. ***The Department of Transportation should restore the curb in violation and charge the owner of the property.***

Public Transit Service: Community District 14 is relatively well supplied with rapid transit facilities, but the growing needs of our commuting population are placing greater demands on it. The "B" and "Q" trains on the Brighton Line, for example, bisect the District, and eight (8) of the stations on these lines are located within the board's boundaries. Unfortunately, these are the only lines that have the capacity to absorb any increase in ridership. The "F" train on the Culver Line station on the west is severely congested, as are the "2" and "5" trains, which end their route at Flatbush Avenue in our district.

NEEDED:

- Expeditionary completion of the station rehabilitation projects and advancement of station and line improvement projects for rapid transit facilities in the district, particularly those serving commercial areas;
- Create a new “F” express train;
- Reconfigure bus routes to compensate for recent eliminations of bus routes within Community District 14;
- Extend “G” train service further down the Culver Line; and
- Rehabilitation in particular of the Brighton Line right-of-way through the District, including the restoration of deteriorated protective fences along the right-of-way.

NEW YORK AND ATLANTIC RAILWAYS: Community District 14 is also bisected by the open east-west cut of the New York and Atlantic Railways (formerly known as the Long Island Rail Road freight line). The line runs through both heavily populated residential and commercial areas. Despite sporadic cleanup operations to remove literally tons of refuse as well as extermination of rats during the past several years, the cut remains a serious sanitation and security concern of the board.

NEEDED:

- Immediate commencement of cleanup operations to include removal of tires along the cut which provide a haven for larvae of the West Nile Virus mosquito, along with other necessary repairs of eroded sections of the embankment; and
- Advance construction of fences and address soil erosion between adjacent property.

EDUCATIONAL AND CULTURAL FACILITIES

Primary and Secondary School Facilities: The stability and attractiveness of Community District 14 as a residential area is due in no small measure to the quality of its educational facilities. Community Board 14 strongly supports their recommendations for needed improvements to local primary and secondary schools, and their efforts to make a maximum use of school facilities for both education and other relevant community purposes.

NEEDED:

- Expeditionary advancement of needed improvements to local primary and secondary schools, **particularly to address the serious problem of overcrowding;** and

- Maximum utilization of school facilities to meet community needs.

Higher Education Facilities: Given its geographic location, Brooklyn College lies at the center of community life in District 14. The Community Board enthusiastically supports implementation of needed improvements to this great institution to improve its ability to serve the local community as well as all citizens of the borough.

NEEDED:

- Advancement of vitally needed improvements to Brooklyn College's physical plant.

Libraries: District 14's existing branch libraries are heavily used and highly valued by the community. The board **strongly** supports essential improvements needed by these libraries and objects to any budget cuts. Cuts to the libraries will greatly affect the literacy programs, GED programs and many more, which may be in danger of elimination as a result of budget cuts. Proportionately, the cuts to libraries are far greater than to other City agencies.

NEEDED:

- Complete construction of the new Kensington Branch Library;
- Restore funding previously cut to the local branch libraries to avoid elimination of these important programs in the district;
- Advance needed improvements to local branch libraries;
- Adequate funding to ensure that all branches remain open seven days a week; and
- Adequate staffing and equipment, such as computers, to ensure acceptable levels of service are provided.

Cultural Affairs: Cultural activities are an essential component of quality of life in all communities of the City. Their continuation is needed to enhance City livability and promote the stability of communities.

NEEDED:

- Adequate funding for the Brooklyn Center for the Performing Arts at Brooklyn College (BCBC), which has provided this community with performances by world renowned artists, and other local cultural and artistic programs.

COMMUNITY BOARDS

Community boards continue to be an essential component of City government. In addition to their other Charter-mandated responsibilities, they provide crucial interagency linkages and possess unique local knowledge needed to avoid waste and optimize service delivery. The boards continue to work hard with local agency officials to ensure that the limited municipal resources available are effectively used. The Administration's continued expansion of its Citywide 311 non-emergency telephone complaint system, more specific complaint information is retained centrally, thus making it increasingly difficult for community boards to monitor agency performance as intended by the New York City Charter. Increasingly, community residents complain about the difficulty of getting useful follow-up information concerning resolution of complaints submitted via 311. The end result may be an increase in the length of time in which problems are resolved and reduced transparency in government. Community boards are the only effective way to fill the gap.

To fulfill their Charter-mandated responsibilities and continue to act as a government "frontline," the Boards must have the necessary resources to do so.

NEEDED:

- ***Recognition of the critical role played by Community Boards with a provision for budget adjustment and/or adequate funding to meet their responsibilities to the community.***

Please do not hesitate to call the Community Board 14 District office for further information or clarification.

Respectfully submitted,



Shawn Campbell
District Manager



Alvin M. Berk
Chairman