



COMMUNITY BOARD #3
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District Needs Statement

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Frank Morano, Board Chair

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Community Board 3 Staten Island, the least populated borough of New York City. We are a bedroom community whose citizens seem to only to sleep here when they're not working 40 plus hours a week while enduring a 60 to 90 minutes commute to Manhattan or locations within the tri-state area where the best opportunities for employment are. Residents live in Staten Island for its affordability, lower density character, the purposeful locale between the other 4 boroughs and New Jersey, and the perceived suburban character that offers distinct mostly residential quiet communities.

The Census Bureau population estimates show New York City's population has increased by 2.8 percent from April of 2010 to July of 2013. Staten Island showed the smallest gain, 0.8 percent the same period.

Change in Population, Census Bureau Estimates April 2010 to July 2013				
	Census 2010	Census Estimates 2013	Change: Census 2010 and Estimates 2013	
			Number	Percent
New York State	19,378,102	19,651,127	273,025	1.4
New York City	8,175,133	8,405,837	230,704	2.8
Bronx	1,385,108	1,418,733	33,625	2.4
Brooklyn	2,504,700	2,592,149	87,449	3.5
Manhattan	1,585,873	1,626,159	40,286	2.5
Queens	2,230,722	2,296,175	65,453	2.9
Staten Island	468,730	472,621	3,891	0.8
NYC as % of NYS	42.2	42.8	84.5	
Source: 2010 Census; Census Bureau Current Estimates Program				

Our population growth, although smaller than our sister boroughs, adds to our prevailing problems and challenges. Daily we are faced with traffic congestion, deteriorated roads, poor transportation options, and an inefficient sanitary /storm sewer infrastructure that assaults our quality of life.

We are alarmed that unwise residential development choices will devastate our aging overburdened infrastructure. Uncontrolled density will strain our city services i.e. schools, police and fire departments and hospitals. To foster economic growth we have the land to induce manufacturing and commercial development.

HOUSING

We recognize the need for senior housing. And, to that end we supported the Charleston Mixed Use Development that has provided space for future senior housing development. By utilizing our current zoning requirements and designing to retain the character of neighborhoods we can integrate housing needs for Community Board 3's aging citizens.

LAND USE

We support the Staten Island Growth Management Task Force and its initiatives to safeguard Staten Island from dense housing that does not blend with the character of our neighborhoods and destabilizes the quality of life of its residents.

We have supported all downzoning applications in our Community District for multiple reasons, but mainly because "less is more," suitable housing puts less demand on our infrastructure.

We are seeing a recurrent trend by developers to convert older homes on a sizable lot into multiple lots for one and two-family homes. Also, circumventing the R3A - R3X zoning by application to the BSA is yet another measure used by developers. These are valid concerns that may require a review of zoning text. City Planning and the Department of Buildings should work closely with Community Boards to ensure that the residential characters are preserved.

The Charleston area is currently undergoing a surge of commercial development. While economic development is welcome and beneficial, the Charleston area, including a part of Richmond Valley has seen an increase in traffic congestion.

As the south shore continues its commercial development the need for improved arterial roads is greater. Our pleas for completed highway service roads, the dreadful conditions on Arthur Kill Road, Bloomingdale Road, and Amboy Road have been ignored. Our secondary and tertiary roads are used as main thoroughfares.

The policy to build before infrastructure has failed us; infrastructure first should be our pronouncement. We remain proactive in protecting of quality of life.

TRANSPORTATION

Transit:

The Staten Island Railway "SIR" is a stand-alone railroad line that has no direct link to the NYC subway mass transit system. Commuters use it as a shuttle to the Staten Island Ferry for a link to Manhattan, children use it to get to and from school, and others use it as an alternative to buses.

It is estimated that over 4 million passengers per year ride this rail making use of stops from the Staten Island Ferry to Tottenville. An aging system that desperately needs improvements, passengers would like to see newer trains, cleaner stations, better security, and coordinated schedules with ferry service.

The SIR, our imitation mass transit system, is underserved by the MTA and they should not overlook long overdue upgrades. After waiting forty years the MTA is finally building a new Arthur Kill Station expected to open by 2015.

The S79 Rapid Bus Transit is riddled with failures. In theory it sounds good, but the reality is it has flaws. Omitting a travel lane on Hylan Boulevard during rush hour impacts commuters. The most objectionable complaint is that vehicles slow down waiting to find a pause in traffic to switch lanes enabling them to make right turns or enter driveways. It is undoubtedly creating hazardous conditions, and a formula for accidents. Motorists are critical of bus drivers that do not always use the dedicated bus lane, or worse, straddle lanes forcing left lane traffic into oncoming vehicle lanes.

The MTA implementation of the new X21 Express bus will offer residents a quicker commute to midtown from Eltingville. Express buses are popular, and residents would like the MTA to expand services.

Streets:

A recent report states “DOT has deemed 30.4 percent of the city’s roads to be in “fair” or “poor” condition, up from 15.7 percent in 2000. Roughly 43 percent of all roads in Manhattan are considered substandard, followed by Staten Island (40 percent), the Bronx (34 percent), Queens (31 percent), and Brooklyn (28 percent).

NYC must augment the budget for road rehabilitation. Ignoring deterioration will only increase future repair costs. Pothole repair and wear and tear patches are short-lived fixes.

Deferred since 1987 HWR-919 the reconstruction of Bloomingdale Road is currently under study by DEP and DOT to resolve both drainage and roadway issues. Agency response in the FY2015 Adopted Budget Register states the community board will be informed of the study's outcome.

Our budget request for the design and construction of Arthur Kill Road from Clarke Avenue to Tottenville was altered and reinvented over time. Dating back to 1988 it was originally 4 separate requests, segmenting portions of Arthur Kill Road. Later it was combined into one project HWR-1140, Phases A, B, C, & D. Most recently B, C, & D were cancelled, only Phase A remains under HWR-1140 which incorporates Arthur Kill Road from Clarke Avenue to Richmond Avenue. The FY2015 Adopted Budget Request Agency Response was “DOT has begun process for implementation of program.”

Specifically we mention these two projects, but the reality is that most of our arterials and secondary roads need major repair or resurfacing.

Sidewalks and Curbs:

The lack of sidewalks on the south shore, on both city and private property, does not help the trend to get people out of their vehicles and walking. We have repeatedly asked that DDC

include sidewalks on all sewer and road reconstruction projects on city property, whether it is DEP, Parks, DCAS, or any other agency.

Traffic Control:

Topping our wish list for the south shore is:

- Dedicated left turn traffic control devices at all intersections with turning lanes. A relatively simple and financially modest remedy to ease intersection congestion and increase safety.
- Restricted street conversions from two-way to one-way. Only extremely narrow roads should be made into one ways. It is imprudent to promote one-way streets as safer; we have found that they actually promote speeding.
- Double-parking at NYC schools during drop-off and dismissal should be prohibited, with no exclusions. It places our children, pedestrians, and motorists in jeopardy.

PARKS

Staten Island, the “Borough of Parks” is an identity that we embrace. Looking forward the budget distributions must align with the maintenance requirements. Borough maintenance allocations should be based acreage, with distribution apportioning for active recreation parks, beaches, passive park upkeep, and forests.

Our Budget Request Register conveys that the Department of Parks & Recreation should have a Capital Budget for projects. Depending on our elected officials for funding capital projects unfair and unbalanced.

Trees:

The Million Trees NYC initiative has multiplied the need for tree maintenance. Public safety is being compromised by overlooking hazards caused lack of proper maintenance. Additionally, there is an immense backlog for stump removal which needs to be addressed.

Sidewalk damage caused by tree root growth is common in our district. We advocate for increased funding for the Tree & Sidewalk Program.

SEWER & WATER

Our community is widely known for not having sanitary and storm sewers. Ordinary rainfalls cause street flooding and sanitary back-ups. The terrible weather assaults we took from hurricanes Irene and Sandy were wake-up calls. Although the Port Richmond Wastewater Treatment Plant has recently been updated, it is not enough. The Oakwood Treatment Plant is overtaxed, especially during storms. The Staten Island Bluebelt is a savior discharging storm water, but that also needs expansion.

As there is an urgency to install sewer systems to community that don't have them, as well as upgrade our older existing water, sanitary and storm systems that are near the end of their usefulness.

Designated Open Space is another natural resource to control flooding. We must strike a balance between building and creating non-permeable surfaces, and mandating open spaces with trees that help the environment.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

We have seen a burst of commercial growth in Charleston and the Richmond Valley areas. Older strip malls on Page Avenue are being overhauled and renovated. Land is available for commercial and retail growth.

However, local town independent retail is becoming an endangered species. Towns like Tottenville, Great Kills, Annadale, and Eltingville are losing ground steadily to the larger box stores and outlet malls.

The NYC EDC should be taking the initiative to transform and cultivate older town centers. Most have historic old buildings, former mom and pop stores, restaurants, and commercial buildings investors can capitalize on. Working with communities EDC can figure out what the challenges and opportunities are and develop a strategy for revival of these small towns.