



MANHATTAN COMMUNITY BOARD SIX

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STATEMENT OF DISTRICT NEEDS AND PRIORITIES, FY 2009

Community Board 6 encompasses the East Side of Manhattan from 14th to 59th Streets, from the East River to Lexington Avenue and farther west to include all of Gramercy Park and all of Murray Hill. Additional well-known neighborhoods within the board boundaries: Sutton Place, Beekman Place, Turtle Bay, Tudor City, Kips Bay, Rosehill, Phipps Houses, East Midtown Plaza, Stuyvesant Square, Waterside, Peter Cooper Village and Stuyvesant Town. East Midtown is a mixture of residential and commercial use with offices located in Citicorp Center, the Chrysler building and other major structures, with retail shops lining the avenues. Community Board 6 is home to the United Nations as well as hundreds of missions and diplomatic residences. There are six major hospitals in the district, used by all New Yorkers - Beth Israel, Joint Diseases, Cabrini, Veterans, Bellevue and NYU Medical Center. Numerous substance abuses, mental health and other ambulatory care clinics are located in the district. The district includes Baruch College, the School of Visual Arts, Brookdale Campus of Hunter College, the NYU School of Medicine, the NYU College Dentistry and some facilities of Yeshiva University.

The assessed value of commercial and residential properties combined with the daily influx of workers, as well as tourists who shop and visit the district converge to contribute significantly to New York's economic base.

There are 5 Business Improvement Districts (BID) within the Board area or on our boarder: The Grand Central Partnership, 34th Street Partnership, East Midtown Association, Union Square Partnership and the Flatiron/23rd Street Partnership. We applaud these BIDs for improving, and continue to improve the quality of life within the district. We encourage the City to continue to endorse new BIDs.

The commercial energy of East Midtown and the sedate apartments on Sutton Place, the brownstones of Murray Hill and the mansions surrounding Gramercy Park may overshadow the needs of this primarily middle-income community that also has significant numbers of low-income residents and a large elderly population living on fixed incomes. There are five SRO and sixteen residential facilities within the Board. The 30th Street Shelter has fourteen percent of the sheltered male beds in the city. The shelter at 215-225 East 45th Street has beds for one hundred thirty women. An additional ten percent of the sheltered female beds are at the Lexington Avenue Armory. Similarly, ten churches and synagogues in the Board area have opened their doors as private shelter. However, homelessness continues to be a major concern for the area; homeless people sleep under the FDR, on the streets and in area parks.

PRIMARY NEEDS

Education

The Community Board perceives a substantial shortfall in after school and support services for children in the district and for school seats for children at middle school age. This perception is aggravated by a lack of current information of school age population. While over 2,100 apartments have been built in the District since 2000, the population data available at the New York City Department of Planning is still based on the 2000 Census. It is the Community Board's perception that the need for both school and after-school services are severely under-met in Community District 6.

Services for the Elderly

The Department of Planning Community Profile shows that there are three senior centers in the District serving 20,000 elderly residents. This level of service is clearly inadequate. The Community Board capital budget requests for additional senior centers and adult daycare services dating from a decade ago continue to go unmet. Additionally, It is vital that senior centers are supplied with internet access computers so today's more active senior may access much needed information on various senior services and where to get the best values for their dollar, therefore, over the last few years, the Board has included a Lifelong Learning Center in the Boards budget requests. The Board would like to see this type of center placed in the mid portions (E. 30's) of the district.

Parks and Recreation

Community District 6 has the lowest penetration of parkland of any community district in New York City. By comparison, its population is at the median of Community District size both in Manhattan and in all of New York. Yet the district is concerned about current city plans to alienate existing parkland. The District needs more parkland.

Happily, through the efforts of our elected officials most of the parks in Community Board 6 have been reconstructed. We anticipate improvements along our waterfront as the Esplanade/Bikeway plan for the East River progresses under the auspices of the Economic Development Corporation. However, the East River Esplanade underpass of FDR Drive has been kept closed for safety reasons. The underpass needs repair so that our residents can gain quick access to the East River Park (Glick Park).

With all the capital improvements in our parks and recreation centers, we continue to emphasize the need for adequate maintenance, operation and protection of our rehabilitated parks. The need for additional maintenance workers continues to be a high priority within Board Six and throughout the city. Asser Levy and the 54th Street Recreation Centers are two of the three most heavily used centers in the city; they do not have adequate personnel to meet the needs of the many people they serve nor do they have sufficient funds for maintenance and supplies.

Closing the Robert Moses Park creates the need to find open space to relocate the parks active space area. The United Nations had proposed to extend the esplanade between E. 42nd and E 48th Streets; as mitigation for the proposed interim U.N. Building at Robert Moses Park. In addition, a replacement park for the use of Robert Moses Park must be found.

Recent census data shows a thirty percent increase in the population of very young children in Manhattan. For this reason, the city needs to develop new active park space. Community District 6, with its very limited space, should be a high priority in the development of new space.

Services for the Disabled

While the District has numerous medical facilities, access to housing for low income individuals

is poor and becoming poorer as Peter Cooper Village, Stuyvesant Town and other smaller developments continue to move units out of rent control and rent regulation. Much of the new housing created under 421-a, is not developed within the District. There is a chronic homelessness within the district. The Community Board is also concerned about the lack of adequate intake facilities for comprehensive social service evaluation.

Library Services

The Community Board appreciates the City's decision to make certain library services a part of the base budget. However, this is only a first step. In a dynamic city such as New York, library services should be available at least 16 hours a day 7 days a week. Anything less is inadequate. Furthermore, the nature of libraries is changing. It is essential that our local branches, while continuing to offer traditional services, also meet the new demands of the electronic information society. Community Board 6 fully supports full service libraries at the Kips Bay and Epiphany Branches.

Relocation of the Men's Homeless Shelter

The 30th Street Homeless Men's Shelter occupies the former Psychiatric Building is currently under transition. DHS is decentralizing its intake system from one center to three centers. It is DHS' hope to open an intake facility in each of the three boroughs with the highest concentration of street homeless individuals, Brooklyn, the Bronx, and Manhattan. In order to close the 30th Street shelter and proceed with this project, the City must create additional beds at alternate sites. The Doe Fund has developed and opened a 400-bed shelter in East Williamsburg, Brooklyn. A second proposal for a shelter in the Bronx was rejected by the local community.

DHS continues to cite a goal of decentralization of the adult intake system. However, there is little evidence of community review and consultation in this process.

Transportation/Traffic Enforcement/Control

The district streets, bridges and tunnels receive a great deal of wear and tear; potholes, sinkholes, and deteriorating manholes permeate the district. The Board continues to request improved maintenance.

Traffic controls and enforcement of existing controls is another major concern of the Board. The most hazardous activity most people in this district encounter is crossing the street. Gridlock, spill back and red light running are the daily norm. This community needs more traffic control and enforcement.

Issues such as unauthorized parking including double and triple parking, non-permitted layovers, idling of engines, and use of non-route streets by buses and commercial vehicles must also be addressed. Another significant issue is that buses stop in intersections to pick up passengers blocking pedestrians from crossing on the crosswalk. There is neither traffic enforcement nor MTA management correction of this practice.

The FDR Drive runs along the eastern border of Community District 6. Additional attention needs to be given to the maintenance, and cleaning of the FDR exit and entrance ramps, highways, bridges and tunnels.

The Board appreciates the recent trial of an audible traffic signal within the Community District and encourages the city to expand the use of these devices within the district. The Board requests red light cameras throughout the district.

Bicycles

Pedestrians are likewise harassed by inconsiderate and illegal bicycle practices for which there is no enforcement. Principle among these are bicycles on the sidewalk, bicycles crossing intersec-

tions against the light, bicycles entering the crosswalk at the light, and bicycles traveling against the traffic either in the lane or on one-way streets.

Livery Cars

For years, the for-hire vehicles have created lay over problems in East Midtown. During the day these cars commandeer much of our streets legal parking spaces, utilize metered spaces for hours without paying the meter resulting in lost city revenue; block hydrants and park illegally, blocking cars and buses making turns, especially on our one-way streets. Additional TLC oversight and enforcement is needed.

Area residents constantly complain that drivers congregate and talk; loudly play radios; sweep out their cars, dump coffee containers and pizza boxes onto our streets. Public urination has also been observed.

Discussions have taken place to address this problem. Plans have been proposed, but no plan has been implemented. Worst of all, existing laws are not adequately enforced.

Transit

Safe, convenient, efficient transportation to and from midtown Manhattan is critically important to the economic and environmental health of this city. The midtown streets are clogged with buses, cars, trucks and taxis. The long awaited construction of the Second Avenue subway line has begun at the north end. In order to ease our over used mid-town streets, this construction must extend to lower Manhattan.

The Board sees the major east-west thoroughfares as potential locations for ferry terminals at Twenty-third, Thirty-fourth and Forty-second Streets. Ferry terminals may increase access to the city and to these areas, but may also increase congestion in these areas.

The Board has long been concerned about the presence of idling busses. Therefore, the Board encourages the city to find specific alternative solutions, either through enforcement or through capital development of a bus garage.

Sidewalk Obstructions

Members of the Community Board spend a great deal of time carefully reviewing all sidewalk café applications and continue to work with DCA in making the review process more meaningful.

The sidewalks in this area are cluttered with both illegal and excessively large permitted sidewalk cafes, in many instances these restaurants/bars leave three to four feet of sidewalk space and in many instances this footage is cluttered with illegal planters, benches, signs, and have bicycles chained to street furniture; fruit stands extending more than four feet, newspaper boxes in some cases up to ten at every intersection create a pedestrian hazard and in many cases are unsightly. Another sidewalk obstruction is the mounds of trash placed at curbside too many hours prior to collection. All infractions are regularly reported to the appropriate agencies. Violations are issued in most instances and fines are paid, most businesses consider these violations to be a part of doing business in the city and continue their illegal behavior; fines should be increased to a level that would get these businesses to change their attitude. Additionally, even though mechanisms do exist, nothing is done to remove the obstructions. The Board feels that there are too few enforcement agents, and existing rules, such as the padlock citation, unlicensed operations or having more tables than stated on their permit; is difficult to address because enforcement of these laws is weak.

There has been a reduction of enforcement agents in most agencies; we believe this creates a large loss of city revenue and hurts the quality of life for city residents; damages the city's image and

its' public relations efforts when trying to stimulate tourism. The City should review all agencies' enforcement branches with particular attention to the amount of revenue generated by each, and their potential to generate more.

Development

There are five major development sites pending in Community Board 6 that will have a major impact on community resources, the Con Edison site along First Avenue between 35th and 41st Streets (see below); the East River Science Park on the Bellevue Campus; a 950,000 square foot building being proposed by the United Nations for development on the Robert Moses Park site (42nd Street and 1st Avenue); the Hunter College Brookdale Campus exchange for the Julia Richman Education Complex and anticipated development; and the recently proposed closing of the Police Academy on 21st St between First and Second Avenues with unknown disposition of this property.

Closing the Robert Moses Park creates the need to find open space to relocate the parks active space area. The United Nations had proposed to extend the esplanade between E. 42nd and E 48th Streets, as mitigation for the proposed interim U.N. Building at Robert Moses Park. In addition, a replacement park for the use of Robert Moses Park must be found.

Since the 2000 U.S. Census, Community Board 6 has seen rapid building growth; 2,100 residential units totaling almost 2.5 million square feet have been built in that span. Our community has also seen expansive growth in commercial construction, with nearly 2 million square feet of new office space and over 100,000 square feet of new retail space.

Such rapid growth has its consequences on our existing infrastructure. A growing population requires additional open space for our residents, new schools for our children, rehabilitation of our existing roads and mass transit services, more police officers and firefighters to serve and protect the community.

The Bellevue Campus

Bellevue is in the midst of a major modernization of some of its existing facilities. For decades, Board 6 has been advocating for a strategic plan to determine Bellevue's immediate and future health care and land use needs prior to any disposition of property; no study has ever been conveyed to the Board.

A proposal to develop an East River Science Park (ESP.) on the northern part of the Bellevue Hospital campus by the NYU School of Medicine and/or a private development entity has emerged. The Science Park will include the development of three new buildings devoted primarily to biotechnology facilities and also containing core research facilities, a library, local retail, parking and other uses. It will also include the renovation of the former Psychiatric Building, which will contain clinical and research facilities, staff housing, a conference center, and a day care center.

Most scenarios for developing the biotechnology industry in New York City focus on capitalizing on the City's existing assets to jump-start biomedical companies. While the biotech industry is assumed to be a potential source of high-wage jobs, the pay-off may come slowly and at the cost of significant investment of much needed public resources.

The February 2001 report of the New York City Investment Fund ("Market Demand Study for Commercial Biotechnology, Biomedical and Bioinformatics Facilities in New York City") estimated that the companies emerging from the City's academic research centers would generate a demand for approximately 1,000,000 square feet of space designed for bio-tech firms over the next few Years, of which about 40,000 square feet is needed as incubator space for start-up firms just.

Completion of Phase I of ESP. would produce a total of 300,000 square feet of biotech laboratory space.

Con Edison

Due to the July 18, 2007 steam explosion that occurred on Lexington Avenue and E. 41 Street, along with the steam explosion that occurred in Gramercy Park in 1989, the Board believes some government oversight is overdue. Considering the loss of life and the numerous injuries, street closures, traffic diversions and the direct involvement of many City agencies, the Board is seeking information on the total cost to the City for this massive effort. Additionally the Board would like information on the age of the general steam pipe system, the method of inspections and an inventory of scheduled maintenance.

The New York State Public Service Commission has mandated the disinvestment of many of Con Edison's assets. These include four sites along First Avenue between 35th and 41st Streets that collectively amount to 8.9 acres. These properties have been demolished and the developer has begun excavating for an anticipated commercial and residential complex. Development along this corridor continues to have a major impact on the community. The 15th Street exit on the FDR, as well as E. 15th and E. 14th Streets from the FDR to Avenue C have been closed to the public since 9/11. Due to public safety concerns, the Community Board had no real input into these closures that have created major traffic and pedestrian safety issues, as well as the loss of many of our residential parking spaces. The Department of Transportation needs to develop a traffic plan for our streets caused by these closures.

The development of the Con Edison Waterside properties will be closely reviewed in terms of not only the height and bulk of proposed buildings, but also concerning access to the waterfront, affordable housing, and implementation of our goal to build a continuous esplanade along the East River. Community Board 6 has provided its own 197-c Plan encompassing the Con Ed properties east of 1st Ave.

The CB6 197-c Plan runs from East 34th to East 41st Street and from 1st Avenue to the East River. In addition, CB6 has completed a 197-a Plan that encompasses the area bounded by East 14th Street and East 59th Street, 100 feet west of Second Avenue to the East River. The CB6 197-a Plan has been accepted by the Department of City Planning as complete and is now in the formal review process.

Brookdale/Julia Richman Exchange

Although the Brookdale campus exchange for Julia Richman is controversial, the process for exchange continues. There is an appearance that a substantial portion of the Brookdale property will be sold for development. The Community Board is concerned that public authorities will be used to block effective community input into the nature of such development.

Police Academy

The City has announced the intention to relocate the Police Academy to another location. Disposition of the existing property has not been discussed publicly. The Community Board reminds the city that they are Charter mandated to consult with the Board on the disposition of this property.

Robert Moses Park Site

While development has not begun, the Community Board is also concerned about the effect on the already limited parkland within the district. No alienation should be entertained for so long as complete replacement for the Robert Moses Park.

Construction

New high-rise construction, certainly a nuisance for immediate neighbors, does not present a threat to the community. These multi-million dollar projects are built by experienced contractors and are closely supervised by the Department of Buildings. However, we continue to be concerned about

the length of time sheds surrounding buildings are allowed to stay up, and the flagrant disregard Building owners appear to have for the permitting process and building code regulations. Much work is done without any building permits, or with a permit that does not begin to cover the full scope of the work being performed. More and more work is being done in the evenings and on weekends when the Department of Buildings has only a few inspectors to cover all five boroughs. Additionally, illegal uses and occupancies need to be addressed.

ADDITIONAL NEEDS

Given the nature of the midtown area - its dense residential population, the number of homeless people, tourists and daily work force - the Board has some very basic concerns:

The Need for Better Statistical Data

Although demographic data on our residential population is fairly comprehensive, we have no statistics on the number of people who enter this district on a daily basis to work, to shop and to visit our institutions.

The relationship of the quantity of such populations to the number of service delivery personnel allocated to Community Board 6 is crucial to it's' quality of life and should therefore be carefully analyzed by the City Administration.

Although the Community Board believes the schools in the district are overcrowded, the Board knows of no Community District level data source on student populations.

The City's Community District level budget data are spotty at best. Police precincts only partly coincide with Community Districts, but at least precinct level data are available. Most other departments do not provide the sort of data that inform the Community Board of the level of effort the City performs within the Community District at all. This problem should be corrected.

The Community Board has been unable to obtain adequate information on complaints made to the 3-1-1 complaint system. Consequently the Board is unable to follow up for correction nor able to examine complaints for patterns that may reflect larger needs.

The Community Board would like to request support for enhanced development of GIS based information concerning the district. While we are interested in city services, which are supported at the Department of City Planning, we would also like to see other maps that focus on local concerns such as dilapidated buildings, construction sites, police incidents, sidewalk cleanliness, bar locations, etc. Map resources are becoming easier to obtain. The Board would like to put them to constructive use. The Board requests an inventory of Bars and Taverns along Third Avenue from Fourteenth Street to Thirty-Seventh Street, giving the block of each establishment and requests increased inspection of bars and taverns. The Board would like an inventory of pedestrian ramps and accesses around the FDR.

Sanitation

Community Board 6 thanks the District Superintendent and his crew for all of their assistance. Although the districts streets are relatively clean, additional enforcement of alternate sides of the street regulations is needed as well as additional city litter baskets; the existing baskets fill quickly creating overflowing conditions that add to the already existing rodent problem.

The Board notes that certain sidewalks are continuously notoriously littered. We have also noted

that garbage can sit on the street for many hours in advance of pickup creating a littered and odorous mess and creating an attraction to rodents. In addition, scavengers open trash bags spilling contents on the ground or leaving them for sanitation workers who also spill contents on the ground. No enforcement or sanitation pickup activities demonstrate any concern for the effects of these practices on the neighborhood quality of life.

Health

The Board 6 area always has a great deal of construction, a large number of yearly street fairs and block parties; this creates the need for additional pest control and remains a high priority in this community.

Homeless Services

For several years, the most serious service delivery issue in Community Board 6 has been created by the large numbers of homeless people on our streets and in our parks. East Midtown is one of the nicest areas in the city with one of the lowest crime rates. Homeless people need not fear that local residents will rob them of their few possessions as they sleep. People engaged in panhandling have an easy commute to the Central Business District. This community has demonstrated great compassion for the homeless in its midst, and is aware of the enormous demands for service needed by this population. Persistent outreach continues to be necessary to provide service to the existing homeless and to prevent their expansion.

We acknowledge how very difficult it is to site any facility serving homeless people. However, creative avoidance of the issue by claiming contract agencies are not subject to ULURP even when the lease or purchase of a building is funded in full by New York City tax dollars is not an appropriate response. As painful as it is, Fair Share must be respected and community review must take place. Community input and involvement in DHS' siting of 9,000 units under the New York/ New York III program is essentially to the implementation of this objective.

Respectfully Submitted,

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