



# City of New York

## Community Board #1, Queens

American Museum of Moving Image  
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*District Manager*

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## INTRODUCTION

Community Board 1, Queens' District covers the area bounded by Bowery Bay on the north, on the south by Queens Plaza North, Northern Boulevard and the LIRR Tracks, on the west by the East River, and on the east along the west bound curve of the Brooklyn Queens Expressway to the Grand Central Parkway and 82nd St. We service the communities of Astoria and portions of Long Island City, Woodside and Jackson Heights.

Our zoning is mixed with residential, manufacturing and commercial areas. There are two Industrial Business Zones (IBZ) within our boundaries. The District abuts LaGuardia Airport, along with several major roads that provide access through our community to and from Rikers Island. District 1 is home to the largest number of energy power plants that provide electricity to New York City.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the population in Community Board 1's District has increased from 188,549 in 1990 to 211,220 in 2000. The District's population is one of the most ethnically diverse in Queens.

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Our community has many desirable qualities that include a beautiful waterfront, cultural establishments such as the Museum of the Moving Image, the Noguchi Museum and Socrates Sculpture Park. A replica of an ancient Greek Amphitheater at Athens Square Park is the site of numerous ethnic entertainment events during the summer months.

We are also home to the Kaufman Astoria Studios, which has the largest sound stage on the east coast and is currently expanding its facilities.

Our cultural diversity provides an epicurean delight for the multitude of diners that live in and visit our District.

Our District has experienced the construction of multiple dwellings in areas where low density housing formerly existed. New construction is being built to the maximum capacity of the existing zoning regulations, drastically changing the character of neighborhoods and putting a strain on our infrastructure. Community Board 1 has been working on a rezoning proposal with the Department of City Planning, Council Member Peter Vallone, Jr. and the residents/property owners in the area bounded by Broadway to 20th Avenue/East River to Steinway Street. The spirit and intent of the study is to contain overdevelopment, to update our commercial overlays and to maintain the character of our residential streets.

## **DISTRICT NEEDS STATEMENT — FY 2011**

### **Department for the Aging**

Many seniors depend on subsidized transportation programs as their only affordable means of travel to and from doctor appointments and for shopping. Our District is experiencing a growing population of homebound seniors who depend on the Meals-On-Wheels program, home health care and visiting nurse services. Home care for our frail and elderly is less costly to our City and more desirable to many in need. These services must continue and should be expanded.

Community Board 1, Q recognizes and supports the development of affordable housing for seniors and the physically disabled living within our District.

### **Buildings**

Much of the new development taking place within our District is to the maximum permitted zoning, which is having an impact on existing neighboring properties.

The need for affordable housing in our District has produced a market for illegal apartment conversion. It has long been our Board's opinion that legislation should be considered to legalize apartments that meet all safety regulations. This will provide safe, affordable housing and add to the City's tax base. Conversely, more inspectors are needed and stiffer fines must be levied to those who violate their building permits and Certificates of Occupancy.

### **Consumer Affairs**

Our District has the greatest number of licensed and unlicensed Unenclosed Sidewalk Cafes in Queens. While the Board appreciates the ambiance that these cafes bring to our community, we realize that the quality-of-life of our residents must be maintained. We stress the need for Enforcement Agents, specifically in the evening and on weekends, to monitor the licensing codes and padlocking of habitual violators.

### **District Attorney**

The blight that graffiti puts on a community, along with the cost of graffiti vandalism to City and

property owners is great. Our Board asks that the Queens District Attorney's office continue to prosecute graffiti vandals to the fullest extent of the law. We also ask for increased funding for graffiti cleanups sponsored by the Mayor's Community Affairs Unit.

### **Economic Development**

District 1's commercial/manufacturing/industrial areas play an important role in the stability of our community. Two Industrial Business Zones have been designated within our manufacturing/industrial areas.

Our primary shopping areas are located on Steinway Street, Ditmars Boulevard, Broadway, 30th and 36th Avenues. These commercial strips have, in the past year, experienced an increase in vacancies due primarily to the economic downturn, a rise in property taxes and unaffordable rents. The maintenance of our streetscapes must be maintained, e.g.: curb and sidewalk repairs and tree stump removal. Most importantly, additional parking is required and critical to preserving our commercial areas that are crucial to the well being of our entire community. Tax incentives are required to ensure that jobs are maintained and taxes are not lost to the City.

### **Environmental Protection**

New development has put a strain on our infrastructure, particularly on our combined sewer and storm systems. Multi-family dwellings are now being built where one and two family homes previously existed. Our current infrastructure cannot handle this increased population. The City must plan for the increase in higher density development.

Along with hosting the greatest number of power plants in the City our District abuts LaGuardia Airport. The Grand Central Parkway, the Brooklyn Queens Expressway, the Robert F Kennedy and Queensborough Bridges also run through our District. Exhaust and air fuel fumes have lent to our District's reputation as one of the highest rated respiratory distress related areas in New York City. Therefore, monitoring of our air quality is essential to our health and well-being.

### **Housing**

Our District has five New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) developments. They are: Astoria, Queensbridge North and South, Ravenswood and the Woodside Houses. Due to diminished funding from Federal/State/City sources, NYCHA is considering the elimination of youth programs available to residents living within these developments. The Astoria Houses, in particular, has a high number of young residents. Support of activities for this population is essential. Every effort must be made to maintain our youth centers.

### **Parks & Recreation**

Our increased population has created a greater need for the development of our open spaces. Our Board is pleased to note that Council Member Peter Vallone, Jr. has provided funding for the much anticipated Skate Board Park to be located in Astoria Park. Reconstruction was recently completed at the St. Michael's ball field which features new soccer and baseball fields for use by teams throughout the borough.

Our Board strongly supports the hiring of additional personnel to maintain the City's investment in our recreational spaces.

### **Forestry**

We applaud the Mayor's Million Tree Initiative which seeks to plant and care for a million trees in the City over the next decade. Currently, Queens County has the greatest number of trees New York City. The removal of dead trees and large tree stumps must be given a priority in the City's

budget. The pruning of our street trees, every 10 years, is insufficient for the benefit of the trees and safety of our streets. More frequent maintenance will save our City from the many lawsuits resulting from falling branches.

### **Police**

The 114th Precinct, located on Astoria Boulevard, which is a main thoroughfare through our District. Astoria Boulevard also serves as the service road between the Robert F. Kennedy Bridge and the Brooklyn Queens Expressway. Parking along the boulevard is limited and our Board has, for years, requested the construction of a parking lot over the Grand Central Parkway to accommodate Police Department vehicles, as well as, the increasing number of commuter vehicles.

In addition, we urge the enforcement of regulations pertaining to cabarets and bars i.e.: excessive noise, drugs and serving alcohol to minors. The MARCH Program (Multi Agency Response to Club Hotspots) has been very effective in monitoring those establishments that violate the law. This program must continue. More Police are needed on our streets and we support a more competitive wage for our “Finest”.

### **Sanitation**

Our Board has supported the relocation or expansion of the existing QW-1 Sanitation garage. The facility was built in the 1930's and our community's needs and population have changed drastically since that time. Additional space to meet the increase in the size and number of vehicles is required.

More litter baskets are required on our commercial strips. Also, we need greater enforcement of littering laws. Merchants and property owners bear the burden of being ticketed for litter that is indiscriminately dropped by pedestrians or motorists.

### **Transportation**

Community Board 1 acknowledges the need for safe passage of cyclists through the City, and applauds the plans to provide access in our community along Vernon Boulevard via our shore line to connect riders to our park land along the East River. However, we have serious concerns regarding the elimination of parking on the west side of Vernon Boulevard. This action has created a hardship for businesses along the boulevard; it has created excessive difficulty for the residential community and has also disenfranchised handicapped drivers who can no longer park, in a safer zone, for access to the open spaces along Vernon Boulevard. A plan that will incorporate parking and bicycle paths must be implemented.

We need additional cars on our trains during rush hour and more buses on our routes to accommodate the increase in our population and encourage utilization of public transportation.

*Vinicia Donato*  
Chairperson

*Lucille J. Hartmann*  
District Manager