



# **Queens Community Board 13**

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## **COMMUNITY BOARD 13**

### **STATEMENT OF COMMUNITY DISTRICT NEEDS**

Community Board 13Q is located in Southeast Queens along the Nassau border. It is made up primarily of one and two family homes, with a scattering of garden apartments and apartment buildings. The district encompasses nine distinct communities, which includes, Bellerose, Cambria Heights, Floral Park, Glen Oaks, Laurelton, Meadowmere, New Hyde Park, Queens Village, Rosedale, and Springfield Gardens. There is a strong sense of neighborhood commitment in each of these communities.

The needs in each community differ, i.e. one community fights for a long awaited library while others struggle with illegal conversions, street resurfacing, flooding, and illegal dumping. Then there are those issues that effect the entire board i.e. being oversaturated with group homes, day programs, and psychosocial clubs.

There is a large senior population as well as a large population of people under the age of 24. We believe that our population is increasing. The transition in many communities involves young families with children moving into the community and requiring services. In addition, many new houses are being built on tracts of vacant land throughout the community board, and attracting young families. Our population trends indicate a need for programs servicing youth and seniors.

#### **POLICE DEPARTMENT:**

Community Board 13 never receives our fair share of manpower and equipment. The residents of Southeast Queens, deserve an appropriate number of police officers, and **A SECOND POLICE PRECINCT.**

At one time violent crimes were not the issue in our district, recently that has changed with a number of crimes in Cambria Heights, Queens Village, Laurelton, and Bellerose.

The community was extremely receptive to the community-policing program however; that program has diminished from 36 beats to 2. Therefore, many residents complain that they never see an officer in their neighborhood. Our community complains that quality of life complaints receive no response in the form of an officer appearing at the scene in a timely manner. Each year during the summer months noise complaints resulting from large and disorderly parties being held at residences in our area require that enforcement of noise restrictions increase.

Quality of Life concerns continue. Graffiti continues to be a major problem on public and private property. Motorcycles, ATV's, and mopeds along with drag racing have become a major problem; people cannot sleep and have expressed total frustration in this matter.

Community Board 13Q, is 13.2 square miles or 354 block miles which makes it the largest board in the City of New York. This also means that police vehicles are over used and abused. Patrol cars are used at the rate of 1,000 miles per week or 100 miles per tour, there should be a shorter service life of all vehicles also **NEW VEHICLES ARE NECESSARY AND NEEDED.**

We must have additional civilian personnel to free up police officers that are doing the job of civilians. The 105th precinct lost 6 police administrative aides and they have not been replaced. There are full time police officers (\$60 / \$70 thousand per year) doing the job of an administrative aide (\$35,000 per year). This is not saving the City of New York money; in fact, it is costing unnecessary amounts of money.

Since, this board is the largest (land wise) we need to have a mobile command post. This would permit movement into problematic areas of the board. This command vehicle post must belong to the 105th precinct.

In the past, we have had the TNT program in various sections of our board. It is necessary to continue some form of a maintenance program with uniform, and plan clothes presence to handle some of the current problems that seem to continue to spring up in various communities. We must create a safe environment for our young families and our senior citizens. There must be a constant effort to prevent serious crimes from proliferating. The 105th precinct had 6 narcotic modules we were cut to 1 module that we share with other precincts.

### **PUBLIC SAFETY:**

Our communities rely heavily on the emergency medical service for assistance and transportation in crises. We support an increase in EMS service and availability in Community Board 13Q.

When the bureau of electrical control approves a site for a new streetlight, there is a lengthy wait for installation. Similarly, when a capital project i.e. park construction, street construction, is completed we must sometimes wait for years for the new streetlights to be put in place. The procedures governing these situations must be improved. We request appropriate funding to correct these delays.

### **DEPARTMENT OF BUILDINGS/CODE ENFORCEMENT:**

Illegal residential conversions and illegal commercial uses are escalating to an alarming degree. The significant population increase during the last decade is one indicator of this problem, which must be addressed. Service delivery deteriorates as a result because; many of the people living in illegal apartments do not statistically exist. It is essential that this very serious problem continue to be recognized as such and be addressed. Illegal uses, commercial or residential, must not just be cited; they must not be allowed to continue. There must be personnel sufficient to insure adequate inspections on an on going basis.

## **COMMUNITY BOARDS:**

Community Boards are "treading water" as regards operating expenses, service contracts, telephone use costs and postage are ever increasing in cost which leaves little room for essential upgrading and expansion of our computer system to today's standard. It is essential that Community Boards have the technology to communicate more efficiently with other city agencies.

Individual Community Board offices are mainly in locations isolated from other government offices. When equipment is out of order and it is not possible to utilize a fellow governmental office located upstairs, downstairs or the building next door, our ability to operate ceases.

Removal of service contracts, telephone and postage costs from the Community Board budget would assist in fulfilling our charter mandated functions.

Each agency, city, state or federal, proposing new development, rehabilitation, or action for one Community Board area which would impact, within a borough, an adjacent Board's area or impact an adjacent Board in an adjacent borough should be required to notify such adjacent Boards. Mandated review processes should involve both affected Boards.

## **FIRE DEPARTMENT:**

Our board has determined that in order to have quality fire prevention we must continue to support quality fire investigation. Therefore, additional fire marshals are needed.

Community Board 13 still needs updated ERS Fire Alarm Boxes. There are still too many false alarms. To further delay the installation of these boxes will cost the City more money responding to false alarms that are costly and endangers the lives of our fire fighters.

We must have 5 person manning on every fire engine throughout the City of New York for everyone's safety.

A signal light should be installed in front of every firehouse within the board. The fire fighters at that house would control the light as they exit and re-enter the firehouse. This would be especially helpful on busy streets, and at intersections where drivers Do Not Stop For Emergency Vehicles, and such a delay in getting out of the firehouse could mean someone's life.

## **EDUCATION:**

The influx of families (both legal and illegal) with school age children continues but dissatisfaction appears in short order. The school buildings are very overcrowded. Parents see a diminished range in what is being offered to the students at the elementary school level. Parents are concerned with the quality of education and the safety factor as students move to the Middle Schools and High Schools. Many are seeking to relocate for better educational opportunities and safety inside and outside the school buildings. The physical plant of many of our school buildings needs attention. Headstart and/or Pre-Kindergarten facilities are rapidly becoming too costly. School enrollment projections indicate that many more school seats will be required over the next decade. We are obliged to make sure that every child in our Community Board has a seat in his or her neighborhood school and each school must provide a full range of educational services.

## **HEALTH:**

We must have a new program for pest control. We request baiting of properties however, there is no follow-up and the rats are increasing.

Our Community Board is experiencing an escalation of rat and raccoon infestation of private residences, lots, and in the streets in all areas of the district. It is almost impossible to keep ticks, mosquitoes and rats under control if there is no way to mandate that owners maintain their unimproved lots or land with a structure upon it. We would hope that some way could be devised to penalize owners who cannot show that they have contracted for the necessary service on a semi-annual basis and city-owned property should be handled the same way by Pest Control. The current method appears not to be sufficient, and it should be reviewed by joint groups i.e. Sanitation, Health, Environmental Protection (sewers), and the Department of Transportation. Presently, the pest control program appears to be fragmented and should be revamped. Animal Control should be responsible for raccoon removal especially from the homes of our residents. In the past ASPCA took raccoons' out of people's houses that program worked out great. Our Senior Citizen population can not afford to get a company to go into there homes to trap raccoons', and get them out. It should be the obligation of the City to remove these dangerous animals.

Nurses should be returned to schools because of the escalation of contagious diseases and their expertise in the recognition, and prevention of problems.

We need more health clinics in Community Board 13Q. Our district is void of hospitals (the only one being Long Island Jewish) therefore, we must have clinic type facilities.

## **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND HOUSING:**

We are requesting that economic development programs continue to be developed on our commercial strips. Local development corporations and business groups are making strides in moving their local projects forward on our commercial strips. Security, regular street cleaning, daily household and basket collection, the need for additional parking, improved lighting, and infrastructure improvements are on their agendas. They seek ways to attract additional businesses compatible to the abutting residential communities. Additional support from government would assist them in making more progress. Our local merchants need help to remain stable, illegal use of business property must be stopped legally.

We strongly support the building department programs and we feel that every board should be given a trained inspector who will work closely with us to root out some of the illegal use of homes and businesses. We favor stepped up enforcement of code and zoning violations. HPD inspectors should be assigned the same way.

## **SOCIAL SERVICES:**

We need a multi-service center to handle the needs of our district. Too often, those in need of these services must travel many miles at expensive transportation. Creating a one-fare zone for the entire district would help our people who receive public assistance to stretch their stipends further and assist our working community in obtaining better jobs.

## **ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION:**

Poor drainage and flooding has been a long-standing problem in our community board. Existing outlets are not sufficient to handle all the water that flows to us above and below ground. Severe problems exist in southeast Queens, and throughout the remainder of the district there are areas of intersection and corner flooding, as well as areas where sanitary sewers do not function, and water flows into the basements of the buildings. These problems can usually be solved through the lump sum storm and sanitary sewer projects. Therefore, it is important to the district that storm and sanitary sewers be installed in southeast Queens, and these projects be ongoing throughout the next ten years.

We are in need of ongoing routine maintenance of catch basins, all connections to the sewers, and the sewers themselves.

The response time for catch basin cleaning and repair is excessively long. Funding should be made available for the preventive maintenance of basins and for emergency repair of defective basins, which are hazardous, and a threat to public safety.

Since we are a poor drainage district, and so many of our Bureau of Highway Operations Capital Improvement Projects are moving along the pipeline, we hope that a process is being established to insure that sufficient new basins are being installed to assure proper run-off and, construction waste is being properly disposed of to prevent clogging of existing catch basins.

## **DEPARTMENT OF SANITATION:**

The residents of the district take great pride in their homes and neighborhoods however, there are problems they need help with. At least 3 dozen locations in our community board frequently fall victim to illegal dumpers therefore, we must have more severe enforcement to deal specifically with the elimination of illegal dumping.

Our community board is subject to miles of illegal signs placed on street poles, and medians. These signs are very offensive to the residents of the community. Neighborhood people have gone out and made lists of the locations where the signs exist. We forward the lists to The Department of Sanitation Enforcement for the removal of the signs. It seems that less than one percent of the violators receive a summons for placing these signs on City property.

We must have more effective laws that will prevent the continuation of this illegal act on our community.

Community Board 13Q contains miles of concrete malls that need to be cleared of weeds and litter. Public safety depends on good visibility at all intersections. Weeds interfere with visibility and they must be cleared on a regular basis. Restoration of the clean team for our district is needed.

- Increase vacant lot cleaning capabilities, and institute fencing programs
- Increase the limited number of W.E.P. workers.
- Provide tools for them to work with land vans for their transportation
- Additional basket trucks.

- Additional enforcement personnel.
- Increase funding to provide personnel to clean malls.

Keep in mind that when people are researching an area to live in, do they look at the condition of the street but also, as to how clean they are and how the empty lots are maintained.

### **DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION:**

Our district is completely dependent on surface transportation for mobility; as a result, we need an increase in manpower to upgrade the performance of pothole crews and to establish more resurfacing programs. We are vigorously pursuing capital improvements for most of our streets, but clearly, improved maintenance is necessary while plans are developed for capital projects.

We require additional personnel in the traffic department, including field engineers, installers and maintainers to improve service delivery. The backlog for this work is tremendous and there is dangerous areas waiting too long for completion of surveys and installation of traffic safety devices.

We need a traffic program that will channel commercial traffic away from residential streets. This is especially true when there is a major commercial section which attracts many shoppers or when there is major construction in a residential community and it is necessary to move large trucks such as earth movers (18 , 20 wheel trucks), cement trucks, large equipment carriers, etc., to and from the construction site.

- Increase in asphalt for street maintenance
- Additional resurfacing programs.
- Increase in manpower to upgrade the performance of pothole crews.

### **DEPARTMENT OF DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION:**

For many years we have experience ongoing infrastructure improvement. We find that there is still a lack of ongoing communication and consultation among agencies, utilities, outside consultants, etc. before and during the construction process to permit the improvement to go forward as expeditiously as possible. For example, when the project boundaries are determined, and dollars approved for scope and schematics, each street should be checked for map/title/dedication status and the necessary process initiated so that when construction does take place streets are not eliminated because that process has not taken place.

Currently, as part of a capital project contract, most contractors are permitted to work on more than one job. However, very often, the time lapse during which no work takes place can be many weeks and the traffic backing up becomes frustrating which leads to accidents. Incentive/disincentive clauses must become standard to all projects to insure timely completion.

We find that the smaller business operations on commercial streets are not getting the customer and delivery access they should be getting during construction.

Experience has shown that where sections of an area designated for capital improvement have problems in drainage or grade, which create design difficulties, those streets are left for last and delayed year after year. Agency policy should be established to address the problem section first and then proceed with the remainder of the project.

The independent engineer hired to monitor the contractor in the field often seems to be more responsive to the contractor than to the community and too much time elapses before the engineer, agency and contractor discuss and resolve the problem. This often results in hardship for homeowners or merchants. Contracts in older residential areas, which are not well lit, do not include enough nighttime precautions to permit drivers to see barricades, depressions, etc. resulting in accidents.

Over time we find that each completed highway reconstruction project generates more owner complaints than prior projects produced. We therefore request that a quality of work clause be integrated into each contract and that quality control on the site be such that infractions would initiate work stoppage and immediate correction.

### **THE LOW BIDDER DOES NOT GUARANTEE**

### **THE BEST JOB AT THE BEST PRICE.**

### **DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AND RECREATION:**

Many capital dollars have been expended in our district in recent years for reconstruction of parks. However, if there is not a person assigned to each completed facility, then it seems to us that these dollars are being wasted.

As parks capital projects are completed within the district, the need for maintenance personnel and equipment increases. In addition, the parks department has jurisdiction over large areas of public land in this district. We are specifically requesting permanent assignment of more city parks workers. We need at least 12. We also require a minimum of eight seasonals. Many of our parks have been redone or spruced up but we do not have the maintenance staff to allow the public full use of them.

Our many parks and playgrounds require attention from both the community and the recreational division of the parks department. We must have additional recreational persons who help to oversee and plan programs in the parks. We do have some local Friends of The Parks, who have been recruited over the years but, it is very discouraging to them to see vandalism from time to time because, we do not have the staff to prevent it. We need park houses and the professional staff to assist the local Friends.

We have a large percentage of the borough's trees and in accordance with the age of our communities, most of our trees are old, large trees in need of maintenance for both aesthetic and safety reasons. One of our most serious problems is dead tree, stumps, shafts, and trees that overhang stop signs, and lean on private property. It is imperative that the Queens Forestry division be expanded to provide services to address these problems. We must have a tree pruning contract that deals with these very old and large trees but, the contract should be on a yearly basis not every 10 years. Additionally, services need to be coordinated between D.O.T. and Parks when a traffic signal is installed many signals are being installed in areas where existing trees block visibility. Ignoring the hazards that line our streets is compromising public safety.

- We are requesting additional funding for personnel, equipment and contracts that include maintenance and operation of parks.
- Increase funding for dead tree and stump removal contracts.
- Increase funding for tree pruning and maintenance contracts.

### **CULTURAL:**

The old Springfield Cemetery located between Cambria Heights and Laurelton requires official recognition as a Landmark, along with some existing Antique Housing Stock. In the vicinity.

### **YOUTH:**

Youth programming needs are limited within our district. Currently, the Department of Education and the Department of Youth and Community Development provide limited after school and evening programs to the Board area. Some programming exists in local religious institutions. However, the board area is not eligible for Community Development funds and has few community based organizations eligible to apply for the funds that do exist.

Schools buildings offer the primary source of space for youth programs in Community Board 13Q. The opening and space fees for evening programs in a school building still exist in prohibitive amounts. This factor inhibits program initiatives that are needed in the primary site resource available during the day and evening hours. We urge the Department of Youth and Community Development and the Department of Education to address these cost issues to permit more and less expensive use of school buildings.

The Department of Youth and Community Development Community Share Allocations to the Community Board and the local School District have been the best means of meeting local youth programming needs in a competitive funding stream with a local review process. Only the Community Board and Community School District can pinpoint the program needs of the community and use funds available under their recommendation process to fill those needs. Programs in local communities are providing the front-line youth service programs available to all children in all communities throughout the city. They must be supported and the community's recommendations respected by city officials and the agencies that serve youth.

Community Board 13Q has identified some of the need priorities in youth programs within the board. They include expanded recreation and leisure time activities to provide year-round youth programming and serve the growing need for latch-key type programs; educational and career choice counseling; youth employment; programs addressing the high school dropout rate; substance abuse prevention counseling; support programs to help resolve personal and family problems and the need for expansion of appropriate education and prevention programs addressing health needs and the growing threat of AIDS to the youth population.

The following are some of the programs that this Community Board would like to see:

- The maintenance and enhancement of the Department of Youth and Community Development/Community Board cooperative planning efforts and coordination for all



youth programming located in/or serving the youth population of the community board. This effort must include the provision of a youth coordinator position and protections for the prerogative of each Community Board to plan for youth services with a Full Time Staff Position specific to that individual board.

- Increased Community Share Allocation funding to Community Boards/Youth Services Planning Committees and After School Program funding to Community School Districts to permit new program development, program expansion and needed salary increases that will allow existing programs to remain competitive as employers.

- All School Building day and evening program opening fees and space costs for youth programs should be eliminated, in order, to expand the use of this site resource for our youth population. Program costs saved by the elimination of these opening and space fees should be made available to expand and/or develop new youth programs.

**PUBLIC BUILDINGS SHOULD BE AVAILABLE FOR PUBLIC USE.**

- Youth Development this will focus on reaching out to youth, empowering them, and increasing their self-esteem, understanding and sensitivity to others in a multicultural society. Youth will be involved in identifying, planning, implementing and evaluating various projects to achieve various goals.

### **SENIOR CITIZENS:**

Seniors comprise a large segment of our population; it is imperative that programs be developed to meet their needs.

Community Board 13Q is requesting that the existing Senior Programs be continued and that the communities that lack service entirely be funded for Senior Centers, along with transportation a Meals-On-Wheels service.