



# *The City of New York*

## **COMMUNITY BOARD 17**

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

**Sherif Fraser**  
District Manager

#### **INTRODUCTION**

Community District 17 hereby submits the following Statement of Community District Needs in accordance with §2800-d (10) of the Charter of the City of New York for Fiscal Year 2014. The contents of the statement result from local citizen complaints and testimony given at public hearings, as well as long-standing and, yet unmet needs and priorities.

Community District 17 is comprised of the following neighborhoods: East Flatbush, Northeast East Flatbush, Rugby, Farragut/Hyde Park, Remsen Village, Distmas Village and the Erasmus area. The geographic district encompasses East New York Avenue from East 98 Street to Utica Avenue, south on Utica Avenue to Clarkson Avenue, West on Clarkson Avenue to Bedford Avenue, South on Bedford Avenue, to the Long Island Railroad/Glenwood Road East along the Long Island Railroad to East 98 Street, then North on East 98 Street to East New York Avenue.

Roughly 70% of Community District 17 consists of one, two and three family homes, about 20% are multiple dwelling walk-ups, 3.6% is used commercially, 1% or less for industrial uses, and very little is vacant land. The industrial area is located adjacent to the Bay Ridge line of the Long Island Railroad but threatens to spill over onto abutting property. The commercial strips consist primarily of small shops, fruits and vegetable stores, medical offices, few large dry goods stores, used car dealerships, one senior day care center, private day care and pre-school centers, restaurants and auto repair shops.

We strongly believe that we have many undocumented residents who, if counted, would probably double the estimated increases. The black –non-Hispanic and Hispanic population continues to grow, the census count showed that approximately one-third of our population is under the age of 18 years. There has been an increase in our Asian and Caucasian population. Additionally, members of the orthodox Jewish Community continue their rapid acquisition of real property of multiple

dwelling strategically in CB 17 and CB 15 to the East and the construction of large apartment buildings for their ethnic and religious constituents.

During the past year, CB17 have had an unprecedented increase in the construction of multiple dwelling houses throughout the community, which have not contributed to any reduction in home prices except the reduction caused by the current economic recession. Additionally, the new construction and the ongoing conversion of rental property to condominium and Coops have resulted in ongoing displacement of those who cannot afford to purchase or pay higher rents.

Community District 17 needs additional resources and services from all city agencies, individually and collectively, to satisfy the needs of its constituents as all other communities within New York City and New York State, e.g education, youth, senior services, including senior housing, recreational programs and facilities.

### **BROOKLYN PUBLIC LIBRARY**

We support the Brooklyn Public Library's need for increased funding to provide the much needed services, supplies and equipments for our Branch libraries so that the needs of our students and adult population can be met. **All of the Branch Libraries in Community Board 17 must be considered for Capital improvement to avoid further deterioration of the physical structures.**

Capital requirement to complete the renovation at the Rugby Branch for furnishing and equipment cannot be postponed. **Adequate arrangement to serve the public during the renovation period must be a top priority.** The number of **computers and books** at our Branch office must be dramatically increased to avoid long wait time.

### **FIRE DEPARTMENT**

The long awaited renovation at Engine 310 Ladder 174 has finally begun. We are pleased this project has finally started, however, the Board is disappointed funding for an emergency generator was not included in the allocation of funding for this project. **Emergency generators off-set that critical need that comes with the loss of electricity in a power outage.**

The repaving of the rear yard at Engine 248 is badly in need of repairs in addition to the repaving of the sidewalk in front of the fire house. The City and the Fire

Department should make these request a top priority to avoid a crisis at the locations.

The Board is overly concerned about on-going neglect of and wanton avoidance of addressing these issues and once again reiterates the importance of prioritizing these projects.

We have received many allegations of homes occupied illegally, often in rooms with flimsy dividers, crowded conditions with overloaded electrical wiring that creates fire hazards. In 1998 we requested a pilot program to permit the NYC Fire Department to inspect multiple dwellings as they inspect places of business for violations. This may be done in conjunction with the Buildings Department which usually cannot gain entry without a warrant and have to discontinue multiple dwelling inspections for many, many years.

Once again we reaffirm our support for the Fire Prevention Inspection Program, Fire Prevention Inspection Team and the Juvenile Fire Setter Intervention program. We also support funding for carbon monoxide and smoke detectors for distribution to seniors and other population unable to afford the purchase.

We also emphasize the importance of having the fifth person on the apparatus.

### **HOUSING PRESERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT**

We are requesting that the New York City Housing Preservation and Development re-institute and prioritize the inspection of apartments and multiple dwelling buildings.

Community Board #17 recommends funding for non-for-profit organizations within the confines of District 17 that are engaged in Foreclosure Prevention and Financial Literacy and Mortgage Modification within the current calendar year and beyond.

We have asked for a feasibility study and after years of gentle persuasion demanded an urban renewal program and development of land near the LIRR. There is currently a salvage yard directly behind a new school. This yard, and an abandoned car lot with car parts and other debris creates an unhealthy surrounding and are harmful to the health of our children. Please include this request as an emergency item in the fiscal year 2014 Budget.

Community Board #17 supports Flatbush East Community Development Corporation, Neighborhood Housing Services of East Flatbush Inc. and Erasmus Neighborhood Federation in their request for funding a Youth Arts, Culture and Literacy center under the Neighborhood Preservation Consultant Contract. We hope they will be designated recipients. This community needs all the help it can receive to improve and maintain its housing stock. Also, there is a need to work more closely with the community to facilitate community needs/goals.

We believe that Neighborhood Housing Services of East Flatbush must be funded for Foreclosure Prevention through HPD's Neighborhood Preservation Consultant Contract. Also, such contracts should be awarded to organizations with the most experience and record of actual accomplishments that are engaged in the communities where their needs are.

We are requesting annual funding to support East Flatbush Foreclosure Prevention Programs. With the present state of the economy, these programs are necessary to assist homeowners who are experiencing financial difficulties.

We also support additional funds for Code Enforcement, the Narcotics Control Unit where applicable, and to assist renters who face eviction due to foreclosures.

The community is in desperate need of C2 Housing for our aging population. Central Brooklyn has a very large population of persons 65 years and older one of the largest population concentration in the State of New York. The lack of affordable housing for our senior population and the community at large presents a very serious problem. CB#17 asks that NYC provide funding for Housing Vouchers to prevent homelessness and foreclosure. It makes sense to use funds for housing for those who need a home, than development bonds and tax abatement for developers.

### **OFFICE OF BUSINESS SERVICES**

Nothing has been done in Community District 17's industrial commercial areas, primarily along the Long Island Railroad and the commercial strips. Community District 17 has great potential for a flourishing industrial park-like development.

We also ask for agency outreach to Community District 17's businesses. It is becoming impossible for proprietors to keep their businesses due to high real property taxes, high water and electric bill, unreasonable fees and surcharges. CB#17 small businesses need immediate assistance.

**The Board also request that the New York City Work Force1 Career Centers be expanded to the various communities. In these difficult economic times, there is a greater need for more centers to provide jobseekers with a full array of employment services including career advisement, job search counseling, skills training and job placement.**

### **DEPARTMENT OF BUILDINGS**

There has been an increase in the amount of commercial activities taking place in residential properties, such as, restaurants, churches, bakeries, car repair shops operating out of private garages and retail store. Efforts must be made by this agency to enforce all buildings and zoning codes. Building code violations make tenants and neighbors justifiably angry and concerned for their safety and quality of life.

The Department of Buildings in the past Twenty years or more has not met its responsibility of inspecting multiple dwelling buildings and new construction at all phases. It is incumbent upon this agency, that, given the unabated increase of the illegal renovations/apartments throughout the city, that the Buildings Department re-institutes inspection of multiple dwelling houses. The wanton lack of inspection and code enforcement has indeed created a clear and present danger in our community and other communities during the last decade resulting in displacement of residents and insurmountable personal losses.

The Department of Buildings and New York City Government must recognize that self-inspection of new construction and violation removal is not a workable solution to the agency's responsibilities of "Building Inspections." In the past five years, New York City has experienced more than its fair share of collapsed buildings, new in-progress construction and falling debris. This agency must re-institute massive bi-annual inspections of multiple dwellings and commercial properties and the timely inspections due to complaints. Additionally, some non-offending renovations should be Grand Fathered in as done in DUMBO years ago.

We are requesting that the Buildings Department inspect all commercial enterprises operating with variances for violations and all new construction from excavation to first occupancy. Prior acceptable conditions of building codes must never be fined and grand-fathered as is the rule currently.

**Community Board 17 request that the Department of Buildings step up enforcement of illegal curb cuts, evident all over Brooklyn.**

## **DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION**

Problems related to water meter billing continues to plague District 17. Many residents who had meters installed have received very high water bills, which are subsequently found to be in error. It is often difficult for them to have these bills rectified. They are understandably confused. The self-metered and installation cost reimbursed by this agency is unfair and punitive to homeowners. Homeowners have paid for meters over a decade through special rate increases for this purpose. Additionally, DEP must modify its procedures for informing customers of inoperable meters and Remote Meter Readers and the process must be simplified to facilitate repairs. DEP must ensure that their customer service employers have the proper information to give to customers who calls for specific problems and services.

There is a long delay in answering complaints about clogged catch basins. This indicates a need for more frequent preventive maintenance. We implore this agency to act responsibly and address these unhealthy conditions.

Our District is saturated with auto repair shops which discharge large amounts of volatile organic solvents and volatile organic compounds into the air which contributes to respiratory diseases. DEP must do a study and provide Community Board #17 with a corrective action plan to address these dangerous and increasing health issues. These health issues have been ignored over the past years and needs to be expeditiously addressed. We are insisting on a written response regarding this issue.

## **HUMAN RESOURCES ADMINISTRATION**

**All programs funded by HRA are sorely needed in Community District 17 and funding should be continuously increased and expanded where needed.**

## **DEPARTMENT OF SANITATION**

Daily complaints regarding dumping on streets and street sweeping remain constant. Monthly reports of the cleanliness of our streets and sidewalks continue to show some areas with low cleanliness rating. These areas need to be monitored and improved. The Sanitation Department has the ability to effect positive changes. Also, enforcement efforts needed to be continued to address blocked sidewalks by businesses. Sanitation should coalesce with the Department of Consumer Affairs to improve cleanliness compliance by businesses and to also address sidewalk clutter.

While it is important to remove the dump-out promptly, we believe it would be more cost effective to prevent this illegal activity by posting police and installing surveillance cameras to apprehend the perpetrators and confiscate the vehicles used for illegal dumping.

Illegal posterage continues to be a problem. During Fiscal Years 2009, through 2011, this activity has increased more than 100%. Illegal posterage is being done with impunity. In addition to the large posters, construction advertisements are often nailed to trees and poles. Smaller signs are glued to poles, street signs, walls and all available areas, even painted on sidewalk creating an eyesore. The Sanitation Inspectors who perform daily inspections, Sanitation Enforcement and the citywide posterage team must make a concerted and consistent effort to reverse this trend.

Five day collection at public and private schools must remain a high priority, especially at those schools with a breakfast program and several lunch hours. Collections must be made around schools that put out garbage on Friday past the regular pickup. Also, the Sanitation department must clean-up all debris spilled when pick-up are made especially at public school locations on the weekend.

On weeks when there are holidays, a regular two-day a week pickup becomes a one day scheduled pick-up. This diminution of service is even worse for recyclable materials and the problems of vermin and rodent infestation multiplies.

## **DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AND RECREATION**

Community District 17 appreciates the Department of Park's Greening Project. During the past ten years, Community District 17 has had limited success with tree pruning. Therefore, we are requesting that our schedules for pruning and planting be prioritized due to the years of deliberate neglect. Our waiting list for tree planting and pruning has increased. Tree pruning and planting must be given top priority for Calendar Year 2014 and beyond.

The greening of our community is very important because of the high rates of respiratory diseases. Community District 17 has made multiple requests to the Parks Department and the Parks Commissioner for Tennis Court permits for off-hours usage by our community youths at no charge. Community District 17 has the fewest parks and/or recreational areas in New York City. The issuance of these free permits will cost the Parks Department zero dollars. However, they will provide an hour of meaningful recreational time for our community youths.

Please arrange for easy access to these permits through our local Community Board 17.

The Parks Department and the New York City 311 Service Center must address the difficulty in getting serious complaints for dangerous trees to be pruned and removed. It is virtually impossible to lodge a complaint and get a response to these issues expedited. Reports to 311 regarding dangerous trees must be prioritized for immediate attention.

The Mayor's initiative to plant one million trees mandates that a specific budget be in place for this project. It is necessary to have adequate guaranteed funding for the tree pruning now and thereafter.

### **DEPARTMENT FOR THE AGING**

Community Board #17 would like to once again applaud Department For the Aging for approving a Senior Center in our community. The center has been in operation since 2007, and the seniors are extremely grateful and ecstatic to return to their community. However, **a Bus and driver to transport the seniors who are experiencing difficulties utilizing public transportation and those that do not have the means of transportation to get to and from the center.** Community Board #17 ask that you use your good office and make this possible for our seniors.

Our population continues to age like the rest of the country; the frail and elderly are growing more numerous. They need the services provided by the programs funded by the Department for the Aging more than ever. There is a desperate need for C2 housing to meet the needs of our community's aging population namely: assisted living, independent living and dependent living.

There remains a great need for additional senior centers throughout Community District 17 to meet this growing population. **It is to be noted that there were four senior centers in this district and currently there is only one.** Additional funding is needed to continue the current programs and to expand where current and additional senior services can be provided. Sincere efforts must be made to promote greater outreach to the shut-ins who depend on the Meals on Wheels program. We are requesting that the Commissioner address these concerns of our seniors.



## **DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION**

The Department of Transportation must erect **“Local Traffic Only” signs throughout Community District 17 in areas that are illegally utilized by commercial vehicles, as there are too many pass through commercial traffic in District 17.** There is a need for additional enforcement to curtail the abuse of large trucks using local residential streets as Interstate highways and parking garages. These large oversized tractor trailers, because of their gross weight including freight, do considerable damage to our residential streets and homes.

We continue to be troubled by the congested and dangerous traffic conditions along our streets, namely Church Avenue/Bedford Avenue to East 98th Street; Nostrand Avenue/Empire Boulevard to Flatbush Avenue; Rogers Avenue/Glenwood Road to Empire Boulevard; Utica Avenue from Empire Boulevard to Glenwood; entering from both the southern and western side of Linden Boulevard from Kings Highway to Flatbush Avenue; Remsen Avenue from East New York Avenue to Foster Avenue. Most of our major intersections are choked with traffic. A comprehensive traffic study is imperative to alleviate this terribly dangerous traffic situation. These conditions also contribute to asthma and other respiratory health problems due to huge amounts of auto exhaust caused by stalled traffic.

**The Board welcomes the traffic study and the proposed reconstruction at the intersection of Utica Avenue, East New York Avenue and Empire Boulevard, and looks forward to working with DOT to bring this project to fruition.**

Additionally, we request that intersections throughout CB17 be inspected for turning lanes at certain location.

We admire DOT’s “schoolxing” signs throughout the community. However, Community District 17 again requests the erection of the appropriate signage throughout the community and especially around our schools, both public and private. In some commercial areas of the district, the new sweeping signage does not reflect the customary commercial hours. All non-confirming signs must be replaced as soon as possible.

We have requested construction of curb cuts throughout Community District 17. We need curb cuts throughout our district to meet the needs of our young children, seniors, the disabled and physically challenged. This is a top priority and one that will bring the city into compliance with the American with

Disabilities Act passed by Congress. There is a chronic problem with double parked vehicles on the major thoroughfares throughout Community District 17.

## **DEPARTMENT OF YOUTH AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT**

There is no more important priority for the future of our city than services for our youth. The need for youth services must be provided to the youth of Community District 17, whose needs are the same as those in every community throughout the city, yet Community district 17's requests have been neglected and blatantly ignored for decades.

The children in our district, some from one-parent families, most from families where both parents are wage-earners, and many for whom English is a second language, all need after school and serious meaningful year round youth and after school programs.

We are in dire need of Youth Centers and publicly funded recreational facilities. The City of New York and DYCD must double its funding and efforts to provide for more Adult Job Training, Youth Education, after school tutoring and Youth Job Training in Brooklyn District 17. We ask that this agency live up to its mandate to provide youth programming that will satisfy the needs of our youths mental, physical, educational and social needs and aid in raising the standards of our poorest constituents to above the Federal poverty level.

We hope that funding will be reinstated for Youth Delinquency Diversion Programs, Summer Youth Recreation Programs, and after school and evening programs in Community District 17.

The Beacon Program, at three of our schools, is most welcome. We would like to see these programs continued and expanded. We need additional funding to support and expand the Music Outreach Program in our community schools. These two programs are in dire need of continued funding.

Employment program for our young people are an indispensable necessity for Adults and Youths in our community not only during the summer but all year and in perpetuity.

## **DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION**

In Community District 17, there are a number of schools that needs immediate intervention to rescue the 15,000 plus students who are in the 8<sup>th</sup> Grade and cannot read and do math at a third grade level. A deadline of two years is quite adequate to turn these schools around.

Community Board #17 constituents are very disappointed by the difficulty and lack of access to those who are responsible for the education of our children and therefore advocates for some local community control and involvement in the governance of our local schools. **Additionally, there should be more accountability from teachers regarding those children who are missing classes and those that appear to be experiencing difficulties at home.**

Our school buildings, though old, are cherished by all. The replacement of missing floor tiles, broken window panes, leaking roofs and other minor repairs should never be classified as Capital improvements to be placed on the Department of Education's ten year plan. It cost very little to make these minor repairs versus what it usually costs to renovate or close down school buildings and then lease and renovate private property. We are requesting that our needs be given serious consideration and be expeditiously addressed.

The Board is extremely concerned about the educational needs of our children and would appreciate the opportunity of being notified in advance of any future school closing and modification and/or configuration. We are also requesting that the Board's office be apprise of all future planning for new schools and to be involved in the pre-proposal process. **There remains an on-going conflict with the co-existence of Charter Schools and Public Schools. Guidelines must be put in place and there must be adherence to those guidelines.**

We are encouraged to learn that the Department of Education now has new accountability tools that will enable parents, teachers, principals elected officials and Community Board members access to the progress report and quality review of our schools. We are asking the Department to be open and responsive to outside request for information.

## **NEW YORK POLICE DEPARTMENT**

Community Board 17 is deeply concerned that the 67<sup>th</sup> Precinct despite reporting an increase in shootings and felonies, received less officers from the Academy.

**Community Board #17 commends the Commissioner for the Impact Zone initiative** in the 67<sup>th</sup> Precinct and hope this initiative continues. Additional officers and increase visibility deters criminal activities. **We implore the Police Commissioner, the Mayor and all elected officials to do more to keep firearms out of our community.**

There is a direct relationship between the absence of police officers patrolling our community and crime in the community. The 67<sup>th</sup> Police Precinct needs to respond to (radio run) calls to 911 plus calls to 311. **We are also in dire need of more manpower and vehicles in the 67<sup>th</sup> Precinct.**

We believe it is impossible for the 67<sup>th</sup> Precinct to respond to all the calls made by the community with the resources available. Deployment of officers after training must adequately address the safety needs in our District especially on the Merchant Strips where day time crime has increased. **The 67<sup>th</sup> Precinct is also in desperate need of additional detectives to help solve crimes in the community, marked and unmarked cars and three wheeled scooters.**

We applaud the 67<sup>th</sup> Precinct for its community involvement. Our community demands the re-implementation and expansion of a “Safe Corridor for Seniors Programs.” This program is financed by a specific tax levy and has been discontinued for no good or apparent reason(s).

Based on numerous complaints from residents, we are requesting that the police department step up enforcement efforts to address truck traffic on residential streets and overnight parking. **There is a blatant disregard to this rule and enforcement of such needs to be prioritized.**

**Civilian Observation Patrol Program (COP) is a new initiative being undertaken by the Board with the assistance of our elected official and the 67<sup>th</sup> Precinct. The purpose of this initiative is to improve the quality of life, ensure the protection of the residents of our community and assist our law enforcement officials to secure our neighborhood. We request full cooperation and assistance from the NYPD in the form of vehicles and all necessary equipment/items necessary for this program.**

**The 67<sup>th</sup> Precinct Off-Street parking is a Priority.** It is our hope that NYPD will follow through with NYC Office of Management and Budget to acquire the space at 2913, 2917 and 2919 Snyder Avenue for Off-street Parking. Community Board #17 have done the due diligence and the NYPD have reassured us that the

Department have signed off on the proposal and forwarded same to Office of Management and Budget.

### **NEW YORK CITY TRANSIT**

Every effort must be made by this agency, to provide adequate transportation for our community residents. We reiterate the need for a rush hour bus route for Remsen Village which is serviced mainly by dollar/commuter vans and the B46 and B 17 Buses. Additionally, more local buses must be added to the **B46, B8, B12 and B17 bus route during rush hours.**

The Board urges the MTA to revisit the study of the Franklin Avenue Subway Station to address the numerous complaints regarding the **infrequency** of trains going towards Flatbush Avenue versus the frequency of trains going towards Utica Avenue Subway Station from Franklin Avenue.

The Transit Authority must extend the daily hours of use of all buses and subway passes for all high school students. Additionally, Community Board #17 is requesting a fair consideration for an additional bus to service the students at PS/IS 109 located at 1001 East 45 Street. We are requesting that the students receive the same treatment as the children at IS 278.

The New York City Transit Authority in the past chose to single out one group of students for special consideration while ignoring the needs of the majority of students for the special services desperately needed by all New York City students. This policy must be changed.

### **RE- ZONING**

Based on the numerous complaints Community Board 17 have received regarding overdevelopment in certain areas of the District, the Board has embarked on a re-zoning project in an effort to preserve the character of the neighborhood. We continue to advocate on behalf of the residents and work with the New York City Department of City Planning on this project.

*Robert Antoine*  
*Chairperson*

*Sherif Fraser*  
*District Manager*