



THE CITY OF NEW YORK BRONX COMMUNITY BOARD 6

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DISTRICT NEEDS STATEMENT FOR FISCAL YEAR 2009

INTRODUCTION

The Community Board #6 section of the Bronx is an area that is continuing to undergo positive changes and a total rebirth. Private homeownership is on a dramatic increase and large numbers of new affordable apartments units have either recently been developed or will be constructed in the very near future.

The few remaining vacant parcels of city-owned land in our district are all earmarked for development, such as the properties on both the north and south sides of East 176th Street at Third Avenue. One is slated to be developed as a new public school for young men (The Eagle Academy) and this other is being developed by the Lantern Group as affordable housing for young adults aging out of foster care.

Elsewhere in the district, private property owners such as the owner of 4269 Park Avenue (Block 3028, Lot 48) are expressing interest in developing their underutilized properties for the public good, such as for housing, schools and commercial storefronts.

Our community is also developing economically, as well, thanks, in part, to established institutions such as the New Fordham Road Business Improvement District, our large employers such as St. Barnabas Hospital, our many small "moms and pops" stores, and new emerging groups such as the Belmont Business Improvement District which is now in formation.

Our community is the proud host of the Bronx Botanical Garden, the Rosehill campus of Fordham University, and the world renowned New York Wildlife Conservation Society (The Bronx Zoo), which proposes to construct a 30 million dollar Intermodal transportation facility as part of its master development plan.

Our community also hosts a historical landmark, the West Farms Old Soldiers' Cemetery, which contains the remains of soldiers from five previous wars, including the American Civil War and the War of 1812.

However, like all inner-city communities in the United States, our district has its share of social ills (incidents of gang violence, robberies and illegal drugs, etc.) but they are far outweighed by the community's many positive attributes that include many successful schools, a regional trauma center located at St. Barnabas Hospital, strong civic, homeowners and tenant associations, viable commercial strips such as the Arthur Avenue/East 187th Street corridor (the Little Italy of the

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Bronx), and a strong and committed network of social service providers that work to raise the quality-of-life for those in our district who are less fortunate.

Some of our district's more pressing needs (broken down by municipal agency) are:

NEW YORK POLICE DEPARTMENT

Bronx Community Board #6's support of its local police precinct (the 48th) is second to none. We want our police officers to be well equipped, well trained and totally prepared for the challenges and risks of the 21st century and beyond.

Having said that, we urge the department to redouble its efforts to ensure that the 48th Police Precinct is equipped with all of the tools – vests, computers, telephones, etc., – that it needs to protect, and communicate with, the citizens our district. We mention this because of an incident in early 2007 when the 48th precinct's fax machine was inoperative for several months. Even minor equipment needs should be addressed.

In a similar vein, we ask that the department pay greater attention to the 48th police precinct's vehicles. The vehicles, particularly the squad cars, appear to require a more frequently maintenance schedule, including repainting.

Bronx Community Board #6 also asks that our district's allocation of police officers be increased in order that we may continue to enjoy and maintain the significant reduction in crime that we have experienced in recent months.

Similarly, the community board asks that our district's allocation of school crossing guards be increase to kept pace with the growing number of school age children coming to our community as a result of our rapid and welcomed influx of new affordable housing projects and private homeownership developments.

Lastly, there are two policy, non-budgetary, issues that we urge the Police Department to implement in fiscal year 2009.

To further improve police and community relations, we ask that that Department mandate that local precinct commanders once again convene precinct management team meetings (PMT) with their respective community board's district manager and the president of their precinct's community council. These monthly meetings provide for the useful exchange of important information that assists both the precinct commanders and the community board to better serve their mutual constituencies.

Additionally, we further ask that Bronx Community Board #6 be kept informed of any illegal activities (i.e., public drinking, gambling, etc.) that occur at fairs, block parties and other street events that are held in its district. This information, which is not normally provided to the board unless we specifically ask, would prove extremely helpful to us as we decide which activities should continue to receive our support and recommendations for approval.

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NYPD SCHOOL SAFETY

We ask that the New York Police Department's School Safety Division designate the central Crotona and West Farms sections of our district as a school drug free zone. The boundaries of the zone would be: Southern Boulevard/Crotona Parkway to the west; East 180th Street/Bronx Park South to the north; Morris Park Avenue to the east, and the Cross Bronx Expressway to the south. At a minimum, the proposed school drug free zone contains three (3) day care centers, four (4) public and/or private elementary and intermediate schools, and several youth after-school programs. Youth will be able to travel more freely to and from these facilities as word spreads that persons arrested in the zone for the sale or possession of illegal drug are subject to stiffer criminal penalties.

DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Bronx Community Board #6 urges the Department of Environment Protection to allocate funds to correcting water drainage problems that frequently occur at the northwest corner of East Tremont Avenue and Boston Road; at East 185th Street and Southern Boulevard, and at East 180th Street and Bronx Park Avenue whenever we experience even a light or moderate rainfall.

The department must address these recurring problems, perhaps through the installation of additional catch basins at, or in the immediate vicinity of, each site.

HOUSING PRESERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT

Bronx community board is fortunate that most of its vacant city owned land is now undergoing development for housing or other worthwhile development project and that we have no vacant city-owned land that is not already in the pipeline for development. Nonetheless, we urge the Department of Housing Preservation and Development to encourage all housing developers to, as much as possible, incorporate "green roofs" into their future project designs.

We also urge the department to hire additional inspectors so that it may more frequently inspect apartment buildings that it has turned over to third party management companies. These companies should be totally vetted by the department to insure that their other properties are totally free of housing and building violations and that the properties are properly managed.

We also ask that HPD increase funding for anti-drugs and narcotics abatement officers to combat the sale and use of illegal drugs in and around housing developments that are either managed, supervised, or subsidized by the City.

DEPARTMENT OF HOMELESS SERVICES

Relations between local communities and the Department of Homeless Services would be greatly improved if the department were to notify the affected community well in advance whenever it plans to open a new homeless shelter. We note that on several occasions Bronx Community Board

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#6 was only informed that a new shelter was established in our district after it was open and after clients had already been moved into the facility.

On a related matter, and in response to several recent requests for Bronx Community Board Six to support the development of transitional residences within its district, the community board's Housing and Land Use Committee's adopted the following position statement and voted to have it included as part of the community board's annual District Needs Statement:

"Our intention is not to offend others in declining the offer, but our focus should be to bring developers to the area to build affordable housing.

At this time, we currently have at least two (2) shelters, six (6) transitional housing facilities, and a number of scatter-site apartments for homeless families and individuals within our community.

Our focus should be to assist the working poor who are for the most part one paycheck away from homelessness to live in affordable units without having to worry about the potential of becoming homeless. We need to help those who are working, and continually recycling their earnings within the community, to have the option of affordable housing.

Community Board 6 has been a committed advocate for transitional housing in the past, but we would now like to focus on assisting the working poor obtain permanent affordable housing."

Furthermore, in order to ensure that community board six receives the ultimate benefits from new housing projects developed within its district, the community board has adopted a policy of requesting letters of assurances from all housing developers who appear before the board requesting its support. We ask that the developers provide written assurances that they will attempt to hire locally, purchase equipment and services from local vendors and promote our district's economy as much as possible.

DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AND RECREATION

Bronx Community Board #6's foremost concern for the Department of Parks and Recreation is for the safety of our constituents as they visit and utilize our district's numerous parks and play areas. Therefore, we encourage the hiring and deployment of additional Parks Enforcement personnel to patrol and monitor conditions in all of our parks. We also ask that the department work closely with the 48th Police Precinct in order to reduce criminal activities in and around our parks, such as, but not limited to, gang activity at Vydalia Park, vandalism at Cicerone Playground, and prostitution in and around Bronx Park.

We ask that the Department of Parks and Recreation redouble its effort to expedite the rehabilitation of Belmont Park, particularly the park's handball court and retaining wall. We also urge continued attention to the Mapes (Jacobo) Ball Field and to the Cook Farm in the Bronx.

We also ask that the department prepare and release a Request for Proposals (RFP) to profit and non-profit developers who will develop the Tremont Park comfort station (located at the corner of East Tremont and Third Avenue) as a venue that will enhance the East Tremont Avenue com-

mercial strip. Converting it to office space for a non-profit or as a mini shopping mall for small businesses are but two possible scenarios that come readily to mind.

Lastly, we ask that the department support our requests that the following equipment and personnel be allocated to our district:

- i) A tractor (\$55,000)
- ii) A mini-packer (\$85,000)
- iii) A pick-up truck with plow (\$30,000)
- iv) One City Park Worker (\$26,977)
- v) One Assistant Gardener (\$38,792)
- vi) One Parks Enforcement Patrol worker (\$30,378)

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Bronx Community Board #6 supports the timely and ambitious plans being advanced by Fordham University, the New York Botanical Garden, Montefiore Medical Center and the New York Wildlife Conservation Society (aka the Four Bronx Institutions Alliance) to improve the thoroughfares that serve as gateways to their respective institutions.

One part of their plan seeks to improve traffic flow along East Fordham Road from Southern Boulevard to Boston Post Road. According to documents provided by the Alliance, the improvements to Fordham Road would require \$620,000 in design funding in fiscal year 2009, and \$9,155,300 for construction and \$485,120 for controlled inspections in fiscal year 2010. The project's scope entails the:

*"...conceptual re-design [of Fordham Road] by removing all existing unsightly Jersey Barriers throughout the length of this roadway. Then, super-elevate 610' of the eastbound south side of the roadway for pedestrian safety. Replace with a raised planted median in the center between eastbound and westbound traffic. Add raised planted beds on the sides of the roadway between road and pedestrian sidewalks. Landscape with trees and appropriate flora & fauna. Install improved lighting and signage, and ensure functioning storm sewers and drainage systems."**

We also support the Alliance's request for \$300,000 in design funds in fiscal year 2009 for street improvements along the perimeter of the Belmont commercial area, including "East 187th Street from Bathgate Avenue to Southern Boulevard and the Arthur Avenue retail corridors from Fordham Road to Crescent Avenue. The project is to include streetscape improvement...traffic redesign and street upgrades, new signage, street lighting, security upgrades [and] landscaping; all in coordination with the Belmont/Arthur Business Improvement District that is now in formation.

We also support the Alliance's plans for streetscape improvement and landscaping along Kazimiroff/Southern Boulevard from Bedford Park Boulevard to Bronx Park South, and east on Bronx Park South to Morris Park Avenue. The final cost of this project has yet to be determined.

*Note: Italicize text excerpted from the Alliance's July 25, 2007 letter to the community board.

NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY

The community board is pleased that the City has funded the New York's public libraries in fiscal year 2008 to the extent where all library branches, citywide, can provide six days a week service. We encourage the City to continue to fund the libraries in such fashion and to provide the libraries with such additional funding as may be necessary for them to continue to upgrade their collections, maintain their facilities and keep the salaries of its librarians competitive with those that are offered in neighboring cities and towns.

NEW YORK FIRE DEPARTMENT

Bronx Community Board #6 requests that the City provide the funds necessary to make sorely needed repairs and upgrades to our district's local firehouses.

Specifically, Engine 88 needs apparatus replacement. Stands have been holding up its floors since 1996. Additionally, Engine 45 has serious plumbing and electrical issues that need to be addressed.

We also continue to ask the City to fund the purchase of smoke detectors and carbon monoxide detectors, which the Fire Department may distribute free of charge to the public. We recommend that \$100,000 be allocated for the purchase of 10,000 smoke detectors and that \$200,000 be allocated for the purchase of an equal number of carbon monoxide detectors.

DEPARTMENT OF CITYWIDE ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES

Bronx Community Board 6 asks that the Department of Citywide Administrative Services support our request to move from our current office space on the seventh floor of the City-owned Bergen Building (rooms 709 and 712) to the privately owned office building located at One Fordham Plaza.

The community board has literally outgrown its current offices. We have no room to conduct on-site meetings of the full board and we have to borrow space from another agency when hold on-site committee meetings. There is insufficient space to store our growing number of files, books and historical documents. We would be much better served if we could consolidate our operations in one large office containing ample space for meetings, files and equipment storage, and future growth.

Funding, above our current budget allocation is needed to finance the relocation to One Fordham Plaza, customizing the new office space, and for rent and utilities.

CONCLUSION

Other projects, programs and services that our district needs and continues to support include:

- Funding for the Wildlife Conservation Society's proposed Intermodal Transportation Facility.
- Funding for increased monitoring and enforcement of laws prohibiting illegal conversation. (Department of Buildings)
- Increased funding for the Summer Youth Employment Program. (Department of Youth and Community Development).

- Increased funding for senior citizen programs, including congregate meals, recreation, and employment services. (Department for the Aging).

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Respectfully submitted on behalf of the members and constituents of Bronx Community Board #6.

Ivine Galarza
Ivine Galarza,
District Manager