



COMMUNITY BOARD NO. 8 BRONX

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August 3, 2009

Statement of Community District Needs for Fiscal Year 2011

Introduction

COMMITTEE CHAIRS:

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Economic Development

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Traffic & Transportation

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For fiscal year 2011, Bronx Community Board No. 8 (BXCB8) continues to work to revisit long-standing budget requests and pare our list to the most essential services the community needs to remain a viable haven for our burgeoning neighborhoods of young families and elderly retired persons. In addition we continue to make efforts to improve the budgetary process at BXCB8 and to attempt to partner with City agencies when formulating our budget requests. We encourage your feedback and direction so that the budget process is as efficient and productive as possible and results in increases in the number of positive responses to our requests.

Before we discuss BXCB8's FY 2011 budget priorities, we will provide you with some background information about BXCB8 to assist you in understanding our budget requests.

The following statistics provide a profile of Bronx Community Board No. 8, according to the Department of City Planning, based upon the statistics from the 2005-2007 three year estimates of population data from the American Community Survey (PUMA5 03701):

BXCB8 has 110,210 persons (total population) living within our boundaries:

- Nearly 42% of BXCB8 community is of Hispanic origin
- 14.6% Black/African American
- 4.6% are Asian
- Nearly 26% of the total population is under 19 years old
- Nearly 20% are over 65 years old
- 80% are employed
- 26% are enrolled in a school

According to the 2000 census (total population 101,332):

- 71.8% of the total population are renters
- 21.5% are not proficient in English and 71.5% of this group speaks Spanish at home
- Thirty-two percent (32%) of the total population is foreign born:
 - 62% from Latin America (up from 48.4% in 2000 census)
 - 19.5% from Europe (down from 28.5% in 2000 census)
 - 12.6% from Asia
 - 5% from Africa.

According to the 2000 census, of the 27 census tracts that make up BXC8, 6 tracts have 30% or more persons living below the poverty level and 4 of those tracts have more than 30% of families living below the poverty level.

In addition, the NYC Department of Health & Mental Hygiene 2006, Community Health Profiles for Kingsbridge and Riverdale reports:

- People in this Riverdale and Kingsbridge are older than in the Bronx and New York City overall
- The death rate increased 10% between 1997 and 2002
- In this neighborhood, the biggest health issues that impact the premature death rate are: cancer at 27% and heart disease at 17% (an increase of 6% in 3 years).
- The heart disease death rate is higher than in the Bronx and NYC overall
- Kingsbridge and Riverdale residents are less likely to be tested for HIV than others in the Bronx and 41% of positive HIV test results are “late” diagnoses.
- More than 1 in 10 adults in Kingsbridge and Riverdale engage in binge drinking monthly.

There is one mental health facility, Riverdale Mental Health Association that offers an alcoholism and substance abuse treatment program in North Riverdale. However, Bronx CB8 does not have a hospital or in-patient facility within its boundaries.

Our district is located in the extreme northwest portion of New York City, bounded by the Hudson River on the west, Westchester County on the north and extending to Van Cortlandt Park and the Jerome Park reservoir on the east; to the south we are bordered by the Harlem River, West 225th Street and Kingsbridge Road. This area of 3.4 square miles encompasses the neighborhoods of Spuyten Duyvil, Kingsbridge, Riverdale, Marble Hill and Van Cortlandt Village. Marble Hill is unique. It is considered a part of Manhattan but the municipal services are provided by Bronx city providers.

Our communities have 1,386 acres of parkland—fully 63% of the land in our area. There are 68 park sites in all, including smaller greenstreets as well as City gems such

as Wave Hill and the 1,146 acre Van Cortlandt Park. To put this in perspective, we have 20% of the parkland in the Bronx. For that reason, for many years many of our capital requests have been for improvements to parks. While our expense request have been for maintenance of our parks. We have had mixed results in getting those requests acted upon. We will redouble our efforts and look forward to improving that statistic in FY 2011. BXCB8's parks are a natural resource to all the residents of New York City. With so many parks in our community, capital funding for the improvement of those parks is one of BXCB8's highest priorities. In addition, each year community boards are asked to indicate the general importance of each service to the community by ranking programs on the Community Board Service Program Rankings. All five boroughs have consistently ranked *park maintenance* as one of the top 10 concerns.

Our budget priorities reflect the diverse socio-economic mix of families, seniors and single-family households, and our common desire to maintain a vibrant community in the Bronx where people can raise families and even retire. As the city's population continues to increase, this diversity has made BXCB8 a natural destination point for families and seniors relocating from Manhattan. This is very good for our community and the Bronx, as a whole, but it also increases the demands placed on available resources and city services and shapes our capital and expense budget priorities.

Our first and highest budget priority is that the budget of BXCB8 office be increased from \$198,895 to \$250,000 in FY 2011. **BXCB8's budget has not been increased for many years and received a significant budget cut in FY 2010.** With a continued increase in population and in costs over the years, this lack of increase has already required BXCB8 to do more with less. It is imperative that the BXCB8's budget be funded at the \$250,000 level. Any lesser amount will impact on BXCB8 in performing the vital services to the citizens to whom they serve and to comply properly with the City Charter and New York City administrative code mandated responsibilities. Furthermore, funding at a lesser amount will serve to prevent the needs of our district from being heard and realized.

Aging, Health, Hospitals, Social Services, and Youth

Our population of seniors, at 20%, is the second highest in the Bronx so that services and programs to maintain and improve the quality of life of our seniors are vitally important to BXCB8. For FY2011 we are going to request that BXCB8 be include in a significant way in the "Livable Communities/Aging in Place" initiative; we urge increased funding for services for seniors in the areas of mental health, adult daycare; urge funding for training for seniors in money management and elder abuse prevention; and urge needed funding for training for senior caregivers.

Mental Health and family services make a positive difference in the lives of BXCB8 residents. For that reason we request increased funding to organizations that provide these services especially for seniors, such as the Riverdale Mental Health Association.

The youth of Bronx CB8 are a vital part of our community and of course are our future. We urge that funding be provided to make services available to the youth of our community to prepare them to make the right decisions in difficult situations and enable them to gain the skills to become productive members of our society. To that end, we request funding for programs for alcohol and substance abuse prevention and education, sex education, vocational training and services for children with special needs. These programs should be incorporated into the existing curriculum of the Out of School Time Program and other programs at our community youth centers including the Riverdale Community Center, the Kingsbridge Heights Community Center, the Riverdale Neighborhood House, Marble Hill Community Center, Ft. Independence Community Center and the Riverdale YMHA.

Education

Twenty-six percent of our residents are school-aged children. Many more children are bussed in or commute from other neighborhoods. Consequently, our schools suffer from chronic overcrowding. John F. Kennedy High School has one of the largest enrollments of any school in the city.

Our children deserve the same learning environment as the rest of New York State, and we need to speed the process of improving these learning environments in order to keep working families in our community rather than see them leave for the suburbs.

Our schools are in urgent need of repair. We urgently request that funds be allocated to make repairs to the infrastructure of our schools that were identified by the School Construction Authority and to conduct further thorough inspections of our schools and perform all necessary repairs. We request that funds be made available to bring all of our schools into compliance with City, State, and Federal disabled accessibility requirements. The children of BXCB8 need additional full day pre-kindergarten classes. We request that funds be made available to acquire sites for those classes.

One site that has been made available is the Whitehall Annex (3223 Independence Avenue). This site has a lease expiring in 2010 and we request that it be extended to accommodate the overcrowding of the local elementary schools. In addition, DOE has a priority to locate a new school in our community board. This is a good initiative and BXCB8 would like to be included in the site location process. Due to significant overcrowding in our district, there are plans to re-zone to accommodate

Programs that engage our children productively outside of the school day also have to be increased in our district. Additional funding is needed for all BXCB8 schools for after-school educational/recreational programs particularly remediation and enrichment programs.

Funding is needed to staff every school in our district with a full-time nurse, librarian, guidance counselor and computer instructor. Funding for lab technicians for science and computer labs is also needed.

To provide our children with the best possible opportunity to learn we are requesting funds to reduce class size.

DEP and Sanitation

The area along the perimeter of the Jerome Park Reservoir (JPR) between the fence and curb has become a public health hazard and an eyesore. The JPR has one of the highest severity levels and is the largest area of rodent infestation in all of BXCB8. It is important that funds be provided for staff to perform rodent control, graffiti cleaning, maintenance, and weekly trash removal.

Canine waste is a public health hazard that plagues BXCB8. Additional enforcement agents and patrols are necessary to ameliorate this situation.

Libraries

BXCB8's libraries are an invaluable cultural, educational, and informational resource to all of the members of our community. The physical conditions of some of our libraries are in dire need of repair or replacement. We emphatically urge that funds continue to be allocated to complete the construction of the Kingsbridge Branch Library. A full renovation of the Spuyten Duyvil Branch Library is needed with a priority on renovation of the fire alarm system, redoing the HVAC system and replacing the roof. Funding also is requested to renovate the interior of the Van Cortlandt Branch Library or to purchase land for a new site to replace that library.

No matter what condition our libraries are in, if they are not opened our residents cannot use and benefit from them. We affirm the decision to keep these vital resources open six days per week and implore that funding continues.

Parks and Recreation

Some progress is being made thanks to responses to our budget requests, funding from our local elected officials and Croton filtration plant mitigation funding, but BXCB8's parks continue to be in great need of reconstruction and repair.

"The land that now comprises Van Cortlandt Park (VCP) was acquired by NYC as parkland in 1888. Today, the park is one of the City's largest and most heavily used, and is a significant component of the extensive park system in the Borough of the Bronx." (Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement for The **Croton** Water Treatment Plant At The Mosholu Site, May 30, 2004).

Van Cortlandt Park is one of the most heavily used public parks in the city. It caters to citizens throughout the City through soccer and baseball leagues, as well as concerts, and the multiplicity of schools who train their athletes or hold citywide sporting competitions in this historic park and in the stadium. In addition, the city residents use

its swimming pool and lake, which are a mecca for thousands of young and old in the sweltering days of summer.

Croton Filtration Plant Mitigation Funding has been allocated to reconstruct the VCP parade grounds. However, we are requesting that funding be added to that project for construction of a much needed restroom near Broadway at West 251st Street. Funding is also needed for many other projects to improve and maintain our parks including; a new restroom at Fort Four Park; correction of drainage problems at Fort Four Park; reconstruction of the pond wall at Spuyten Duyvil Park to prevent hazardous runoff to the Metro-North station and neighboring roadway; completion of the renovation work at Van Cortlandt Mansion/Museum; the local matching funds for the Riverdale Park portion of the Hudson Valley Greenway project; Fort Four Park Phase II including new sidewalk benches, park pathways, and landscaping; reconstruction of the basketball courts and related work at Henry Hudson Park upper level; repair of the deteriorated parts of the sidewalks at the perimeter of Van Cortlandt Park; reconstruction of Bailey Avenue playground; reconstruction of Van Cortlandt's Caryl Field to correct drainage problems; reconstruction of pathways in Seton Park; and reconstruction of the stairway in Brust Park.

Van Cortlandt Stadium is in deplorable condition. It is a Bronx and City venue for sporting events. Renovation is long overdue and critically needed. An example of this is the bathrooms and locker rooms which are severely deteriorated and barely usable.

Proper maintenance of our community parks preserves them and keeps them safe and useable. Funds are needed for sufficient maintenance personnel for all of our community's parks, for three pickup trucks with snowplows and water tanks, and for increased PEP personnel. Additional lighting is needed for safety in Van Cortlandt and all of our community parks. Walkways are in need of repair in the Greenstreets parks at Broadway and Manhattan College Parkway and at Broadway and Van Cortlandt Park South.

Public Safety

We are pleased with the work of the 50th Police Precinct to combat crime, provide public safety, and maintain superior community relations in our district. Many of our tax paying residents, would leave the City if crime rates began rising. We request that additional community relations staff be added to better educate and inform the BXCB8 community on criminal activity and public safety. Additional furniture is also required at the 50th precinct to enable them to adequately host informative community meetings.

We are concerned that the staffing level at FDNY Engine Company 52 is not sufficient to keep our community safe. One additional Firefighter is needed. We emphatically endorse the proposal to fund the creation of a Haz-tech Engine at Engine Company 52 to decrease response times to a terrorist event, and increase the Fire Department's ability to handle and mitigate a hazardous material incident, and survival time of victims. The fact that Engine Company 52's location is well situated near transportation

routes to enable access to other parts of the Bronx and Manhattan makes it an ideal candidate.

To maintain fire safety, the number of Fire Marshalls assigned to the Bronx and BXCB8 should be maintained.

We also urge the creation/funding of other programs to improve the safety of our residents including the purchase of CPR instructional kits, the purchase of smoke detectors, and the purchase of plastic helmets for children.

Traffic and Transportation

An extremely dangerous condition exists due to the exceptionally sharp turn at the exit ramp from the Henry Hudson Parkway at 253rd Street. We request funds be allocated to correct that condition.

Funds are also necessary to: install new sidewalk curbs on West 260th Street between Riverdale and Delafield Avenues; reconstruct the West 230th Street exit off of the Major Deegan Expressway; grind and resurface Broadway from 233rd Street to 238th Street; and sidewalk and curb repair from 236th Street to 238th Street.

Economic Development

To improve the business environment in our district we are requesting funding through Small Business Services for establishment of a local office of a Workforce One, job training contractor as well as funding through Small Business Services for the establishment of a local office of NYC Business Solutions, entrepreneurial training and small business resource contractor. These offices will provide sorely needed support and resources to a suffering business environment. Our Community district has had an increase in vacant stores and is greatly concerned about the economic viability of the community. BXCB8 would be interested in funding for programs that work with neighborhood development of small businesses.

Housing

Additional resources are needed to monitor and ensure safety at the large number of construction projects in BXCB8 as well as to ensure the quality and safety of our existing housing stock. **There have been numerous abandoned properties in the district where development has been halted due to economic stress. We welcome** additional Inspectors, new vehicles for Inspectors, and an updated computer system for the Bronx offices of both the DOB and HPD will help alleviate this situation.

Respectfully submitted on behalf of the members of Bronx Community Board No. 8 by:

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Chairman
Bronx Community Board No. 8

Ken O'Brien
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Chairman, Budget Committee
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