



COMMUNITY BOARD NO. 8 BRONX

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August 1, 2013

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Statement of Community District Needs for Fiscal Year 2015

Introduction:

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Public Safety
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Youth
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Bronx Community Board No. 8 (BXCB8) continues to revisit long-standing budget requests and pare our list to the most essential services the community requires 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 will result in an increase in the number of positive responses to our requests.

Before we discuss BXCB8's FY 2015 budget priorities, we will provide you with some background information about BXCB8 to assist you in understanding our community and budget requests.

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. BXCB8 covers an area of 3.4 square miles encompassing the neighborhoods of: Fieldston, Kingsbridge, Kingsbridge Heights, Marble Hill, Riverdale, Spuyten Duyvil, and Van Cortlandt Village. In the case of the Marble Hill area, these statistics are not included in our city planning profile but this community is considered a part of BXCB8 and receives municipal services from the Bronx.

Our community also has 1,386 acres of parkland—fully 63% of the land in our area. There are 68 park sites, 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, historically, many of our capital requests have been for improvements to parks, natural resource for all the residents of New York City.

While most of our expense requests have been for the maintenance of our parks, we have had mixed results in having them acted upon. We will redouble our efforts and hope that more of these requests will be fulfilled in FY 2015.

Serving the neighborhoods of Fieldston, Kingsbridge, Kingsbridge Heights, Marble Hill, Riverdale, Spuyten Duyvil, and Van Cortlandt Village

District Profile:

The following statistics provide a profile of Bronx Community Board No. 8, according to the Department of City Planning, based upon the statistics from 2010 census and estimates of population 101,657 data from the American Community Survey (PUMA 03701):

Where most Bronx neighborhoods have decreased in population, BXCB8 has increased. In 2000 there were 101,332 and the current 2010 census indicates 103,000 persons (total population) living within our boundaries.

- 46% Male
- 54% Female
- 42% Hispanic origin
- 12% Black/African American
- 5% Asian
- 5% Veterans
- 26% Under 19 years old
- 21% Over 60 years old
- 39% Of families live below poverty level
- 32% Foreign born
- 60% Of the foreign born are from Latin America
- 62% Employed

According to the 2000 census, the most recent statistic available, of the 27 census tracts that made up BXCB8, 6 tracts have 30% or more persons living below the poverty level.

As mentioned above, BXCB8 has two New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) locations: Marble Hill and Ft. Independence Houses. Marble Hill Houses accounts for a population of approximately 3,500. The Ft. Independence Houses account for a population of approximately 775. According to NYCHA information, as of January 2010, the average family income in conventional public housing is \$23,187; 49.5% of NYCHA's households are below the poverty line; 11.9% of NYCHA families receive public assistance; working families account for 47.4% of NYCHA families; social security, SSI, a pension, Veteran's benefits, etc., support 41.9% of NYCHA families; 35.4% of the households are headed by persons over 62 years-of-age; and 36.8% of the NYCHA population are minors under 21 and 29.7% are minors under 18.

Community Health Profile:

In addition, the NYC Department of Health & Mental Hygiene 2003 and 2006, Community Health Profiles for Kingsbridge and Riverdale. This information is dated and covered a population of 88,989. The current 2010 census has the population at 101,731. It reports that:

- People in 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 in Riverdale/ Kingsbridge than in the Bronx and NYC overall.

*Serving the neighborhoods of Fieldston, Kingsbridge, Kingsbridge Heights,
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- The three (3) leading causes of death are: cancer at 28% and heart disease and stroke at 23% (an increase of 6% in 3 years) as well as pneumonia and influenza. These issues are higher in Riverdale/Kingsbridge 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.
- More than 1 in 5 adults smoke in Riverdale & Kingsbridge, higher than in the Bronx and NYC
- The hospitalization rate for mental illness is higher in Kingsbridge and Riverdale than in NYC overall.

There is one mental health facility, Riverdale Mental Health Association that offers behavioral healthcare to individuals living in the Northwest Bronx. However, Bronx CB8 does not have a hospital or an in-patient facility within its boundaries.

FY 2015 Budget Requests

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 Northwest Bronx where people can live, raise families and enjoy retirement. 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 for 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 priority is that the budget of BXCB8 office be increased from \$206,895 to \$350,000 in FY 2015. BXCB8's basic budget has not been increased for over 20 years. With a continued increase in population and in costs over the years, this lack of increase has already required BXCB8 to struggle to do more with less. It is imperative that the BXCB8's budget be funded at the \$350,000 level. Any lesser amount will have an 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 only prevent the needs of our district from being heard and realized.

Aging

Our population of seniors, at 21% 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. To better care for this population demographic, we seek FY2015 expense funding for the following items:

- Increase funding for Senior Centers in Community Board 8 for nutritional, educational and health, initiatives to maintain the highest function of older adults and to foster aging in place.
- Provide funding for communal meal services at the Ft. Independence Senior Center.

- Provide additional funding for geriatric mental health services for healthy independent living.
- Provide additional funding for senior transportation programs including accessible cabs.
- Providing funding for programs that support and train caregivers.
- Provide funding for the development and implementation of telehealth programs to remotely monitor health.

Health, Hospitals & Social Services

Mental health and family services make a positive difference in the lives of BXC8 residents especially for seniors. With 21% of the BXC8's population over 60 years of age and growing, we request expense funding from:

- The Department of Health & Mental Hygiene (DOHMH) for the Riverdale Mental Health Association (RMHA) Geriatric Program. This RMHA program addresses the unique mental health issues in Bronx Community Board 8's growing geriatric community.

Due to the lack of a hospital facility within the BXC8 borders and the aforementioned DOHMH statistics, our constituency is inadequately covered in the event of health emergencies. Compounding this problem is the closing of the current re-stocking station located at the NYPD 50th Precinct which has provided two Basic Life Support (BLS) ambulances. Therefore, BXC8 requests capital funding for:

- A new FDNY/EMS restocking station and decontamination station.

Youth

The youth of BXC8 are a vital part of our community and of course are our future. The youth under 19 years old make up 26% of the population in the community board and 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 expense funding for:

- The Department of Youth and Community Development to allocate \$1.2 million through OST (Out of School Time) and Teen Action for programs specifically within the BXC8 district. Funds are needed from the OST program for Marble Hill Community Center's Children's Arts and Science Workshops, Inc. for summer day camp services (\$284,000) and school year projected activities (\$657,500) and for staffing of activity specialists in science, literacy and art; Kingsbridge Heights Community Center in the amount of \$100,000 to support the after-school and evening programs that provides services to youth in Community Board No. 8; and funding of \$90,000 is also needed for the Riverdale Community Center to re-establish the after-school Teen Center and to reinstate the Street Outreach Program teen program.

Education

In 2008, 26% of our residents were school-aged children. Many more children are bussed in or commute from other neighborhoods. Consequently, our schools suffer from chronic overcrowding. We would like to continue exploring site acquisition opportunities for annexes to our existing educational facilities to better deal with overcrowding issues.

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 request that capital 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 and upgrades to the following facilities:

- In Tech Academy –MS/HS 368X (electrical upgrade for computer lab-room 321, electrical upgrade for library media center);
- PS 7 – Kingsbridge (concern for school and student safety; need for replacement of 15 internal doors that do not open or close properly, the doors do not have modern panic bars and 16 exit doors (external) coming off frames).
- Upgrade to all gymnasium equipment in all schools in Bronx Community Board 8 to help reduce the epidemic of obesity among students.
- Continued exploration of site acquisition opportunities for annexes to our existing educational facilities. The community board encompasses district 10 which is one of the most crowded education districts in the borough.

We also request allocation for several expense projects in FY 2015 that include funding to:

- Upgrade of all gymnasium equipment in all schools in Bronx Community Board 8 to help reduce the epidemic of obesity among students.
- Funding for after-school educational/recreational programs in particular remediation and enrichment programs for all of the schools in Bronx Community Board 8 including non-title No. 1 schools.
- Allocation for funds to provide for a meaningful reduction of class size for all grades.

Department of Environmental Protection

The Hansen Reports issued monthly by the Department of Environmental Protection (“DEP”) show a high number of community complaints concerning noise from: alarms, construction before and after hours, construction equipment, air conditioning and ventilation equipment, jack hammering and other sources. We request expense funding for:

- DEP to hire more inspectors and purchase more decibel meters for enforcement of the city’s noise codes.
- DEP hire more workers to routinely clear clogged catch basins which cause flooding.

The Hansen Reports also show a high number of community complaints monthly concerning clogged catch basins.

Libraries and Cultural Affairs

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. Some libraries continue to operate in old, overcrowded and poorly maintained buildings. We request capital funding for:

- A full renovation of the Spuyten Duyvil Branch Library with a priority on life safety systems, renovation of the fire alarm system, HVAC system replacement, interior ADA compliance and replacement of the roof.
- A partial interior renovation of the Riverdale Branch Library including upgrading life safety systems, HVAC replacement and changes for ADA compliance, new furniture and equipment, replace HVAC, and rehabilitation of the entrance, sidewalks, retaining wall, doors, and upgrade drainage.
- The existing Van Cortlandt Branch Library is too small to support the area need and is in dire need of repairs. It needs a full renovation and rehabilitation of the façade, a new roof, renovation of the interior spaces, including the staff room, new windows, new furniture and equipment; or the purchase of a new site to replace it.

Regardless of the conditions of our libraries, if they are not opened, our residents cannot use or 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 maintenance, enforcement, 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).

VCP is one of the most heavily used public parks in the city. It caters to citizens throughout the City through soccer, baseball and cricket 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.

Capital funding is needed for many projects to improve and maintain our parks including:

- Construction of a new restroom and DPR maintenance in Fort Four Park and related plumbing repairs.
- Repair of the Bailey Avenue playground.
- Repair of Henry Hudson Park basketball and handball courts.

- Construction of a restroom at Broadway and W 251 St. adjacent to the VC Parade Grounds.
- Renovation of the Marble Hill Playground.
- Installation of a pedestrian bridge over the Major Deegan Expressway in Van Cortlandt Park.
- Reconstruction of the pond wall at Spuyten Duyvil Park to prevent water runoff on the roadway of the parking lot at the Metro-North station.
- Renovation of the Strong St. Playground.
- Resurfacing of the Seton Park tennis courts and basketball courts and related repairs
- Renovation of Van Cortlandt Park Stadium.

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. Funding for expense items are needed for:

- Personnel sufficient for maintenance and enforcement in CB8 parks, especially on weekends and times of high use.
- Two stump grinders for Van Cortlandt Park.
- Purchase of an additional wood chipper to aid in removing tree debris from CB8 parks.

Public Safety

Fire department of New York – (FDNY): We have previously requested capital funding under the Health Hospitals & Special Services category for an EMS restocking station under the jurisdiction of the Fire Department (FDNY). Since mid-2011, that home base for ambulance crews serving Community Board 8 has been located in a newly established station in Woodlawn, which is several miles away from the former temporary restocking and decontamination station at the 50th Precinct, which was centrally located in Community Board 8 and served as home base for ambulance crews based in this area. Shorter response times translate into better outcomes in emergency situations and ultimately reduce the cost of medical care by allowing intervention by trained personnel before a patient's or accident victim's condition becomes more severe and thus more expensive to treat.

We are concerned that many of the firehouses are turn-of-the-last-century buildings that need upgrades such as new roofs; apparatus floor replacements, waterproofing, pointing, electrical upgrades as well as new kitchens and bathrooms. We request capital funding to:

- Upgrade the facilities in the board 8 area, specifically an emergency generator and kitchen renovation for Engine 52, Ladder 52.

New York Police Department (NYPD) - We are pleased with the work of the NYPD 50th Police Precinct to combat crime, provide public safety, and maintain superior community relations in our district. They are doing a fine job, but need added tools to help them.

Many of our tax paying residents would leave the City if crime rates began rising. BXCB8 is requesting expense funding for:

- The requisition of a community affairs vehicle and office supplies such as batteries and literature to distribute to the community at events which would aid the 50th Police Precinct in its ongoing efforts to reduce crime in our district.
- In addition, the purchase of an Auxiliary vehicle and new uniforms for the Explorers Club members would increase the visibility in the community as well.

Department of Sanitation

A recent Independent Budget Office (“IBO”) study showed that recycling collection is most cost-effective and productive when the city increased its use of dual-bin trucks, which eliminate the need for sending two trucks on a recycling route, one to pick up paper, the other metal, glass, and plastic. Community Board # 8 was not listed as having this equipment. BXCB8 is requesting capital funding for:

A Dual-Bin Truck for Recycling

The 2010 census showed an increase in our district area of residents. In order to maintain the cleanliness of this district, we request expense funding for:

- Staffing for the Dual-Bin Truck for the very important recycling effort.
- Reinstatement and hiring of sanitation district officers to increase enforcement of the city’s sanitation laws especially littering, illegal dumping and “pooper scooper” laws.
- Reinstatement of the manual street cleaning crews to remove litter from the streets.

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

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Chair,
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Brendan J. Contant
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