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BRONX COMMUNITY BOARD No. 10

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Martin A. Prince
Chairperson

STATEMENT OF COMMUNITY DISTRICT NEEDS BRONX COMMUNITY BOARD #10 FISCAL YEAR 2017

Opening Statement

Bronx Community Board #10 is one of the largest Board service areas in the Borough of the Bronx. It is primarily characterized by 1-3 family homes, situated on tree shaded streets. There are a few multiple dwellings concentrated in the Pelham Bay, Zerega and Westchester Square portions of the Board. However, the Board is the host community to Co-op City, one of the largest cooperative housing developments in the United States. One of the most interesting communities within the Board's service area is City Island. This nautically themed community is home to several America's Cup Yacht Race winners, and resembles a quaint New England fishing village. The Board is also home to the City's largest park, Pelham Bay, in which Orchard Beach, the Bartow Pell Mansion and the Thomas Pell Wildlife Preserve are situated.

History

The areas that comprise Bronx Community Board #10 were once part of the Village of Westchester and before that, the private estates of several families, most notably the Bartow and Pell families. Two significant battles were fought during the American Revolution between British and Colonial forces, in the vicinity of Orchard Beach and Westchester Creek. In the Battles of Westchester Creek and Pell's Point the advance of British forces was thwarted, allowing Washington's troops to regroup in White Plains. The Westchester Square area is home to St. Peter's Episcopal Church, one of the oldest churches in New York City, and one that received its charter from George III, the last ruling British monarch over America. Westchester Square is also home to the Ferris Family Cemetery, with graves dating back to the 16th Century, and the historic Collis P. Huntington Free Library.

Boundaries

North-New England Thruway, Eastern Prolongation of Park Drive, Park Drive, Long Island Sound, City Line; East-Western boundary of Pelham Bay Park, Eastchester Bay Long Island Sound (including City and Hart Islands); South-East River; West –Westchester Creek, Northern Prolongation of Westchester Creek to Waterbury Avenue, Waterbury Avenue, Westchester Avenue, Castle Hill Avenue, East Tremont Avenue, Silver Street, Eastchester Road, Blondell Avenue, East Tremont Avenue, Hutchinson River Parkway, New England Thruway.

Public Safety

Bronx Community Board #10 is serviced by the 45th Precinct, which has one of the largest patrol areas in the City, over 6 miles. One of the greatest challenges to law enforcement in Community Board #10 is the illicit drug trade. The drug trade in this Precinct is characterized by internet sales, the use of unregistered cell phones, and automobiles. The 45th Precinct at one time had a full drug module assigned to it. However, it has since been split with the 43rd Precinct. Bronx Community Board #10 has long advocated for the

permanent re-assignment of this module back to the 45th Precinct. The sophisticated nature of the drug trade in this Board's service area requires the re-assignment of this module to the 45th Precinct. The Police Department has indicated that the existing drug module was acceptable. The Board has countered by saying that instead of partnering with the 43rd Precinct, perhaps the NYPD should have a joint venture between the 49th Precinct and the 45th Precinct with respect, to the operation of a drug module. Additionally, the 45th Precinct has historically suffered from understaffing. Its patrol sector is quite large, spanning the distance from Zerega Avenue to Co-op City. Its officers are pulled for special duties at Orchard Beach, Yankee Stadium, or to other venues throughout the City. This reduces the overall number of officers that are available for patrol, on any given day. It is our Board's sincere hope that the senior management of the New York City Police Department recognizes the staffing disparities at the 45th Precinct and makes the necessary adjustments, so that this Precinct is staffed properly at all times and our Board is served well.

The 45th Precinct was built in the mid 1920's. The character of the precinct and its needs have changed dramatically in the ensuing years. The building's technology while upgraded, has not been able to keep in pace with the new information systems that are available. Its public spaces and offices, as well as its restrooms, locker rooms, and weight room are in need of complete renovation. This Board had suggested to the Police Commissioner that an alternate property be sought for the Precinct. We feel that our law enforcement personnel should have the best possible environment in which to work and to have the proper tools associated with modern law enforcement.

Graffiti is still a major problem within the Board's service areas. The Board works with the 45th Precinct's graffiti officer in identifying sites for further investigation and enforcement. In addition, it works with the City and elected officials on programs designed to remove the offensive scrawling.

The Board participates in a series of volunteer programs designed to remove the scourge of graffiti from our midst, Board officers, members and staff work with volunteer groups and the police in cleaning graffiti.

Speeding is a recognized problem within the Board's service areas. With the establishment of Vision Zero, speed limits have been reduced to 25 miles per hour. On streets that are not posted otherwise. The speed reduction initiatives such as traffic calming and slow zones, combined with lower speeds, will result in safer streets for everyone. The Board is confident that the City has adequate traffic regulations. However, with those traffic regulations, there must be robust enforcement. The Board supports the hiring of additional officers for this purpose.

FDNY

There are a number of fire houses within the Board's service area that are undergoing renovation. The Board has been supportive of these renovations and continues to do so.

Transportation

Bronx Community Board #10 has witnessed the arrival of two mega malls, with a third one planned, and the Ferry Point Park Golf Course. There was little, if any, attention paid by the developers to the establishment of a rational traffic plan for any of these entities.

Only after the owners of the Bay Plaza Mall realized that the mall's expansion of seventy-five stores, making it the largest mall in the City, lacked an adequate entrance from the New

England Thruway, was a plan to expand the entrances arrived at by the City, State and mall's owners. There is still no traffic plan regarding any exits from this facility. The existing body of zoning regulations and traffic laws make no provision for such planning. The attitude of "if you build it, they will come," holds sway in the halls of commerce and government. This makes no sense at all and the City and State governments must pass legislation that brings rationality to the development market.

At the very minimum, laws should be in place creating a regulatory environment allowing for regional planning, community benefit packages and rational traffic planning.

Presently, the road network is viewed as a static entity. There is no long term planning associated with the ability of a particular road to absorb changes in its fluid environment (the communities along its route). A road is only changed after announced development, and then inadequately. Every five years or so, the route of a road and the communities that it serves should be reviewed and assessed for potential development. In this way, we will not have spotty road renovations to accommodate a single developer.

The Board's network of roads, the Bruckner Expressway, the Cross Bronx Expressway, the New England Thruway and the Hutchinson River Parkway are all subject to constant traffic flow. These roads are outdated and require constant maintenance. The entire network of roadway, exits, entrances and transfer points must be analyzed and re-evaluated to ensure both an easy flow of traffic and safe ride for those who use them.

Alternatives to road travel for commercial purposes should be seriously reviewed. Existing rail to road access points should be considered, as well as water to rail to road access points for freight. The Board is grateful to note that the MTA Metro-North Railroad has expressed an interest in bringing rail passenger service to the Northeast Bronx by establishing a station at Co-op City, in Section #5. The Board has long advocated for this station and enthusiastically supports this concept. The Board has adopted a Resolution to this affect. It is hoped that passenger train service between Co-op City and Pennsylvania Station and Grand Central Station will soon become a reality. The Board has also suggested that a regional station be constructed just outside of Co-op City on land owned by Amtrak. It is a large swath of land that could accommodate platforms a station building, parking and bus transfers. If this could become a reality, Amtrak passengers could access Metro-North trains serving communities in Westchester and Connecticut that Amtrak does not serve, and vice-a-versa. The Board has also advocated for water taxis to service to serve Co-op City and other areas of the northeast Bronx, for connection to the main ferry at Soundview.

Bronx Community Board #10 is served by the IRT#6 Train and several interconnecting bus lines. The MTA New York City Transit has re-built the Castle Hill, Zerega, Middletown Road and Buhre Avenue subway stations, while the Pelham Bay Station has undergone substantial renovation. This considerable capital commitment on the part of the transit agency, is indicative of this community board's ever increasing growth. It also signals a change in policy from the agency, which in 2010 embarked upon a period of retrenchment that saw the elimination and consolidation of bus lines. During this period, our Board saw the complete elimination of a bus in Country Club and truncated service in Co-op City. Here, full service on two lines was replaced by shuttle service. The Board response to these service adjustments was to advocate for the restoration of buses to Country Club and the creation of a bus study for Co-op City. The Co-op City Bus Study, suggested by this Board, and adopted by the MTA Board, saw the restoration of some service to Co-op City and the

creation of shuttle and limited bus services. This is an evolving situation that the Board continues to examine.

Health and Human Services

Bronx Community Board #10 is serviced by the Jack D. Weiler Hospital of Montefiore Medical Center, Jacobi Hospital, and the Emergency Care Unit of Montefiore at Westchester Square. The Board service area is also replete with doctors' offices and medical facilities. Yet, our Board still suffers from high rates of low birth weight babies, obesity, diabetes, alcoholism, and drug abuse. The Board has taken proactive steps to inform the population of these problems. In an attempt to address these concerns, the Board has begun working with health providers and Jacobi and Montefiore Hospitals to disseminate information about the hospitals and their many fine programs.

Another major health issue facing the Board is the incidence of air and noise pollution posed by trucks and autos on the highways and streets. The Board service area, sits at the junction of the New England Thruway, the Bruckner Expressway and the Cross Bronx Expressway. This road network serves as the principal north-south, east-west route for Interstate trucking and on any given day, these roads are subject to the most horrendous traffic jams. Miles of trucks, buses and cars are stopped on these roads for protracted periods of time, polluting the air. As a result, the ambient air quality of the surrounding community suffers. The incidence of asthma and other respiratory illnesses are on the rise at all of the area hospitals. The perpetual horn blowing and reckless driving habits of motorists also detracts from the quality of life in our community. The Board hopes that transportation planners understand the necessity of developing alternatives to the shipment of goods by truck, and has supported the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey's Cross Harbor Freight Program, a transportation system that envisions the shipment of rail freight cars, by barge from New Jersey to New York and creates marine transfer stations, that will utilize rail freight and smaller trucks.

Education

Bronx Community Board #10 is home to fine grammar and intermediate schools. It is also home to several high schools. The Board recognizes that today's work environment requires a well educated and highly motivated labor force. A recent New York City Comptroller's survey found that most of the office workers in Manhattan had the minimum of a Bachelor's Degree. The Board has communicated the necessity of preparing young people for work to the Department of Education and through internships, has offered the students of these schools an opportunity to work and learn about proper office behavior, dress and work habits.

Parks and Recreation

Bronx Community Board #10 is the host Community Board for Pelham Bay Park, the largest park in the City's system. It is also home to many community parks, which provide a welcome respite from the rigors of urban life. These are resources that must be preserved and enhanced. The Board is grateful to note that the Trump Golf Links at Ferry Point will soon open. The establishment of such a course in the Ferry Point Park community will allow it to become a potential destination for major golf tournaments, increasing the economic growth potential of the community.

The Board is also happy to note that the Department of Parks and Recreation's plans to construct a public rest room at Ferry Point Park West have reached fruition. The Board urges the Department to complete its construction with all deliberate speed.

Bronx Community Board #10 is a waterfront community and as such, the Board is interested in providing its residents with as much access to the waterfront as possible. To this end, the Board has made the renovation and dredging of the Hammond Cove and Locust Point Marinas its top priorities. We are hopeful that the Department of Parks and Recreation, along with other colleague agencies will be able to facilitate this needed project.

Again, the Board notes with gratification that Owen Dolen Park has been renovated. The Recreation Center was not part of this renovation, and it is needed. In order to have a viable recreation program for both youth and seniors, the building's environmental systems must be upgraded and it must be made permanently handicapped accessible.

The Board is also interested in having the landmarked elliptical buildings at Orchard Beach transformed into a performing arts center.

Housing and Zoning

Community Boards are mandated to provide advisory opinions on land use and zoning matters. It is important that the City's central administration commit to supporting Community Boards, so that they are able to provide quality opinions on the many development projects that come before them.

One of the many difficulties that the Board faces in attempting to facilitate rational development, is a tendency on the part of building owners, developers or attorneys to construct developments that are contrary to the Zoning Resolution and Special District status for City Island. Members of the aforementioned groups will avail themselves of the right to appeal the Community Board's opinions to the New York City Board of Standards and Appeals (BSA). Too often, the BSA does not render an opinion that is supportive of the Community Board's views, necessitating repeated hearings and duplicative correspondence on the Board's behalf, defending the City's existing Zoning Resolution or Special Districts. It is hoped that the BSA, in the future, will recognize the Community Board's expertise and take it seriously.

Recognizing the importance of preserving the character of the community, a series of zoning resolutions that both downsized new construction and mandated parking was enacted. A major problem for the Board's service areas are the dual challenges of "As of Right" projects and building on zero lot lines. Too many projects are declared to be "As of Right," meaning no governmental input is required to build the project. This type of project allows developers to build buildings that are often inconsistent with the community's needs. Additionally, the current zoning regulations for a portion of our Board's service area, allows developers to build right up to the property line of the next building. This creates a streetscape of one continuous wall of buildings. Our Board believes that this practice runs contrary to the philosophy of the Zoning Resolution of 1916 and 1961, in that it makes no allowances for access to light and air. The Board is working with relevant City agencies and our legislators to review outdated regulations on regulatory reform.

Emergency Management

When Hurricane Sandy hit New York City in 2011, it created massive damage in lower Manhattan, Queens and Brooklyn. The Bronx sustained considerable damage, as well and the brunt of it was in the shoreline communities of City Island, Edgewater Park, Silver Beach and Throggs Neck. Yet, when the Mayor's resiliency study came forth, it really did not address the damage that was done to these shoreline communities in our Board's service area. Our communities were not even mentioned or modeled for the various resiliency interventions that are actively being considered for other neighborhoods. This glaring lack of attention caused the Board to prepare its own resiliency plan that will recommend a variety of interventions to protect the Board's service area from storm surges. We were ably assisted in this endeavor by Mr. Marcel Negret, a graduate student from Pratt Institute and a Graduate Fellow with Fund for the City of New York, who was assigned to Bronx Community Board #10, to assist us in this work through the good offices of the Hon. Ruben Diaz, Jr., Borough President of Bronx County. Mr. Negret identified vulnerable areas of the Board and different strategies to prevent the surges such as living shorelines, coastal berms, floodable parks and walls, breakwaters and surge barriers. Mr. Negret's recommendations will be reviewed by the Board and subsequently forwarded to decision makers.

As indicated, much of Bronx Community Board #10 is shoreline property, and as such, is subject to the negative effects of storms. Central to the City's emergency response system in the Community Board are Civilian Emergency Response Teams or (CERTs). Each CERT TEAM is made up of trained community residents, who have agreed to assist the NYPD, FDNY and EMS during emergencies. Currently, the Co-op City community has a CERT TEAM. The Board will work with the community organizations to facilitate the establishment of additional CERT TEAMS in the storm sensitive areas of the Board.

Economic Development

The attraction and retention of business in the Board's service areas is of utmost importance. The Board established a specific committee, known as the Economic Development Committee, to assist local businesses with information and ombudsman services. The Westchester Square business community has established a Business Improvement District or BID. The BID consists of property owners and merchants who have made a commitment to the community in transforming an older shopping district, into a revitalized economic entity. The Westchester Square experience should be replicated across the other Board's shopping areas along City Island Avenue, East Tremont Avenue, Crosby Avenue, Westchester Avenue and the Dreiser, Einstein and Bartow Avenue Shopping Centers in Co-op City. The Board believes that the City's economic future lies in the preservation and enhancement of its older shopping areas. To this end, the Board calls upon the City's Small Business Services to assist the older shopping areas of the Board.

The Board's business communities are surrounded by regional malls that provide free parking to its patrons. The Board's older shopping areas do not enjoy such benefits. Patrons using these areas must pay for parking at meters. The Throggs Neck Mall and the Bay Plaza Mall, the largest in the City have opened. These malls provide free parking to its patrons. The Board would like to see the City's Economic Development Corporation consider plans for the creation of public parking, so that these older shopping districts can survive. The Board has included within its Budget requests, funding for the creation of decking for the open cut portions of I95.

New York City places no requirements on developers, save for the Builder's Pavement Plan, where a developer is responsible for the paving of half the street in front of the developer's project. Our Board believes that any major development within the city's five boroughs should be subject to Community Benefit Packages. These packages would require developers to work with the local community boards, civic associations, and elected officials on a plan that would benefit the host community for the project, in one way or another. An example would be for a developer to offer the community that the development would be placed in, an opportunity for employment, job training, or the creation of a needed community resource, such as a school or park. The Board has contacted the Department of City Planning and suggested a policy of this nature be adopted.

Recently, the New York City Economic Development Corporation (EDC) announced that ferry service would be modeled from the Bronx to Manhattan. This announcement was the culmination of many years of public meetings and committee work that Bronx Community Board #10 had participated in. Our Board had suggested that the Northeast Bronx communities of Co-op City, City Island, and Throgs Neck be viewed as possible alternatives for the starting off point for the ferry. We based our suggestion on the fact that these Community Board #10 neighborhoods are water bounded communities where a lot of residents, especially in Co-op City, commute to Manhattan on a daily basis. In the modeling analyses, the EDC determined that the Soundview community should serve as the embarkation point for ferry service from the Bronx. The logic used in establishing the ferry service at Soundview was that that site contained a deep water port that would accommodate the type of ferry that the city would like to use. Upon learning of this decision, Bronx Community Board #10 has suggested to EDC that the above mentioned communities should be served by water taxi type service that would employ smaller boats to take people to the main ferry site at Soundview. Our Board firmly believes that any ferry service emanating from the Bronx should include service to the above communities and we will continue our efforts in this area.

Quality of Life

The Board receives inquiries from its constituents on a variety of issues. Most often they center on the cleanliness of public spaces, the need for increased parking, concerns over housing that was built but never sold, and many other issues. In response, the Board is working with its partners in government to try and address these matters. Air quality is of great importance to this Board. One way to improve the quality of the air that we breathe is to limit the carbon footprint of the structures in our Board service area. Rampant development should be limited. The City's central government, in making determinations on vacant land that it owns, should consider turning this land into vest pocket parks or green streets. For land that is privately owned, the owner could be encouraged to land bank it for future use, or to create conservation easements which will be designed to facilitate the cleanliness of our air and water supply.

Homelessness

This is a new section to the district needs statement. Bronx Community Board #10 has experienced an uptick in homelessness. This has been mirrored by a general rise in the number of families who are considered to be homeless across the city. Currently, our Board is home to 3 family care shelters. The method in which the NYC Department of Homeless Services creates shelters in given community boards should be evaluated. Our Board believes that before a shelter is sited in any community that the (DHS) should approach that

board in a collegial effort to discuss the potential siting. Instead, the DHS under the guise of a “Homelessness Crisis” simply plants a homeless shelter in a given community without any notification or public hearing. This engenders a non cooperative stance on the part of the community making a difficult situation that much worse. This is complicated by the attitude displayed on the part of the staff of DHS. The Board would like to see the City’s central administration adopt a policy of proper notification and collaborative work, with respect to the siting of such shelters.

Animal Shelter

Bronx Community Board #10 would like to see the establishment of a full time, no kill animal shelter for the Borough. Currently, we do not have such a facility. All the Borough has is a Center for Animal Control Drop-Off Center. It is a small facility that does not lend itself to full services for the pet population. The Board would like to see this shelter have a dedicated adoption program and an education component that teaches young children the importance of proper pet care.

Youth Services

Bronx Community Board #10 has long advocated for the expanded funding of the Summer Youth Employment Program and number of businesses and government agencies participating within it. The Board has demonstrated its commitment to this program by accepting a youth to work within our offices. Additionally, the Board has advocated for the expansion of the after school and out of school programs.

Conclusion

This statement of District Needs has been submitted by Bronx Community Board #10, in an effort to familiarize the appropriate government agencies with the needs of our communities. This Board represents vibrant communities that are the social and economic bedrock of the Bronx. The Board looks forward to working with its partners in government to ensure our quality of life, and the continued viability and growth of our neighborhoods.

Respectfully submitted,

Martin Prince, Chairman
Bronx Community Board #10

Julian Misiurski, Chairman
Planning and Budget Committee