



COMMUNITY BOARD NO. 8 BRONX

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August 4, 2008

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Statement of Community District Needs for Fiscal Year 2010

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Introduction

For fiscal year 2010, Bronx Community Board No. 8 (Bronx CB8) 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 Bronx CB8 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 Bronx CB8's FY 2010 budget priorities we will provide you with some background information about Bronx CB8 to assist you in understanding our budget requests. According to the Department of City Planning which is based upon the statistics from the 2000 Census, Bronx CB8 has 101,332 persons living within our boundaries. This number is actually higher as of January 2008. Nearly 36% of Bronx CB8 community is of Hispanic origin with 12% Black/African American. 18% of that population is under 18 years old and nearly 18% is over 65 years old. 59% live in a family household and 71.8% are renters. 21.5% are not proficient in English with 71.5% of that group speaking Spanish. The population that speaks a language other than English has increased substantially from the 1990 to 2000 census.

There are 7 public schools (middle and high schools) in Bronx CB8. These schools reflect students of diverse backgrounds and languages. In Bronx CB8 the foreign born population is 48.4% from Latin America, 28.5% from Europe, 14.4% from Asia, and 8% from the Caribbean or Africa.

Of the 27 census tracts that make up Bronx CB8, 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. There is one alcoholism and substance abuse service program in North Riverdale. Most importantly, Bronx CB8 does not have a health facility within its boundaries.

In addition, according to the Community Health Profiles for Kingsbridge and Riverdale as reported from the NYC Department of Health & Mental Hygiene 2006:

1. People in this area are older than in the Bronx and New York City overall.
2. In this neighborhood, the biggest health issues that impact the premature death rate are cancer at 27%, heart disease at 17% and HIV related at 5%.
3. The heart disease death rate is higher in Kingsbridge which is where most families living under the poverty level reside.
4. 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.
5. More than 1 in 10 adults in Kingsbridge & Riverdale engage in binge drinking monthly.

Our district is located in the extreme northwest corner 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, and Van Cortlandt Village.

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. In May 2006 the City Council designated the Fieldston Historic District. The Council's action was intended to preserve the community's natural characteristics as an urban oasis for all New Yorkers to enjoy. Community Board 8 strongly supported the City Council's action, and we strive to be exceptional stewards of these natural resources for the entire City. For that reason, for many years many of our capital requests have been for improvements to 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 2009. Bronx CB8'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 Bronx CB8's highest priorities.

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 Bronx CB8 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 shapes our capital and expense budget priorities.

Our first and highest budget priority is that the budget of Bronx CB8 office be increased from \$200,000 to \$250,000 in FY 2010. Bronx CB8's budget has not been increased for many years. With a continued increase in costs over the years, this lack of increase has already required Bronx CB8 to do more with less. It is imperative that the Bronx CB8's budget be funded at the \$250,000 level. Any lesser amount will impact on Bronx CB8 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.

Aging, Health, Hospitals, Social Services, and Youth

Our population of seniors, at 18%, 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 Bronx CB8. For 2010 we are going to request that Bronx CB8, be include in a significant way in the "Livable Communities/Aging in Place" initiative; we urge the development of a east/west transportation system for seniors; and strongly urge that funds are allocated to develop a comprehensive, appropriate system to inform seniors about the services that are available to them.

Bronx CB8 does not have a medical center within its boundaries. For that reason the availability of emergency medical services is of highest importance to us. We would like to have ambulances dedicated to our district and retain the EMS stocking stations that we have.

Mental Health and family services make a positive difference in Bronx CB8. For that reason we request increased funding to organizations that provide these services, such as the Riverdale Mental Health Association for services to the senior community and the Jewish Board of Family and Children's Services for computer equipment to help them better provide their services.

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, and vocational training. These programs should be incorporated into the existing curriculum of the Out of School Time Program.

Education

Twenty-five 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 this process 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 Bronx CB8 need additional full day pre-kindergarten classes. We request that funds be made available to acquire sites for those classes. One of those sites is the Whitehall Annex (3223 Independence Avenue.)

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 Bronx CB8 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 Bronx CB8. It is important that funds be provided for staff to perform rodent control, graffiti cleaning, maintenance, and weekly trash removal.

Libraries

Bronx CB8'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.

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 Bronx CB8's parks continue to be in bad need of reconstruction/repair.

Van Cortlandt Park (VCP) is one of the most heavily used public parks in the city, catering 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 to using its swimming pool and lake, which are a mecca for thousands young and old in the sweltering days of summer. We are requesting funding to renovate the VCP stadium. Croton filtration plant mitigation funding has been allocated to reconstruct the VCP parade grounds. We are requesting that funding be added to that project for construction of a much needed restroom near Broadway at 251st Street.

Funding is also needed for many other projects to improve and maintain our parks including: construction of a higher sturdier fence at Fort Independence Park to prevent vandalism to neighboring property; 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; reconstruction of the basketball courts and related work at Ewen Park; 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 renovation of the bathrooms in Van Cortlandt Stadium (pending completion of the engineering study of Van Cortlandt Stadium.)

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 Cortland Park South. Funds also needed for the planting of trees throughout Bronx CB8.

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. A full complement of Officers is needed to maintain these efforts. We urge that funds be provided to maintain staffing at 204. The precinct needs unmarked cars and vans to combat the rise in burglaries and auto related thefts. Funding for Police scooters and a portable ID scanner is also important to keep our district safe.

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; sidewalk and curb repair from 236th Street to 238th

Street and Riverdale Avenue and at 225th Street and Broadway; and the installation of catch basins at 5555 Broadway (in front of Fine Fare Supermarket), 5610 Broadway (in front of the Blue Store), 5716 Broadway (in front of Stop and Shop Supermarket), and 5760 Broadway (in front of Mavis Tires.)

Economic Development

To improve the business environment in our district we are requesting funding for a director for Small Business Organizing to work at Bronx CB8 offices; Wi-Fi access throughout the district; benches at various commercial centers; and bike racks at various commercial centers.

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

Ken O'Brien
Chairman, Budget Committee
Community Board No. 8

Damian McShane
Chairman
Community Board No. 8

