



COMMUNITY BOARD NO. 8 BRONX
5676 Riverdale Avenue, Suite 100 • Bronx, New York 10471-2194
Telephone: 718-884-3959 • Fax: 718-796-2763
E-Mail: brxcb8@optonline.net
Website: www.nyc.gov/brxcb8

Honorable Ruben Diaz, Jr.
Bronx Borough President

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Nicole M. Stent

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August 10, 2011

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Statement of Community District Needs for Fiscal Year 2013

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Education
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Environment & Sanitation
Rosemary Ginty

**Health, Hospitals &
Social Services**
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Land Use
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Libraries & Cultural Affairs
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Parks & Recreation
Bob Bender

Public Safety
Arlene Garbett Feldmeier

Traffic & Transportation
Daniel Padernacht

Youth
Andrew Cohen

Introduction:

For Fiscal Year (FY) 2013, 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 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 2013 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. 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 in that it is considered a part of Manhattan but the municipal services are provided by the Bronx.

BXCB8 consists of 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.

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While most of our expense requests have been for the maintenance of our parks, we have had mixed results in getting them acted upon. We will redouble our efforts and look forward to improving that statistic in FY 2013.

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.

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 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 108,000 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, of the 27 census tracts that make 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 (covering a population of 88,989, the majority of BXCB8 district) reports that:

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

- 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.
- 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 3 health 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 2013 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 2013. 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 FY2013 funding for the following items:

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

- Maintenance of senior centers in accessible locations (including Ft. Independence Senior Center) providing services including: communal dining, health/educational and social services, case management for information and referral, geriatric mental health and recreational programs for all senior centers in Bronx Community Board 8.
- Maintenance of elder transportation programs.
- Maintenance of Social Adult Daycare programs.
- Support of Telehealth programs – the remote monitoring of health issues and homecare services to support “seniors aging in place.”

Health, Hospitals & Social Services

Mental health and family services make a positive difference in the lives of BXCB8 residents especially for seniors. With 21% of the BXCB8’s population over 60 years of age and growing, we request funding from the Department of Health & Mental Hygiene (DOHMH) for the Riverdale Mental Health Association Geriatric (RMHA) 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 BXCB8 borders and the aforementioned NYC Department of Health & Mental Hygiene (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, BXCB8 requests capital funding for the establishment of a new FDNY/EMS restocking station, which could potentially be located at the Department of Transportation depot within Van Cortland Park.

Youth

The youth of BXCB8 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 the Department of Youth and Community Development allocate \$300,000 through OST (Out of School Time) and/or Teen Action for programs specifically within the CB8 district at Kingsbridge Heights Community Center, Riverdale Neighborhood House, Mosholu Montefiore Community Center – program located at Van Cortlandt Heights/Amalgamated Houses and Riverdale Community Center.

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 funds be allocated to make repairs to the

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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 to the following facilities:

P.S. 207 BX; MS 368 BX; The David A. Stein Riverdale / Kingsbridge Academy, MS/HS 141, BX; PS 7 BX; PS 81 BX; PS/MS 95 BX; PS 307 BX; and Marble Hill Nursery School, BX requests installation of climbing equipment and safety surfacing of outdoor play area.

In addition to the comments within the category of Health, Hospitals and Social Services, we also believe there should be an EMS station located in the Community Board 8 area.

BXCB8 has focused on several expense projects in FY 2013 that include the immediate inspection of all public schools by the School Construction Authority for repairs needed, infrastructural defects and PCB contamination; funding for after-school educational recreational arts programs, in particular remediation and enrichment programs for all of the schools in Community Board No. 8 including non-Title No. 1 Schools; allocation of funds to provide for a meaningful reduction of class size in all grades; and complete the staffing and funding of a full-time nurse, librarian, guidance counselor, and a computer instructor (with lab technicians for science and computer labs) for every school in Community Board No. 8.

Department of Environmental Protection

We request that DEP begin the process of allocating the monies set aside for park improvements for the Jerome Park Reservoir (JPR) area and all BXCB8 parks. We also request capital funding to allow for community access to Jerome Park Reservoir. We consider public access to JPR as a crucial part of the neighborhoods appeal and viability.

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 funding for a full renovation of the Spuyten Duyvil Branch Library with a priority on renovation of the fire alarm system, redoing the HVAC system and replacing the roof. In addition, an expansion or purchase of a new site to replace the existing library of the Van Cortlandt Branch Library, it is too small to support the area need and is in dire need of repairs.

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 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. 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.

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

- Construction of a new restroom in Fort Four Park and related plumbing repairs.
- Reconstruction of the Bailey Avenue playground including construction of a skate park.
- Repair of the basketball court and the fences at Ewen Park. The committee notes that Councilman Koppell has already allocated \$700,000 toward these repairs but DPR has not yet proposed a plan for using these funds to make the necessary repairs.
- Repair of the Henry Hudson Park basketball and handball courts.
- Reconstruction of the pond wall at Spuyten Duyvil Park to prevent water runoff onto the roadway in the parking lot at the Metro-North station.
- Construction of a walkway with a permeable surface at the southern end of Seton Park parallel to West 232nd Street.
- Repair of the gas line in Classic playground to allow reopening of the restroom in the winter months and repair of the basketball courts in this playground.
- Reconstruction of the stairway in Brust Park.
- Renovation of Van Cortlandt 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 BXC8 parks, especially on weekends and at times of high use for all of our community's parks; for the acquisition of a pickup truck with snowplow, salt spreader and water tank; for two stump grinders at VCP and for the installation of a permanent concrete ping-pong table in VCP near Broadway.

Public Safety

FDNY: We have previously requested funding for the EMS restocking station under the jurisdiction of the Fire Department (FDNY). BXC8 supports the funding of a new EMS restocking station with consideration of its location at the Department of Transportation depot within Van Cortlandt Park.

We are concerned that the staffing level at FDNY Engine Company 52 is not sufficient to keep our community safe, BXC8 requests funding for restoration of five person manning of fire companies.

In addition, the Board supports funding the citywide FDNY program for CPR kits (\$100,000), smoke detectors (\$100,000), carbon monoxide detectors (\$100,000) and two FDNY banners for events by the Community Board 8 fire companies.

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.

The requisition of five typewriters, one telephone answering machine, ten new telephones, and a banner for events for 50th Precinct and its Explorers Club would aide the 50th Police Precinct for its ongoing efforts to reduce crime in our district.

Traffic and Transportation

The BXCB8 is seeking capital funds to rehabilitate the step street at West 229th Street between Kingsbridge Terrace and Heath Avenue.

Economic Development

Businesses are the life blood of a growing, thriving community. To improve the business environment in our district especially under these dire fiscal times, we are requesting the following expense items:

- Allocation of funds from Small Business Services (SBS) and/or Economic Development Corporation (EDC) to provide grants or supplemental funding to the Kingsbridge Business Improvement District to assist merchants associations and other community sponsored theme events. These funds should provide for local advertising, printing, entertainment and decorative enhancement of the festival streets.
- Allocation of funds from EDC and Bronx Overall Economic Development Corporation to support funding for job fairs at local high schools or community agencies that service young adults entering the labor markets. Funds should be used for promotional video advertising and printed materials. A trained job developer will also promote employers to these events.
- Funding support from Department of Transportation for "Bishop's Crook" decorative streetlights for South Riverdale commercial corridor to match those on the North Riverdale Avenue commercial corridor.

Housing

Almost three-quarters of the housing units in our district are renter occupied and we ask for additional funding for the Department of Housing Preservation and Development and the Department of Buildings to hire additional personnel to keep pace with escalation of new programs and duties instituted by the City.

In addition, 39% of the population live below the poverty level and receive some form of public financial assistance. The installation of security cameras for the Bailey Avenue Houses, Fort Independence Houses, and Marble Hill Houses in BXCB8 is critical to public safety in these locations.

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

Robert Fanuzzi
Chair
Bronx Community Board No. 8

Brendan J. Contant
Chair, Budget Committee
Bronx Community Board No. 8

Nicole M. Stent
District Manager
Bronx Community Board No. 8