



# Community Board 12M

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Pamela Palanque-North, Chair  
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## COMMUNITY DISTRICT 12, MANHATTAN STATEMENT OF DISTRICT NEEDS AND PRIORITIES FY 2012

Community District 12-Manhattan (CD12M) encompasses the neighborhoods of Washington Heights and Inwood; is bounded by the Harlem River Drive on the east side and by the Hudson River on the west side; and runs from West 155<sup>th</sup> Street to West 220<sup>th</sup> Street. We are a diverse community of 203,160 residents (based on the American Community Survey 1-year estimates for 2008), including a majority of residents (71 percent) of varied Latino or Hispanic heritage. Among the more populous ethnic groups, Dominicans make up the largest single (96,825 or 48 percent of the district population), followed by Puerto Ricans (16,521 or 8 percent); Mexicans (12,218 or 6 percent); Ecuadorians (5,206 or 3 percent); Colombians (3,023 or 1 percent), and many other ethnic groups. Ours is also an immigrant community, with 56 percent of Mexicans; 52 percent of Ecuadorians; 40 percent of Colombians; and 37 percent of Dominicans not possessing citizenship. Our median age is 38; almost 21 percent of our residents are under age 18 and 12 percent are age 65 or older.

### NEEDS AND PRIORITIES

#### Daycare and Early Childhood Education

The care and education of our youngest children remains among our highest priority. In the Administration for Children's Services (ACS) *2008 Community Needs Survey*, our district was identified as one of the most undeserved in Manhattan. Over half of the children eligible for daycare are not served; ACS-funded services were "overutilized" at 105 percent and private daycare providers serve only 7 percent of children, according to the ACS report. Community District 12 has a severe shortage of childcare and many eligible children; our district has a poverty rate of 28 percent for preschool age children. Community Board 12 has repeatedly requested in its expense and capital priorities that daycare and early childhood education centers be constructed in our district and we have requested funding to increase the number of daycare providers.

#### Parks

Community District 12 features over 600 acres of parkland which is in need of additional maintenance and repairs. Our park pathways, paving, stairs and sidewalks require reconstruction (Inwood Hill, Highbridge, Fort Tryon, Highbridge Water Tower); lighting needs to be restored or installed (Fort Washington); new playgrounds are needed, and existing playgrounds need renovation (Bennett, Fort Washington, Javits) and water fountains and new comfort stations are also needed (Fort Tryon, Inwood Hill). In addition, our parks require Parks Enforcement Patrol officers, maintenance workers and after-school program providers.

In a May 2010 resolution to the Mayor, City Planning and Parks and Recreation regarding Columbia University's plan to build an athletics facility on 218<sup>th</sup> Street at Baker Field, Community Board 12 recommended that the City of New York require Columbia University to implement and adhere to a community benefits agreement in recognition of Columbia University's long-term use of City-owned property without compensation, including blocked public access to the waterfront. Community Board 12 proposes that Columbia University provide: adequate coverage of Columbia University staff in the proposed new park; funding for additional Parks Enforcement Patrol in Inwood Hill Park, in addition to that provided by the Police Department and by the Department of Parks and Recreation; daily public access to the public waterfront/waterway by the Columbia University boathouse; host periodic "learn to row" classes or other such public events; provide a facility for the rental of canoes, kayaks, and other non mechanical watercraft; add another recipient to the Dyckman Institute scholarship program, bringing the total annual participants to five; provide an internship or some educational programming in

environmental sciences with hands-on opportunities to middle and high schools located in Community District 12; and, make various improvements and repairs to Inwood Hill Park, including ensuring Americans with Disabilities Act compliance.

Community Board 12 also supports the following:

- Develop Sherman Creek properties into public parkland.
- Continue the Phase 1 renovation of Fort Washington Park as envisioned in PlaNYC 2030, subject to conditions in our May 2009 resolution to Parks Commissioner Benepe.
- Ensure that Riverbank State Park staffing, hours and services are not cut and the Park is fully operational as long as the North River Sewage Treatment Plant is also operational as requested in our March 2010 resolution to the Governor.
- Additional parks enforcement personnel and maintenance workers to clean our parks and to enforce regulations.

## Housing

According to the 2008 Housing and Vacancy Survey, 89.7 percent of our occupied housing is inhabited by renters and 89.6 percent that rental housing is either rent-stabilized or rent-controlled. Data from 2008 from the Association of Neighborhood and Housing Development indicate that over 5,000 apartments in our district are owned by private equity firms that subject our tenants to harassment, overcharges, baseless litigation and failure to make repairs. Finally, housing organizers and community residents have complained that Realtors refuse to show available apartments to Section 8 tenants. Community Board 12 supports:

- Increase funding (recurring annually) for housing organizers, legal services attorneys and paralegals to work at non-profit organizations serving the community.
- Reform State and City laws and regulations to strengthen protection of tenants from harassment and discrimination as outlined in our May 2010 resolution to Housing Preservation and Development Commissioner Rafael Cestero.
- Improve data collection and dissemination regarding 311 calls for common housing complaints so that community boards will know the severity of common problems (such as intermittent heat and hot water) in their districts; hire additional enforcement staff; conduct unannounced inspections in buildings with a high number of complaints where City inspectors made no contact with tenants, as detailed in our May 2010 resolution to Housing Preservation and Development Commissioner Rafael Cestero.

## Health and Environment

Community Board 12 recommends that the Department of Buildings conduct a study to determine what types of buildings can support cell towers; require landlords to post notices in their buildings for 30 days prior to applying for Department of Buildings permits to inform tenants of intent to install cell phone towers; certify through inspection prior to the installation of cell phone towers that a building can support the weight of the installation; and, conduct an inspection after the installation to ensure that the cell phone towers were properly installed. Most important, Community Board 12 strongly advocates that the New York State Department of Housing and Community Renewal prohibit landlords from passing any costs related to or ensuing from the installation of cell phone towers onto tenants in the form of major capital improvement rent increases or usual rent increases.

A 2003 Department of Health and Mental Hygiene survey noted that residents in Community District 12 found their access to medical care to be limited. According to this survey, the leading causes of death in our community were then: heart disease, cancer, accidents and injuries, pneumonia and influenza, stroke, diabetes, AIDS, kidney disease, chronic lung disease, and drug-related deaths. Community Board 12 supports public and private health initiatives to address the specific needs of our community, by reducing the death rates among the leading causes of death and by overcoming barriers to our residents obtaining necessary medical care. In addition, the 2008 American Community Survey finds that 12 percent of our residents are uninsured and that 37 percent of our residents are enrolled in Medicaid. Community Board 12 also supports policy reforms that would ensure that enrollment in public health programs is simplified so as to increase participation in those programs, and that would enable beneficiaries to more easily be able to maintain coverage once enrolled, including using community-based organizations to conduct outreach in our community about the availability of all public benefits, as specified in our November 12, 2009 resolution to Human Resources Administration Commissioner Robert Doar .

Community Board 12 also supports the following policies to improve the health and environment of our community:

- Construct an Emergency Medical Service base station in our community district.
- Expedite construction of a sanitation garage in Manhattan Sanitation District 8.
- Increase funding for the Bureau of Pest Control.
- Create a special noise abatement unit for Community District 12.
- Increase funds for public education and outreach on disposal of household garbage and recyclables.
- Hire additional Sanitation workers, including street cleaners, and Sanitation officers for Community District 12.
- Hire additional staff for child and family health clinics in Community District 12.
- Increase funds for mental health programs and school-based health clinics in Community School District 6 schools.

### **Youth, Education, Job Training and Skills Development**

According to the 2008 American Community Survey (1-year estimates), Community District 12 is home to 30,860 children from 5 through 18 years of age, of whom nearly 98 percent are enrolled in preschool or kindergarten through grade 12 schooling. The poverty rate for children age 5 through 18 in Community District 12 is 27 percent. To ensure that their educational needs are met, in a May 29, 2009 resolution to City and State elected officials, Community Board 12 proposed that the State Legislature give authority to Community Education Councils to approve all school sitings, openings and closings; and, strengthen parent input by reinstating the power of School Leadership Teams, and by creating an independent parent organization with a dedicated source of funding. Community Board 12 also recommended that our elected officials work to ensure that the school system meets the needs of every student with special needs. Community Board 12 also advocates pollution remediation and renovation of all our schools, with community notification and involvement in the process.

Community District 12 is also home to 21,847 young adults age 19 through 25 years, of whom 15 percent have not attained a high school diploma or equivalence certificate. The poverty rate for young adults age 19 through 25 in Community District 12 is 26 percent. These statistics underscore the importance of creating meaningful, effective and skills-appropriate employment and training programs to serve residents in our district. We have repeatedly asked the Department of Small Business Services to open a one-stop employment and training center in our district, only to be told that "the agency will try to accommodate this issue within its existing resources." The very high percentage of adults in our community who have not completed high school continue to suffer depressed incomes and skill levels because of the lack of relevant employment and training services.

### **Seniors**

Senior citizens are a growing proportion of our population; we need better planning for their future needs and more support for their current needs. People over age 64 comprise 13 percent of our population (25,924), and of them, 29 percent are at or below the federal poverty level. Many rely heavily on the services offered in our senior centers, which are in-need of renovation and additional funding for more programming and basic operational expenses, including cost-of-living increases for staff employed by senior centers. Community Board 12 supports interventions and increased funding to ensure that seniors remain housed in their apartments and have access to legal services when necessary for repairs or defense against eviction and harassment.

### **Police**

Community District 12 lacks a sufficient number of officers to address growing resident complaints regarding quality-of-life crimes, especially noise, loitering, car vandalizing, disturbances in our parks or during parades and community celebrations, and illegal parking. As of 9/1/10 the 33<sup>rd</sup> Precinct had 159 active officers and the 34<sup>th</sup> Precinct had 170 active officers. Three-hundred and twenty-nine police officer is an insufficient number of law enforcement officers to prevent and respond to crime in a community of 206,000 residents. The substantial amount of parkland in the district also presents the opportunity for criminal activity in out of the way locations.

Community Board 12 urges the City of New York to recruit more applicants to its police academy and to increase its hiring of officers.

## Fire

With our aged buildings, overstocked, narrow-aisle stores and high density population, Community Board 12 advocates that our firehouses remain open and fully staffed. In addition, Community Board 12 supports the construction of a new Emergency Medical Services base station that will improve response times in our community. In addition, we are requesting the full renovation of the Engine 67 firehouse on West 170th Street. Community Board 12 also supports hiring of additional inspectors and marshal's for enforcement issues, including ensuring that buildings are not violating the fire code.

## Traffic and Transportation

Community Board 12 urges the City of New York to include both the Dyckman Marina site on the Hudson River, and the potential site of a Sherman Creek esplanade on the Harlem River, in the consideration and planning for expansion of ferry service in the Five Borough Transport Plan. Community Board 12 requests the City of New York to broaden its consideration of all feasible traffic-reducing and pollution-reducing measures that would benefit residents of Northern Manhattan, in its long-range planning for transportation services in Washington Heights and Inwood; measures such as protected bike lanes, smaller and more energy efficient crosstown shuttle buses, and congestion reduction on major Northern Manhattan arteries.

According to our June 8, 2010 resolution to Department of Transportation Borough Commissioner Margaret Forgione, Community Board 12 recommends that the Department of Traffic provide signage prohibiting standing, stopping and idling of buses on West 162 Street between the intersection of St. Nicholas and Amsterdam Avenues and Edgecombe Avenue, and requiring buses to proceed to bus layover. In addition, Community Board 12 recommends signage prohibiting buses from entering West 160 Street via St. Nicholas Avenue and from using the Metropolitan Transportation Authority's bus stop at the southwest corner of Edgecombe Avenue and West 160 Street as a layover.

Community Board 12 advocates hiring additional pothole repaving crews to work in our district and to repair our streets. We also urge that West 207<sup>th</sup> Street from 10<sup>th</sup> Avenue to Seaman Avenue; Nagel Avenue from Broadway to West 205<sup>th</sup> Street; Seaman Avenue from Riverside Drive to West 218<sup>th</sup> Street be reconstructed.

Community Board 12 also supports intervention to clean, repair and increase safety and service in bus and subway lines serving our community, and to make our subway stations comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act. The Straphangers Association identified the W 163 Street,IND Train as having the worst record as per performance on all levels eg. schedule, rat infestation and cleanliness of cars.

Community District 12 supports the immediate removal of the trash storage area by the TA at the W 163 Street Station. The station is over-run with rats on the stairs, platform and on the tracks. This is a threat to the safety of toll paying customers of the NYC Transit System. In addition, CD 12 request the rehabilitation of the following stations: West 181<sup>st</sup> Street IND; West 157<sup>th</sup> Street IRT; Dyckman Street IRT; and, West 207<sup>th</sup> Street IRT.

Submitted by:

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