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Greenwich Village ♦ Little Italy ♦ SoHo ♦ NoHo ♦ Hudson Square ♦ Chinatown ♦ Gansevoort Market

STATEMENT OF DISTRICT NEEDS

Fiscal Year 2018

PREFACE

Community Board 2 Manhattan (“CB2”) continues to be greatly concerned that the City has minimized the impact of the district’s rapid changes and has neglected to adequately respond to the need to increase the ancillary services that such changes require. During these years of exponential residential growth in NoHo, SoHo, Chinatown and our Hudson River waterfront, planners have not provided for the necessary amenities that make for a healthy and growing residential community, e.g., public schools, open space and parks, access to health care, adequate public transit opportunities and public transit access, affordable retail space, and general services such as sanitation, police and fire.

Each year, CB2 receives many applications for residential conversions and re-zonings. The complaints and requests that come to CB2 reflect the concerns of this new residential population. Our budget priorities for the past few years have continued to focus on servicing these new arrivals to the district, as well as our long-time residents. More specific assessments of services will be set forth throughout this Statement.

I. DISTRICT OVERVIEW

A. Geography

Community Board 2 is a diverse district, bounded on the north by 14th Street, the south by Canal Street, the east by the Bowery/Fourth Avenue, and the west by the Hudson River. It is a unique and rapidly expanding community that includes the vibrant neighborhoods of Little Italy, part of Chinatown, SoHo, NoHo, Greenwich Village, the West Village, Gansevoort Market, the South Village and Hudson Square.

B. Population

Although the population in Community Board 2 has decreased slightly since the 2000 census, the recent rezoning of Hudson Square and the construction of a new residential complex on the site of the St. John’s Terminal will increase our population by several thousand residents in the coming years. In addition, we have five major universities - New York University, the New School, the Cooper Union, Hebrew Union College, and Cardozo Law School - that add a

substantial non-permanent population to our neighborhoods. Several of these institutions are currently in the midst of expansion, with proposals to add many thousand more undergraduate residents to our district, along with additional full time faculty and classrooms that will increase the number of day visitors. While the students that join us every year are welcome, it is clear that the city needs to consider their numbers when looking to allocate services to District 2.

C. Income structure

Much of the architecture and history of our district has been maintained by residents who are determined to preserve the middle class, live-work, merchant and artisan atmosphere of our neighborhoods, past and future, but socioeconomic patterns are changing drastically.

Median income for Districts 1 and 2 combined for the period 2007-2009 was \$104,305.

D. Housing

In recent years, the median monthly rent in District 2 ascended to the highest in the City to \$1,691. Rental units that are rent-regulated are 54.6%, and more than 1,300 buildings are registered with rent-stabilized units. District 2's rank in severe overcrowding rate in rental unit conditions has been elevated from twenty-eight in the City to nineteen. We think that we are losing affordable housing stock, and fear that this will depress our middle class population, that is essential to a healthy, diverse community.

E. Tourism/Visitors

Within the boundaries of Community District 2 are some of the most popular tourist attractions in New York City, with millions of tourists visiting the restaurants and cafes of Little Italy and Chinatown, the galleries and boutiques of SoHo, the jazz clubs and Off-Broadway theaters of Greenwich Village, as well as burgeoning nightlife, night club and cabaret spots of the entire area. A weekend evening stroll through the Meatpacking and waterfront districts in the west, along West 4th Street and Bleecker St. toward the east, through SoHo and Chinatown in the south and on the western edge of the Bowery from Houston to 14th St reveals the nightlife that is attracting record numbers of tourists.

A walk through our landmark districts is an historic delight with many well-preserved buildings dating back to the early part of the nineteenth century. We see many groups conducting walking tours in our neighborhoods, telling stories about our immigrant, arts, and bohemian history. Tour buses travel through our small streets, obstructing pedestrian and bicycle passage as well as emergency access and deliveries, damaging our vulnerable infrastructure, idling and spewing dangerous emissions.

Our street trash baskets are often overflowing, especially on the weekends, and it is up to our citizens and merchant associations to supplement the Department of Sanitation pick-ups. We require more police presence to manage the crowds. The parks in our district require more maintenance because they are not just the outdoor space for our residents, but also appeal to visitors who are looking for a pleasant stop on their way through our district. The High Line Park alone has attracted millions of visitors since its opening.

Tourists are extremely welcome in our neighborhoods. They provide a significant clientele for our small businesses and cultural institutions. However, the influx of thousands of people on a daily basis puts a severe strain on our infrastructure and resources, and these additional needs are not adequately addressed in the budget allocations.

II. LAND USE, HOUSING, AND BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

In assessing local needs, it is necessary to recognize the development boom that Community District 2 has experienced over the last ten years. The number of change of use applications is among the highest in the city, and the rapid influx of new development along the eastern, western and southern borders of the district have added to density of both people and built environment disrupting both neighborhood character and density.

The City recently created a Special Hudson Square District in the southwestern portion of our district. This rezoning will create a mixed-use district by allowing for residential development and expanded community facility uses, requiring ground-floor retail, providing incentives for inclusionary housing, and limiting as-of-right hotel development, while at the same time ensuring that commercial and manufacturing uses are retained. The proposal also includes height limits and set-back regulations that will help to preserve the unique identity of the district.

The NYU rezoning will add approximately three million square feet to its campus, including permanent faculty housing and dormitory space. The recent rezoning in Hudson Square will transform a manufacturing/commercial district to mixed-use, building thousands of residential units, both fair market and affordable. With the closing St. Vincent's Medical Center, and the purchase of the eastern portion of the campus, the Rudin Management Company, Inc. has constructed 450 luxury residential units in the West Village. These massive changes require that current residents and newcomers are provided with levels of service appropriate to the relevant developments.

In NoHo, SoHo, and parts of Little Italy a continuing growing population is evident as existing residents living in converted buildings see new neighbors moving into newly constructed buildings that were built on former parking lots. Since 2005, seventeen previously vacant lots now house residential buildings, adding hundreds of new residents to this area. Community Board 2 will continue to work with the Department of City Planning to ensure that these buildings fit into the character of the neighborhood. Hundreds of loft dwellers residing in NoHo and SoHo continue to bring their loft space into compliance with legal residential requirements and their numbers are also inflating the population figures. Major new apartment projects along the south side of West Houston Street, in the northern portion of SoHo have added scores of new residents there, as well, transforming what was once a commercial traffic corridor to the Holland Tunnel into a highly dense pedestrian traffic area simultaneously. The community board is working with our elected officials to examine what zoning changes are necessary in the adjacent M1-6 District that will help preserve the neighborhood's unique character and address increased pressure on local infrastructure and the need for affordable housing.

These changes impact many of the day-to-day issues that come before our board. It is frustrating to us that the one venue where we are asked that to participate by mandate of the City Charter, the Uniform Land Use Review Procedure ("ULURP"), is too often driven by the interests of

developers. Community boards are supposed to be at the table during the scoping process of ULURP, but we are not included in the pre-process conversations. Consequently, our voice is not heard when the Department of City Planning is asking the hard questions about the impact on the community of a development project, and developers are allowed to assume what is, and is not, important to us. It is especially problematic that ULURPs seldom consider the cumulative impact of individual projects - including traffic concerns, the increased pressure on infrastructure, safety during construction, the need for more park space, school seats, libraries, and social services.

We could go a long way toward ameliorating this problem, if we could become true partners with the Department of City Planning in considering the valuable input of the community at the start of every proposed land-use project. Most of the discussion that follows, and the needs that we are defining, is driven by this unfortunate shortcoming in the current ULURP process.

Another issue of great concern is the alarming rate of loss of the local businesses that are the backbone of our community. For the last few years, there have been too many empty storefronts along our commercial corridors. Some of this can, of course, be explained by the current economic climate. But this is only part of the problem in our district. As our downtown communities have become more desirable, there is a disturbing trend by landlords to end the leases of long term tenants in favor of newcomers who are willing and able to pay much larger rents – usually trendy restaurants and bars, chain stores and upscale retail.

We added business development to the Land Use Committee, to focus on this issue. We support and work well with our local Business Improvement Districts (BIDs): Village Alliance, Hudson Square, NoHo, Union Square, Chinatown, SoHo Broadway and, most recently Meatpacking. The services that a BID can provide help to improve the quality of life in their neighborhoods. They are also usually willing and effective partners in helping to advocate for important capital projects and general enforcement of City rules and regulations, although there is concern that some of these quasi-governmental agencies unduly increase property taxes and may be unresponsive to the needs of the residents within their purview.

This year we would like to engage all of our BIDs, and the Department of Small Business Services, in an effort to come up with real solutions to the problem of maintaining a healthy mix of businesses to provide the real services that our neighborhoods need.

III. SOCIAL SERVICES

A. Education

After listing a new middle school at 75 Morton Street as among our top priorities for several years, we are thrilled that in March 2014 that New York City finally took possession from New York State of the building at 75 Morton Street for conversion to a public middle school, as well as a much smaller self-contained school for children who need special education. We have been working with parent groups from the six elementary schools that will feed into this school, with several businesses and other institutions that will enrich the curriculum, with the School Construction Authority on design, and with the Board of Education on principal selection. We also have the full support of many elected officials. One innovation will be a full service Health

Center for students in the school. It has been a major disappointment for the community was that, because of various bureaucratic delays in the transfer from state to city, the school opening was delayed and, just recently, the discovery of extensive water damage has pushed back the opening another year to September 2018.

We have two remaining concerns regarding 75 Morton:

- The first is that the school have ample science, art, physical education, and other project space to become an excellent school. This means that, instead of the “sardine model” of jamming as many bodies into the building as possible, we favor an “educational excellence model” with no more than 700 students in the middle school, with an additional 60-100 for the special needs school.
- Our second concern is that the flexibility of the gym and theater space be protected by having seating that can, mechanically, be in place with relative speed and ease, as in many other public spaces, including Madison Square Garden, the Alvin Ailey Theater, and some public schools. This may require additional city funding, which we request. This would benefit, not only the school but also the entire community, as both theater and gym space are sorely needed in our neighborhood.

Elsewhere in this Statement, we address the rezoning of Hudson Square by Trinity Real Estate, which will require additional school seats. While the applicant plans to build a school at Duarte Square, it may accommodate only the new residents of the rezoning and would not alleviate the preexisting dearth of school seats in the District. Moreover, it will increase the need for an excellent middle school.

In every new school, it is critical that enough space is allocated and designed, and that consideration of the school/community partnership be built into the construction. For example, the new school at Duarte Square will have both indoor space and an outdoor playground. As architectural plans proceed for the new development, all involved parties must work to ensure that a gym and a distinct fitness room sized to provide space for students at a 444-seat school to use during school hours along with a separate entrance optimally designed to allow for community use during non-school hours, is built.

All three of our current primary schools (P.S. 3, 41, and 130) are overcrowded and in serious need of renovation. We have seen progress on this over the past year, but we continue to be concerned about the adequacy of the physical plant. For us, excellent public schools are a priority.

Bleecker School

Community Board 2 is committed to ensuring that the NYC School Construction Authority exercises its option to build a school on the Bleecker Street site. To ensure that this happens, the School Election Notice needs to be reinstated to the original date of 2025 through an amendment to the Restrictive Declaration of Large-Scale General Development for the NYU LS GD, ("Restrictive Declaration".)

Under NYU's plan certified in January 2012, the City's School Construction Authority was given the option to build a public school on the Bleecker Street site through 2025. Both the Borough President and City Planning Commission retained this option in their modifications to NYU's application. While the Restrictive Declaration added a community facility provision in the event a school is not built, the School Election Date was moved to 2014. CB 2 believes that the 2014 date is too early in light of the fact that:

1. There is a push to fund significant school construction needs in the Financial District and Battery Park City in the Department of Education's five-year capital plan for FY 2015-2019 ("DOE's Capital Plan"),
2. While there is flexibility to modify the DOE's Capital Plan, the Bleecker School is currently not funded in it and certainly could not possibly be funded by December 31, 2014 regardless of need, and
3. Plans for several new downtown schools to open in the near term, including Foundling in Fall 2014, the Trinity School and 75 Morton, may impact what type of school is needed at Bleecker Street.

Thanks to a generous grant from Councilmember Margaret Chin for demographic analysis, CB 2 is confident that a strong case can be made for a new school, we simply need more time. The demographic analysis looks at a Study Area that includes the zones for PS 3, 41, 11, 130 and 340. Preliminary results show that our community continues to see high growth in the under five population and birth rates. In the Study Area, from 2000 to 2010, the under five population grew 31% vs. less than 1% in Manhattan. During the same period, the birth rate in the Study Area grew 21% vs. a decline of 5% in Manhattan. This high growth will continue to strain our already overcrowded schools. In the 2013-2014 school year, all three CB 2 elementary schools were over capacity, PS 3 at 111%, PS 41 at 124% and PS 130 at 104%. As full-day pre-kindergarten seats are added, this capacity will be further constrained. Currently, in Community District 2, there is only capacity for about 25% of the kindergarten cohort to attend free pre-K and all but one of these classes are half-day. Meanwhile, the rapid pace of residential construction, particularly of family-sized apartments, continues in CD 2 as well as other surrounding community boards. Based on trend analysis, a strong case can be made for a new school.

B. Youth

We need much more outdoor play space for children of various ages, especially those under five and over twelve. Safe walking, bicycle, and mass travel are a priority. We support measures in this direction.

Cutbacks in after-school resources deny many children in our community essential recreational, educational and vocational activities. This is particularly true of the southeastern section of the district, where a full service youth center is overdue. We support efforts to open school playgrounds during non-school hours. P.S. 41 has a large outdoor area that could be safe space for our children to play. We will continue to work with the school and the City to make sure these areas are available as soon as possible.

C. Seniors

Many elders in our district have decided to “age in place”, but services for our older residents have been cut drastically. The meal program at one of our centers (First Presbyterian) was eliminated a few years ago, and our other centers are overcrowded, with multiple seatings. An important part of the meal program, social contact, seems to be ignored completely. We would like to understand the goals of the Department for the Aging because they do not seem to be in accord with our understanding of the needs.

We note that several cost-effective programs for seniors – Visiting Neighbors is the most obvious – have lost funding. Again, we are joining our elected officials to work to solve this problem, but we need the City to support Visiting Neighbors, as well as adult day care facilities, in order to allow seniors to live independently in their own homes.

Our elderly are vulnerable to the rampant building boom in our community, when landlords seek to push seniors out. New building permits must accommodate the elderly. Many of our seniors continue to live in rent-regulated walk-up apartments. Renovation, not removal, is needed.

D. Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Questioning Community

Our district welcomes our Lesbian-Gay-Bisexual-Transgender-Questioning (“LGBTQ”) community. They are integral to our healthy growth and community strength.

We are strong supporters of our three strong social service organizations, the LGBT Center, the Door, and Housing Works, attending to the special needs of this community, including many not from Community District 2. All three also support those who are not LGBTQ. The LGBT Center operates its own programs and provides space for over 400 individuals and organizations to run programs of their own, all of which draw 6,000 people a week from around the metropolitan area. Housing Works provides services for hundreds of people living with HIV/AIDS. The Door helps adolescents and emerging adults find jobs, education, and health services.

The Hudson River Park pier at Christopher Street has become a safe gathering place for LGBTQ youth, who still experience discrimination in other parts of the city. This large population in our neighborhood raises concerns among local residents, especially when drug-dealing, prostitution, and petty vandalism occur. We are especially concerned about anti-gay hate crimes in our neighborhood, and in other parts of the city. This violence does not come from our residents, but from people coming into the district who have specific agendas against people whose lifestyles differ from their own. CB 2 is working with the 6th Precinct, The Door, neighbors, and our elected officials, and asks that the City work address this hateful behavior, and to find safe havens for these youth. CB 2 strongly urges the City to expand, not cut back services for LGBTQ youth. Our board strives to balance our concern for the youth and the residents.

IV. ENVIRONMENT, PUBLIC HEALTH AND PUBLIC SAFETY

A. Public Safety

The murder of Mark Carson, a gay man walking in Greenwich Village, in May 2013, sent shock waves through our community. To its credit, the NYPD reacted swiftly, arresting his murderer

and adding increased police patrols throughout the neighborhood. However, this tragedy dramatically illustrated that our streets are becoming increasingly less safe. In addition, we are regularly reminded by representatives from our Transit District that the number of i-phone thefts in and near our subway stations has skyrocketed.

We remain concerned about quality of life issues throughout our district. The large number of bars, clubs, and restaurants at times compete with residences within close proximity. We receive a significant number of noise complaints from residents, often about bars or clubs that crank up the amplified sound and, at times, exacerbate the situation by leaving its doors and windows open. The proliferation of street vendors, selling merchandise and food, has become a bane to many residents and businesses, particularly on Broadway and throughout SoHo. We welcome vendors who obey the laws and rules of New York City. However, too many ignore clearance requirements and create problems in those areas. In particular, regulation of food trucks is piecemeal and enforcement is ineffective because different agencies are involved and there is no coordination among them. The City needs to update regulations and enforcement strategies to keep pace with the proliferation of food trucks throughout the district.

B. Public Health

Our community board has been working diligently with the World Trade Center Environmental Health Center's Community Advisory Council to pass federal legislation that would provide permanent funding for this center along with the other centers dedicated to those affected by 9/11. In the interim, it is important that the City continue its funding and support of these centers.

We are very interested in ensuring that the number of new HIV infections in the City decreases and that those living with HIV and AIDS receive the services they need to remain healthy and to have stable living environments. It is essential that the City fund – and advocate forcefully with the State and Federal governments to fund – new methods to help prevent new infections, research into how to effectively reach the populations that are seeing higher infection rates, and support for the non-profit service providers who are the best responders to the epidemic and yet are losing government funding.

We are pleased the City has dedicated significant resources and is now taking a pro-active approach in combating the rat population in our City. In particular, we applaud the Rat Indexing Initiative. We urge the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene and other relevant agencies to continue these aggressive efforts.

V. TRAFFIC and TRANSPORTATION

When looking at any issue that comes up regarding traffic in this district, our board considers the importance of balancing all the modes of transportation important in New York City – pedestrian, public transportation, bicycles, cars, taxis and trucking.

One of the District's major traffic and transportation problems is with vehicular congestion around the entrance and exit to the Holland Tunnel. The tunnel brings in great volumes of private vehicles visiting the city from out of state. In addition, trucks make many local

commercial deliveries, and use our narrow streets to travel from the Hudson River to the F.D.R. Drive, south to the Financial District and to the outer boroughs. Our fragile network of narrow streets is also clogged with trucks skirting the one-way toll on the Verrazano-Narrows Bridge in order to use the toll-free Manhattan Bridge to access the Holland Tunnel. With the advent of E-Z Pass and other electronic traffic management systems, the one-way Verrazano toll is no longer feasible and should be eliminated.

Every year in our budget requests, we ask that the City work with the Port Authority to consider new approaches to dealing with the traffic back-ups that are caused by the Holland Tunnel. We also ask for enforcement strategies to help keep traffic from “blocking the box” at intersections, as well as to control honking, and driving recklessly to circumvent congestion. The Hudson Square Business Improvement District is addressing many of these Holland Tunnel problems. We are working with them, and look forward to further work with them and the relevant agencies, to find and implement, long lasting solutions, with hopes that these agencies will respond to our needs and recommendations.

Community District 2 has several internationally known tourist destinations that encourage heavy nighttime and weekend usage of the district’s streets, by both cars and pedestrians. New York City Transit should be initiating a major effort to increase the use of public transportation in this context as well as in general by making it more comfortable, convenient, accessible, frequent, and making transit access points more user friendly for both visitors and residents. The removal of our subway station agents compromises our safety and takes away our source for vital information and orientation. We vehemently oppose these cuts that are completely counter to the sustainability goals of PlaNYC and Vision Zero. Public transportation makes more efficient use of space and energy, significantly reduces air and noise pollution, and minimizes pedestrian/vehicular conflicts. Therefore, instead of imposing these destructive cuts on a population that already depends so strongly on transit and its benefits, opportunities must be explored and followed through in providing new transit access and routes in areas of need.

One major transit deprivation impact has resulted from the removal of the M6 bus route and the diversion of the M1, M3, and M5 buses from the routes they followed for many years in District 2. The new route locations are difficult, if not impossible, to reach for CB2’s sizable and growing senior and disabled populations who have depended on convenient bus service to access important destinations, such as medical facilities and food shopping. They have resulted in distances, timing, stop locations, and reduced frequencies that severely penalize the entire District’s residents, workers, parents and children because of the long waits, crowded buses, far apart stops and lack of needed accessibility. These routes need to be restored to their former locations that provide the service the community needs.

In addition, every effort needs to be made to repair and rehabilitate our deteriorating subway stations for users’ comfort and safety. In particular, the West 4th Street station has been severely deteriorating over many years of neglect to the point that current conditions are not only off-putting, but also a threat to people’s health and safety. All of the platforms and surrounding areas are plagued with moldy, leaky and peeling walls and ceilings, and a full rehabilitation is long overdue.

In a walking community like Community Board 2, with a populace that spends much of its time

out and about on the streets, the City must continue to encourage improvements for pedestrian and alternative transportation modes with emphasis on design and regulation of streets, including traffic calming approaches and more pedestrian-oriented redesign of complex intersections, lighting and directional information for both pedestrian and vehicular traffic, improved safety, enforcement, added bicycle parking both on sidewalks and in selected street spaces, as well as aesthetic improvements. Facilitation of pedestrian and bicycle movements and access between the six major subway lines, bus routes, hospitals, commercial districts, open space, schools, universities, historic districts and residential communities, also needs to be pursued.

Opportunities must be sought and identified to reclaim streets for public space that both support pedestrian activities and build community life. The Department of Transportation (“DOT”) is beginning to achieve this through its Plaza program in such areas as Gansevoort Plaza and Astor Place. The permanent reconstruction of pedestrian friendly improvements in these places is welcome.

Individuals using wheelchairs have a basic right, pursuant to the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, to use our city streets. In May 2007, the Community Planning Fellow assigned to our Board by the Borough President, presented a pedestrian ramp study to our Traffic & Transportation Committee. The study found that twenty-three percent (23%) of all street corners in our district do not have pedestrian ramps. In addition, another fifteen percent (15%) of all corners have pedestrian ramps that are uneven with the adjacent roadbed, or degraded, making them unusable or a safety hazard. It is our understanding that all regular corners now have pedestrian ramps. The City has begun the reconstruction of complex corners to install pedestrian ramps at those locations. We look forward to the day when this project is complete.

The degraded condition of our district’s streets, particularly those paved with historic Belgian blocks, is an ongoing concern and, at times, presents a hazardous condition. Some of our many requests for capital repaving projects, street reconstruction, improved traffic conditions and other needed improvements have been heeded, but there is still much to be done. Maintenance will always be an urgent item on the community’s agenda.

The proliferation of tour buses on our small, historic streets has produced a host of negative impacts, including hazardous conditions for pedestrians, air and noise pollution, traffic congestion, and broken street beds. CB 2 calls for increased regulation, enforcement, and relocation of tour bus routes to larger, more accommodating thoroughfares. A tour bus route-plan is long overdue, as is legislation putting it into action.

Recently, we have focused on working with DOT to create a safe environment for increasing bicycling as a mode of transportation. We have embraced the need to build protected bicycle lanes along many of our uptown/downtown and cross-town commuting arteries. However, there has been controversy. The majority of people who testify at our hearings are supportive of the bicycle lanes, but there are others who come with legitimate concerns about the impact of bicycles on pedestrian safety. We have a number of resolutions that ask the DOT to increase general education to the public about the protocols of the new bicycle lanes, and to look for ways to adjust the markings on the lanes to clearly announce how space is allocated to bicycles, pedestrians and cars. At the same time, CB2 strongly supports Complete Streets on 5th Avenue, 6th Avenue and 7th Avenue South.

We have also been working closely with the DOT to look at our parking regulations in a new way. We have consistently supported pilot programs with muni-meters to test how variable pricing can work in our neighborhoods. Because we have so many destination areas, and know that many people insist in coming by car, over our bridges and tunnels, instead of using public transportation, we encourage the use of appropriate priced street parking to help reduce unnecessary circulation of cars looking for parking and eventually encourage visitors to consider mass transportation (which hopefully will be restored and enhanced).

VI. PARKS, RECREATION and OPEN SPACE

With only about .58 acres of parkland per 1000 residents, our district has one of the lowest ratios of public open space in the city, and with its fully built up high-value land, the City standard of 2.5 acres is an unobtainable goal.

But important progress has been made in recent years. Along with the development of the Hudson River Park and the Highline, there has been a steady and ongoing stream of improvements to the quality and condition of our parks with recently completed renovations at Washington Square and JJ Walker and the Jane Street Triangle, along with needed repairs at the Tony Dapolito Recreation Center.

Last year, the new park at St. Vincent's Triangle finally opened to the public and the community looks forward to the ribbon-cutting for the AIDS Memorial at the northwest corner of the site. In addition, funding is in place for open space at Duarte Square, and for streetscapes within Hudson Square. Funding and design work has progressed for upgrades at Father Fagan Park and DeSalvio Playground. Funding has been obtained from a variety of sources for improvements at Pier 40, Little Red Square, Jackson Square, and SoHo Square. These initiatives will make our parks more attractive and safer, thereby providing more people a better park experience.

These additions and improvements are critical, but they have not been sufficient because the population of families with young children continues to rise in our district, increasing the overcrowding of our active play spaces. In addition, several large-scale development projects and major rezoning proposals have been approved during the last year, which will add to the pressure on our parks and the need for more open space, particularly those in which active recreation will be possible.

Whereas the focus of our efforts over the last few years has been on the preservation and improvement of the existing parks, we now see a need to strive to take advantage of every opportunity to create new open space. We thank our elected officials and City agencies for their support and we urge them to continue to help us protect, preserve and improve the public open space while we ask that they work with us to pursue every opportunity for creating new open space in our district.

Continuing Upgrade of Parks and Playgrounds and Facilities

While most of our parks are in good condition, there are still some that need renovation.

DeSalvio Playground, at the corner of Prince and Mulberry Streets, was last renovated in 1996. The park is now run down, uninteresting, and underused despite its location in an area with no other parks and a growing population of families with young children. An energetic group of

parents has launched a drive to get the park rebuilt and the council member has allocated some of the required funds.

Father Fagan Square is also in the process of being renovated. An active group of local residents has been engaged for several years, funds have been allocated by the City Council, a design has been created, reviewed, revised and recently presented to the community. It received a warm response, so we urge all involved parties to proceed with this project.

Trees

As an area with very few large parks and burdened by high vehicular traffic, our district greatly values the benefits of streets trees. We support the citywide effort to plant one million new trees. We passed a resolution urging the Parks Department to make the replacement of trees the highest priority for tree plantings in our district and we have seen some replacements. We also requested a policy change whereby tree and stump removals automatically generate a high priority request for a new tree without the need for a second 311 request.

VII. LANDMARKS and PUBLIC AESTHETICS

Ours is a historically rich community, graced by well over 2,000 century-old dwellings. Indeed, District 2 Manhattan has the oldest housing stock in the entire City with the median age of residential buildings at 95 years. Row houses constructed in the early 1800's, on what was then farmland, still stand in the Greenwich Village and Charlton/King/VanDam Historic Districts. Cast-iron buildings that were bolted together in SoHo during the last half of the nineteenth century still line the streets today.

Within Community District 2 are now nine designated historic districts: Charlton-King-VanDam; Gansevoort Market; Greenwich Village, with two extensions; SoHo Cast Iron, with one extension, MacDougal-Sullivan Gardens; NoHo, with one extension; NoHo East; and numerous individual landmarks.

Our board has joined with other preservation organizations and our neighbors to continue to advocate for the creation of a South Village District that represents an important chapter in the immigrant and bohemian history of New York City.

The strength of the Landmarks Preservation Commission is essential to the unique quality of this district and remains evident in the value of properties here and the vigor of tourism. Our board is unique in the city, in that over 70% of our building stock falls under the jurisdiction of the Commission. Unfortunately, too many illegal renovations and additions slip through each year. Landmarks enforcement must be expanded, and the Commission must have the necessary funds to perform their duties. We will continue to advocate for a stronger LPC, because the integrity of our neighborhoods depend on them.

VIII. SIDEWALKS & STREET ACTIVITIES

Sidewalks

Community Board 2 Manhattan continues to see more pressure on sidewalk access and usage. The list of incursions grows as businesses try ever harder to differentiate themselves, particularly in the current economic conditions. The sidewalks are often home to sidewalk cafes, newsstands, sidewalk vendors, food truck crowds, benches, A-frame signs and other items taking pedestrian and open space, often illegally.

Community District 2 is an extremely popular area for tourists and tri-state visitors and the relatively narrow width of many of our sidewalks, especially on side streets, can lead to intense congestion that often forces people to walk in the streets, which is undesirable and unsafe. The incursions mentioned above, both legal and illegal contribute to the problem.

A primary issue is the lack of consistent enforcement of sidewalk café regulations by the Department of Consumer Affairs (“DCA”). We continue to see too little enforcement in the evenings and on weekends when sidewalk café activity is at its peak. As a result, we consistently encounter a minority of establishments which:

- do not remove café furniture when the café is not in operation;
- operate the café in a manner that is not consistent with their approved plan;
- maintain illegal outside service stations and host stands.

These situations often create unsanitary conditions, limit or make pedestrian access treacherous in what is public right-of-way, and create an uneven playing field that encourages responsible establishments to break the rules as well, if only to compete with their opportunistic neighbors.

The other primary issue with sidewalk cafes is the inability to get rid of defunct enclosed cafes. CB2 has several café enclosures that have been sitting empty for multiple years. Many of these have been used by landlords or various operators in the past to justify dismantling virtually entire first-floor facades, in violation of rules established in the Zoning Resolution and, often, apparent landmarks violations. The City Council may want to look more closely at the many issues relating to enclosed sidewalk cafes.

Street Activities

Community District 2 hosted more than eighty street fairs, block parties, etc in the last fiscal year. Although street fairs are a longstanding tradition in our neighborhoods, there are too many generic, promoter-based multi-block events that have no indigenous relationship to our neighborhoods. These long multi-block events take business away from the merchants who pay rent and taxes, and generally detract from the quality of life of our residents. We appreciate that there is a citywide moratorium on new multi-block fairs, but we urge the City to look for ways to better ensure sponsors are indeed functional organizations and are viable members of the immediate community.

Community Board 2 remains disturbed by the endless proliferation of “special events” approved by the Mayor’s Street Activity Permit Office (“SAPO”) in our pedestrian plazas. The problem has become particularly egregious in the Gansevoort Plaza. CB 2 supported the plaza program wholeheartedly because we recognized that our district needed more public open space.

Unfortunately, we now find ourselves in the position of having absolutely no say in how the plazas are being used, while we must bear witness to SAPO permitting commercial and promotional use with increasing frequency. What was intended to provide an oasis in a sea of traffic too often has been taken over by the likes of commercial retailers, Vegas hotels, and alcohol promotions. With the change in administrations, we once again urge the Mayor's Office to review its special event policy and include the community board in the approval process.

IX. ARTS AND INSTITUTIONS

A. Universities

There are five major higher education institutions located in Community Board 2: New York University, Cooper Union, Benjamin Cardozo Law School, Hebrew Union College, and The New School (which includes the Parsons branch). They draw tens of thousands of students, professors and other staff who commute to or live in the Village.

New York University has put forward an aggressive expansion in their Plan 2031, seeking to add 3 million square feet into the core of historic Greenwich Village. Community Board 2 has the role of being the main liaison between the community and NYU. Plan 2031 was challenged in an Article 78 lawsuit brought by several community members and groups with a decision stating that Mercer Playground, LaGuardia Park and LaGuardia Community Garden are impliedly designated "parkland" and cannot be removed from public use. Appeals to that decision, and to the omission of the land in front of the Coles Sports Center on Mercer Street, are in process.

Over the past decades, NYU has been buying buildings and either demolishing or renovating them for its own purposes. The historic neighborhoods around Washington Square Park are hardly recognizable with the number of large, modern buildings that have replaced the low-scale and intimate streetscapes that Henry James and Edith Wharton wrote about more than 100 years ago. The current plan looks to develop partly on property that NYU currently owns, and partly on city-owned land. The enormity of the project will have significant negative impacts on the quality of life for residents in their buildings and the surrounding streets, including the loss of affordable housing, publicly accessible and community friendly open space, congestion and density, change of use in favor of campus life over neighborhood, and designated historic buildings.

Cooper Union and The New School have been undergoing expansions that will stretch our District's historical references – economically and socially. We have made every effort to work with both institutions to minimize the construction impacts on our neighborhoods.

B. Libraries

We are increasingly concerned that budget cuts have resulted in a reduction in staff and in the hours of operation at the libraries in our district. These reductions impact young children and the elderly most of all. We continue to request that additional funds be allocated to keep the libraries and their community rooms open for as many hours as possible. We also ask that the New York Public Library provide a dedicated staff to create special youth programming.

C. The Arts

Community Board 2 is very excited that the construction of the Whitney Museum of American Art in the Gansevoort Market district is complete. This important institution, which was originally founded in our district, is a great asset to the Far West Village and has begun to help re-focus the neighborhood as an art and design district. The Museum is an exciting center of art, with exterior exhibition spaces as well the traditional interior spaces. Integrated with the High Line Park that runs along the eastern face of the building, the museum offers restaurants, gathering places, and other public areas as part of its overall design.

In addition, our district has several other fine museums, including the NYC Fire Museum, the Children's Museum of the Arts, the Museum of Chinese in America, the Leslie Lohman Museum of Gay and Lesbian Art, the Merchant's House Museum, and The Drawing Center, among others. CB2 is also excited about the Jackie Robinson Museum, which is scheduled to open in our district within the next couple of years.

Community District 2 is also home to an array of performance spaces and independent theaters. We continue to be concerned about the impact on the downtown arts scene of the closure of so many of the district's off-Broadway and small theaters. The main causes are the exponential increase in rents and the drastic cut back of funding to non-profits. Some years ago, we supported a proposal to use tax incentives that would encourage landlords to retain live performance space. In addition, CB2 supports funding for the arts both in our area and citywide, and increased arts education in public schools.

X. SLA LICENSING

All neighborhoods within Community Board 2 are now saturated with liquor licenses. Every full on-premise application that comes before the board requires a 500-foot hearing at the State Liquor Authority ("SLA") because there are more than three existing on-premise liquor licenses nearby. In fact, many have twenty or more licenses within the 500 feet. Even in the current economy, CB 2 has seen an increase in SLA applications. To address this increase, CB 2's SLA Licensing Committee now meets twice a month, every month, in order to complete a committee hearing at a reasonable time in the evening. Several areas in our district, in particular the Bowery, West and East Village, Kenmare area, Meatpacking District, SoHo, and University Place are experiencing a dramatic increase in late night (and early morning) visitors who patronize new bars, clubs and restaurants. This trend has severely strained the quality of life for residents who are demanding that we stop approving SLA licenses, including beer and wine licenses. CB 2 has noted that there is quite a difference between retail daytime use and retail nighttime use, and has gone on record to call upon the City to amend Use Group 6 to require special permits for bars, restaurants and clubs.

In addition to reviewing license applications, our staff and board members spend extensive time and resources asking the police and city agencies, along with the SLA, to enforce the legal 'methods of operation'. Far too often, establishments that have been approved as restaurants with background music, transform themselves illegally into late night venues. As a result, the residential community continues to suffer with even greater degree. Our office receives the complaints, but it is very difficult for us to get the appropriate agencies to do an inspection. It is

important that the City commit to working with the SLA to coordinate the timely enforcement of laws that are written in order to protect our residential and mixed-use neighborhoods from being overwhelmed by the negative impact of the concentration of nightlife.

XI. WATERFRONT

The development of the Hudson River Park has been a great benefit to the residents in our park-starved district. The access to the waterfront, the bikeway and walkway, the playgrounds and seating areas are used year round. The ball fields on Pier 40, at Houston Street, have created the opportunity for children and adults to participate in organized sports leagues. Many residents take advantage of the relatively affordable vehicle parking on Pier 40, as well.

We have had two failed attempts to develop Pier 40 according to the parameters outlined in the Hudson River Park Trust Act. This is of increased concern because the pier is in very bad shape structurally. It is in desperate need of work on both its roof and pilings. We think these failures are due to the lack of public input into a planning process before the issuance of the RFPs.

CB 2 will continue to work with the Community Advisory Committee of the Trust to try to re-start the process to develop Pier 40. In order to succeed, it is imperative that the community be involved in the planning stages. Our board is committed to seeing that the athletic fields and parking remain, and that the necessary commercial development is appropriate to the park and additive to the community. While this project is clearly under the jurisdiction of the Trust, we would ask that the city's representatives on the Trust Board join us in advocating for a process and an RFP that responds to the needs of our district.

Two years ago, as part of the Department of City Planning's review of its Comprehensive Waterfront Plan, CB2 identified two important issues. First, we are concerned about the potential danger posed by rising sea levels. Many parts of our district lie in potential flood plains, and would be devastated in a storm surge. Unfortunately, this concern was borne out during and after the recent devastation caused by superstorm Sandy. In the aftermath of the storm, we applaud the report prepared by the NYC Special Initiative for Rebuilding and Resiliency (SIRR) and anticipate the City will continue its preparation and preventative measures through the Office for Long term Planning and Sustainability.

Also, we are advocating to improve safe access to our waterfront. Three years ago, our highest priority was to institute a new pedestrian crossing, over Route 9A, at Spring Street. Unfortunately, New York State does not seem to be receptive to this request. The Hudson Square neighborhood is becoming increasingly a residential area, and yet it has the worst open space ratio per person in our district. Currently, the only crossing to the park is on the south side of Canal Street, which is actually in Community Board 1. This effectively renders the entire neighborhood cut off from the Hudson River Park. Creating a new crossing will require the cooperation of many city agencies, New York State Department of Transportation, and the Hudson River Park Trust. We ask that the City commit to working with us to advocate for this change, as partial mitigation for the decision to locate a three-district sanitation garage and salt shed at Spring and West Streets, and in light of the upcoming proposal to rezone this area to allow for significant residential development.

In Section III of this report (Social Services), we listed our concerns about the needs of the LGBTQ youth who flock to the Christopher Street pier on weekend evenings.

XII. OTHER ISSUES

A. Chinatown

As one of the oldest neighborhoods in New York City and the country, Chinatown has been a traditional gateway for immigrants, particularly from East Asia. While Chinatown's population and boundaries have grown dramatically over the past three decades due to reforms in national immigration quotas, it continues to struggle as a densely populated, low-income neighborhood with limited language access to mainstream services and programs. Chinatown's economy suffered greatly in the period after September 11th due to restricted flow of commerce under the security zone, and more recently gentrification pressures from neighboring areas have contributed to a loss of affordable housing and dislocation of low income residents and small businesses.

In late 2008, a planning body called the Chinatown Working Group was formed to identify major issues of concern in Chinatown and to come up with ways to allow Chinatown to grow while protecting and retaining its historical character. The Chinatown Working Group is made up of more than fifty full voting members comprised of important stakeholders representing residents, small businesses, workers, social service institutions, arts, and advocacy groups, as well as Manhattan's Community Boards 1, 2, and 3. Other institutions and elected officials also participate in a non-voting capacity during the Working Group's monthly full sessions and Working Team meetings – designed for open, democratic, consensus-building planning in the hopes of creating a comprehensive community-based 197a Plan. In accordance with the City Charter, Community Boards 1, 2 & 3 would be co-sponsors along with the Chinatown Working Group of its proposed 197a Plan.

The preliminary planning needs of Chinatown have focused around a few core issues, namely rezoning for preservation and creation of housing that is affordable to existing Chinatown residents, combating tenant harassment and illegal eviction, support for small businesses and job creation for locals, developing more parks and usable open spaces, improving traffic flow and pedestrian safety, bolstering immigrant social services, creating spaces for local arts and culture, enhancing educational opportunities for youth and adults, and preservation of Chinatown's unique immigrant culture and history. In articulating its goals for Chinatown's future, the Working Group is carefully considering the impact of its proposals on adjacent New York City communities.

Community Board 2 will continue to work along these broad guidelines of neighborhood planning in Chinatown in coordination with local stakeholders and other community boards, and, if approved, ask the City adopt this 197a as an action agenda.

CONCLUSION/SUMMARY

Community Board 2 is a community of families and preservationists: our block and community associations plant and care for trees; friends' groups care for our parks; merchants' associations

help local park and City groups; civic organizations clean their streets, and residents get involved and help. We also have BIDs, that are committed to supporting our businesses, and provide security, extra sanitation services and street beautification projects to ensure that their areas remain attractive destinations. The fact that the historic beauty and integrity of our many neighborhoods has survived is clearly due to these efforts.

It is time that the City makes the same commitment to our district, as have our residents and businesses. Increasingly, City agencies are asking for input from the community board regarding the issuance of licenses, changes to regulations and feedback for large development projects. However, we notice that building owners, restaurateurs and cafe entrepreneurs have found it too easy to build in complete disregard of local laws. New businesses are opened and profits are reaped while complaints sit on agency desks. Illegal and unlicensed operations continue without inspections and penalties, and residents continue to complain to the Board office. More careful attention must be paid to the zoning regulations regarding building plan examiners and sidewalk cafe application certifiers. Illegal construction continues in Community District 2. And too often, we are asked to retroactively approve illegal renovations in our historic districts. We need City agencies to establish procedures that will help us to protect our neighborhoods in line with existing laws, and then follow up with inspections to ensure that violations are cured in a timely manner.

Finally, we ask that in FY 2018 the City does not propose cuts to the community board budgets. Any reduction would essentially eliminate the money expended on basic operating expenses. To compensate, our only alternative would be to lay off staff, thereby making it impossible to perform some of our City Charter-mandated responsibilities. Community boards have not received increases to their operating budgets in more than twenty years. It is difficult to perform our duties under the current funding. Any further cuts would basically undermine our role in helping to deliver the appropriate level of city services in our community and prevent us from participating as a full partner in reviewing land use changes, monitoring city services and reviewing agency applications. We understand that there are fiscal challenges that New York City must address. However, it would be short sighted to not take advantage of the thousands of volunteer hours that community board members devote to ensuring that the City stays connected to its local populations.



Tobi Bergman
Chair



Bob Gormley
District Manager