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## COMMUNITY BOARD NO. 2, MANHATTAN

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

### STATEMENT OF DISTRICT NEEDS

**Fiscal Year 2019**

#### **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 14<sup>th</sup> 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**

##### **75 Morton**

After listing a new middle school at 75 Morton Street among our top priorities for nearly a decade, we are thrilled 75 Morton opened in Fall 2017, temporarily co-located at the Clinton School near Union Square. Unfortunately, due to unforeseen construction delays related to extensive water damage, the newly renovated school building will not open until Fall 2018. For 75 Morton, our remaining priorities are the:

1. Opening of the new school building before Fall 2018,
2. Construction of the funded play yard at the rear of the school,
3. Construction of the funded green roof,
4. Re-configuration of the basement space into a usable community and school space now

- that there are no longer plans for a student Health Center,
5. Increased funding for reduced class size – 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,
  6. Funding of after school programs when the school moves to the new site,
  7. Identifying a name for the school that recognizes our community’s decade long advocacy for a new middle school at 75 Morton, and,
  8. Determining the needs, age and programs for the students to be served by the District 75 school, scheduled to open in Fall 2018.

### **Duarte Square School in Hudson Square**

Under a March 20, 2013 Restrictive Declaration by The Rector, Church-Wardens and Vestrymen of Trinity Church in the City of New York (Trinity), Trinity agreed to fund the core and shell of a new 444-seat within a new building (Duarte Square School) to be developed on Trinity’s property fronting Duarte Square Park. The School Construction Authority would fund the remaining costs. The Duarte Square School is listed in the DOE Capital Plan as Project #1, but Trinity currently leases the future school site to Smorgasbord and has not shared publicly their timeframe for construction.

In addition, in a March 12, 2013 letter from the Department of Education to the Speaker of the New York City Council, the DOE has the option to build expanded recreation facilities in the Duarte Square site, including a) a double-height, 6,300 square foot gym, b) a 3,500 square foot multipurpose assembly space and c) 2,100 square foot multipurpose space.

CB 2 remains concerned that the planned school will be too small for projected student demand. The 444-seat size is based on 3,323 residential units projected to be built in Hudson Square in the FEIS multiplied by 0.12, the Manhattan multiplier used to project new elementary school seats. Using a multiplier of 0.16, the most recent experience in Greenwich Village would result in an 88-seat deficit.

CB 2’s priorities for Duarte Square are to ensure that:

1. Trinity and the SCA establish a timeframe for developing the school,
2. The SCA funds the additional recreation facilities and that these are designed with a separate entrance to allow for community use during non-school hours,
3. No charter school claims the site, and,
4. The school designed with a separate gym and auditorium as well as an outdoor playground and no “gymatorium.”

### **Bleecker School**

**About:** Under a July 24, 2012 Restrictive Declaration by New York University (NYU) and amended by a letter from NYU to Councilmember Chin on October 21, 2014, the NYC Department of Education has an option to build a 100,000 square foot public school at [509 LaGuardia Place](#) in Greenwich Village on New York University-owned land. To exercise this option, the DOE must fund the school by December 31, 2018 and start construction by July 31, 2020. The DOE may build a school to serve students through 8<sup>th</sup> grade (not high school students.) If the DOE does not exercise this option, the buildable rights revert to NYU and NYU would allocate no less than 25,000 square feet of above grade space for a community facility. In

addition, under the Restrictive Declaration, NYU has the right to build up to 70,000 square feet of below grade space. *Currently, the Bleecker School is not funded in the DOE Capital Plan for 2015-2019, updated in [February 2017](#).*

**Need for School Seats:** CB 2 recognizes the need for 600 public school seats at the Bleecker School, based on our June 2017 analysis that shows:

1. 148 to 337 seat shortfall from overcrowding at all three CB 2 elementary schools for 2015-2016, based on outdated Blue Book figures that underestimate overcrowding, at 112% at PS 3, 109% at PS 41 and 109% at PS 130 as well as 114% at PS 11,
2. 88 seat shortfall at the Duarte Square School, based on a CEQR multiplier of 0.16,
3. 169 to 225 seat shortfall resulting from the 550 Washington rezoning – approved with out any school seats – based on a CEQR multipliers of 0.12 and 0.16 respectively,
4. 100+ seats to reduce kindergarten class size to comply with Contract for Excellence class size reductions (and 650+ seats for grades K-5),
5. 69 seats to expand pre-kindergarten seats to 50% of the kindergarten cohort,
6. 131 seats to expand 3K programs to 25% of the kindergarten cohort,
7. 44 seats for District 75 students at Duarte Square,
8. 60 seats for District 75 students at Bleecker, and,
9. Additional square footage and seats to comply with physical education requirements,

**Next Steps:** 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, NYU needs to reinstate the School Election Notice to 2025, which was NYU's original proposal. CB 2 also urges the SCA and the DOE to take into account the demographic analysis and projections developed by CB 2 and fund the Bleecker School in the SCA's next five year Capital Plan.

### **Existing Elementary Schools**

All three of our current primary schools (P.S. 3, 41, and 130) are overcrowded and in need of regular capital investment to maintain the adequacy of the physical plant. For us, excellent public schools are a priority. In FY 2017, the near term capital needs are for improved technology and new water fountains.

### **Arts Education**

CB 2 wants to ensure that the DOE allocates funds for increased arts education, faculty and classrooms in our service area's public schools. Two recent studies, one by the NYC Comptroller ("State of the Arts") and the other by the Manhattan Borough President ("ArtsForward"), identified deficiencies in arts programs in public schools. While some funds were allocated in FY 2015, we ask the City to baseline this and provide additional funding to hire more dedicated arts faculty and provide adequate infrastructure for arts education.

### **Funding, Siting and Building New Public Schools**

The City Environment Quality Review (CEQR) process is flawed for analyzing how new development impacts public schools and overcrowding. Most development projects do not trigger an analysis of their impact on school seats and even when a new development triggers an Environmental Impact Analysis, the CEQR Technical Manual and EIS guidelines to do not accurately estimate the need for new public schools seats.

CB 2 recommends that:

1. The Department of City Planning develop new and better formulas, based upon current demographics, that more accurately represent the percentage of families with school age children that comprise our local population, and considers the number of families who can be expected to move into new residential development;
2. The Department of City Planning to institute a policy that would require a school impact study, using local data as required under the 2014 law, on all new residential construction and conversion, regardless of size; and,
3. The City develop a mechanism that would require developers of all new residential buildings to contribute to a capital fund for public schools, and/or include new school seats within their projects.

## **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 the increase in 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 LGBT youth. Our board strives to balance our concern for the youth and the residents.

#### **IV. ENVIRONMENT, PUBLIC HEALTH AND PUBLIC SAFETY**

##### **A. Public Safety**

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. Environment**

New residents, replacing the manufacturers who previously hired private carters, must now rely on collection by the NYC Sanitation Department. Further, the growth of tourism throughout our district, particularly on weekends, has created an additional burden on the existing uniformed Sanitation workers. Sanitation District 2's limited staff is hard pressed to meet the community's growing needs as the area has increasingly become home to a twenty-four hour population. In particular, the agency's decision a few year's ago to cut the number of supervisors in each

district has made it more difficult to clean the streets as thoroughly as they had been cleaned in the past.

### **C. 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 elimination now of toll booths on the Staten Island side of the bridge, and toll collection being done by way of E-Z Pass scanners and license plate readers, 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 are pleased to note that some of these problems are now being examined by DOT's Hudson Square/West Village Transportation Study to identify and address longstanding transportation challenges as well as challenges and opportunities anticipated in the near future, and we look forward to the findings and proposals that result from this study. We also ask for enforcement strategies to help keep traffic from “blocking the box” at intersections, as well as to control

honking, especially now that "No Honking" signs are no longer used, and to curtail reckless driving done to circumvent congestion. We continue to work with the Hudson Square Business Improvement District to address many of these Holland Tunnel problems, and look to continue to 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 and frequent, and making transit access points more user friendly for both visitors and residents. The removal of many 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, and sources of funding for our suffering transit system must be pinpointed and secured.

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 4<sup>th</sup> 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. L-train stations along 14th Street are also in need of upgrades, and their 15-month closing during the Canarsie Tunnel Project presents a perfect opportunity for carrying out needed improvements, including ADA accessibility, at all three CB2 L-train stations.

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. With

increased and increasing development on the Far West Side, attention needs to be given to providing public transportation opportunities, accessibility and connections in that area for residents, businesses, working people and those who visit.

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, which we 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 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue, 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue and 7<sup>th</sup> 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 to encourage visitors eventually 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.

The new park at St. Vincent's Triangle, which includes the AIDS Memorial at the northwest corner of the site, is a popular oasis for community members and tourists to our area. The long-awaited renovations at Father Fagan Park, SoHo Square and DeSalvio Playground have begun and are expected to be completed next year. Funding has been obtained from a variety of sources for improvements at Pier 40, Little Red Square and Jackson Square and we look forward to the commencement of the improvements. 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 past few years, 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.

### **Elizabeth Street Garden**

From 2013 to 2016, CB 2 held four public hearings and passed four resolutions in support of the permanent preservation of Elizabeth Street Garden in its entirety as public open, green space and urges the City to transfer jurisdiction over this lot to the Parks Department. CB 2 also supports the development of affordable housing at an alternative city-owned site at Hudson and Clarkson Streets, if the Elizabeth Street Garden is preserved.

There is a clear need for additional green, open space in the neighborhood around Elizabeth Street Garden. Little Italy and SoHo account for 23% of CB 2's population but have only 3% of its open space, virtually 100% paved, for an open space ratio of only 0.07 acres per 1,000 residents, as compared with the City planning goal of 2.5 acres per 1,000 residents. Furthermore, the majority of CB 2's open space is in Washington Square and Hudson River Parks, nearly a

mile and 1.2 miles from the Garden, respectively. Residents in Little Italy and SoHo are less likely to use these spaces with frequency. In contrast, New Yorkers for Parks, National Recreation and Parks Association, and LEED for Neighborhood Development all recommend that residents live within 0.25 miles of parks.

The Garden has been open to the public since June 2013 and volunteers provide regular free public program including wellness classes, music afternoons, movie nights, poetry readings, children's story time and crafts, community gardening workshops and the annual Harvest Festival, attending by more than 1,500 neighbors.

### 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 94 years. Row houses constructed in the early 1800's, on what was then farmland, still stand in the Greenwich Village and Charlton/King/Van Dam 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.

The board has joined with other preservation organizations and our neighbors to advocating for the successful designation of the South Village District and the Stonewall Inn. The board continues to identify districts and individual buildings worthy of designation.

The strength of the Landmarks Preservation Commission is essential to preserving the unique quality of this district and remains evident in the value of properties here and tourists, guide books in hand, enjoying the well-preserved district. There is a very considerable increase in visitors to Sheridan Square following the designation of the Stonewall Inn and the creation of the Stonewall National Monument. CB2 is unique in the city, in that well approximately 75% of the building stock falls under the jurisdiction of the Commission.

There is an urgent need for increased funding for monitoring and enforcement at several stages:

Changes without certificates of appropriateness are frequent. The board, the landmarks

committee, and the residents of the neighborhood are vigilant in documenting work in progress without permission. The Commission does not have staff who survey the districts for violations of this type. They only respond to complaints. Complaints, however appear to take some time to be investigated rarely result in the work's being stopped right away and months or years may pass before violations are corrected. Having staff to survey the districts in this regard would be desirable to replace the present haphazard reporting from the public.

When applicants before the Landmarks Committee to have work that has not been approved, the most frequent and least plausible excuse for not having obtained a Certificate of Appropriateness prior to the work is an ignorance of the regulations. Increased monitoring would also address this concern.

Less frequently, work is undertaken that is not in compliance with the Certificate of Appropriateness indicating need for increased monitoring during the carrying out of work that has been approved.

## **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. For several years, Community Board 2 has been troubled by DCA's reluctance to enforce the Zoning Resolution's ban on sidewalk cafes in certain zoning districts. In one example, the agency continues to allow three restaurants on West 4<sup>th</sup> Street, where the zoning is R6 and where sidewalk cafés are prohibited, to continue to operate. After numerous requests over a period of

several years by CB 2 and the Borough President for DCA to either address this situation or at least explain why it refused to act, DCA steadfastly stonewalled all attempts at a resolution. Finally, in April 2013, just prior to a City Council oversight hearing on DCA's management of sidewalk cafes, DCA sent letters to these three operators notifying them of the illegal status of their cafes. Unfortunately, well over a year later, DCA is still allowing the cafes to operate, supposedly because the operators have filed with the Department of City Planning for unspecified zoning or zoning text changes that would legalize the cafes. While the prospects of a rezoning are dubious, sidewalks cafes would still be prohibited because the sidewalks are too narrow. By allowing restaurants to operate unlicensed sidewalk cafes in areas where the zoning prohibits it, DCA has created an unfair and un-level playing field among area restaurants. It is unfair to individuals and families nearby who continue to endure the resulting noise, and to responsible restaurant operators who are either paying significant license fees or are losing business to these operators with illegal sidewalk cafes.

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 promotional and commercial events, some permitted and some not, which are occurring regularly in SoHo and, to a lesser extent, in NoHo. These events clog sidewalks and streets and often result in chaotic street scenes costing the City money and resources as it struggles to bring order to the mayhem. Residents are inconvenienced and neighboring businesses are hurt as temporary "pop-up" shops commandeer the sidewalks, close streets and often blast music that illegally impacts the quality of life of the neighbors. The City needs to focus on this growing problem and come up with ways to successfully address and contain it.

## **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 implicitly 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, were unsuccessful. In June 2015 the state’s highest court upheld a lower court ruling allowing NYU to move forward with its expansion plan. Our board is in regular communication with NYU and will continue requesting that the institution present occasional construction updates to our Arts & Institutions Committee.

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.

The New School does not have a formal expansion program. It is described as having a history of "adaptive re-use", meaning the school often leases space in the area and fits it to their needs. The institution recently purchased a building on 14th Street between 5th and 6th Avenues (behind 55 West 13th Street). We will continue to make every effort to work with The New School and keep the community apprised of any updates related to this purchase.

## **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 delighted by the arts and culture that the Whitney Museum of American Art in the Gansevoort Market district has infused into our district since opening its doors in May 2015 and also appreciates the institution’s regular communications with and support of our board. 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 restart 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. Four 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 11<sup>th</sup> 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.



Terri Cude  
Chair



Bob Gormley  
District Manager