

**COMMUNITY BOARD 2 MANHATTAN  
STATEMENT OF NEEDS  
Fiscal Year 2009**

**PREFACE**

Each year Community Board #2, Manhattan updates its original Statement of Needs (hereinafter referred to as the "Statement"), which is submitted pursuant to the implementation of and in accordance with the Charter changes of 1977. Each year the Statement represents the needs of all of our residents.

The needs of this Community Board, as expressed in this statement, have been brought to our attention by our residential and business communities, agencies, local elected officials and the large number of complaints logged at our office or discussed at our monthly District Service Cabinet meetings. Once these needs are identified they are investigated by pertinent Community Board committees and reviewed by our full Board membership.

**HISTORY**

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 neighborhoods of Little Italy, SoHo, NoHo, Greenwich Village, the West Village, the South Village and Hudson Square. Within Community Board #2 are five designated Historic Districts - Charlton-King-Vandam Historic District, Greenwich Village Historic District, SoHo Cast Iron Historic District, MacDougal-Sullivan Gardens and the newest addition, the NoHo Historic District.

This historically rich community is graced by well over two thousand century-old dwellings. Rowhouses constructed in the early 1800's, on what was then farmland, still stand in Greenwich Village and the Charlton/King/VanDam Historic District. Cast-iron buildings that were bolted together in SoHo from 1859 to 1872 still line the streets today.

Much of this architectural beauty has been maintained by residents who are determined to preserve their neighborhoods' past. But needs are changing

drastically. Manufacturing and commercial areas, once used almost exclusively during the working day, have turned into twenty four-hour residential areas. In addition, hordes of tourists and other visitors add to the extremely heavy burden placed on services and an antiquated city infrastructure.

## **COMMUNITY USE**

### **A. Population**

In assessing local needs it is necessary to understand what the increased shift in building use means to the community, and how the massive amount of new and bulkier construction has added, and will continue to add, more residents to a population count and neighborhood character.

The West and Central Village, from 1960 to 1990, had a population increase of twenty-two percent (22%). In the Far West Village alone -- an area bounded by Hudson Street, the Hudson River, Gansevoort Street and Leroy Street -- many large construction projects were completed in the last few years. New York University dormitory sites have also added thousands more people to the Community Board #2 area, and the New School is in the midst of its expansion program, as is Cooper Union.

In NoHo and SoHo, completed and proposed conversions to residential use have changed and will further change the character of these neighborhoods. The population of SoHo increased thirty-five percent (35%) from 1960 to 1990. However, the largest increase over the same 20-year span was in NoHo, which grew by one hundred and fifty percent (150%). Hundreds of loft dwellers -- residing in NoHo and SoHo -- continue to bring their loft space into compliance with legal residential requirements and their numbers will greatly inflate the population figures. In addition, major new apartment projects along the north and south sides of East Houston Street, east of Broadway, have or will add hundreds of new residents.

According to a City Planning Commission report on the percentage change in 0-17 year old population; between 1980 and 2000, this district will see an increase that may approach fifteen (15%) percent. This trend has already begun to manifest itself in increased numbers of children less than five years of age in the SoHo and West Village neighborhoods of our district. There has also been a marked increase in demand for day care services and outdoor play space for this age group. While for-profit day care services are expanding to meet this

demand, low-cost day care services do not have affordable space in which to expand. Our outdoor play space is extremely limited, and has reached the saturation point.

**B. Tourism/Visitors**

Within the boundaries of Community Board #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, the galleries and boutiques of SoHo, the jazz clubs and Off-Broadway theaters of Greenwich Village, as well as the gourmet shops and bookstores of the entire area. 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.

However, part of our community, particularly SoHo, Hudson Square, Gansevoort, and NoHo, have also seen an explosive increase in late night (and early morning) visitors who patronize new bars, clubs and restaurants and who have severely strained the quality of residents' life. Community Board #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.

There are six major higher educational institutions located in Community Board #2 - New York University and its law school, Cooper Union, Benjamin Cardozo Law School, Hebrew Union College, The New School, and Parsons School of Design – and they draw tens of thousands of students, professors and other staff who commute to or live in the Village. New York University's campus expansion in the Village area has added thousands of dorm residents to the Greenwich Village area and SoHo, and The New School and Cooper Union are following suit. Not to be overlooked is St. Vincent's Hospital and Medical Center, with its recent plan to rebuild a new hospital and its students, nurses, doctors, patients and visitors, all of whom add greatly to our transient population. In addition, the Lesbian and Gay Community Service's Center on West 13th Street operates 300 citywide programs that draw thousands of members and participants each year.

In addition to the extraordinarily high volume of pedestrian traffic, 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 clogged with trucks

skirting the one-way toll on the Verrazzano Bridge in order to use the toll-free Manhattan Bridge to access the Holland Tunnel. In addition, the fleet of trucks operated by wholesalers of perishable goods that have opened in the past ten years in Chinatown, Little Italy and SoHo (turning parts of the area into a terminal market), plus the oversized trucks of their suppliers and customers have added to already illegal levels of air pollution. Added to this situation are mega-stores in our M-districts, and proposed diesel truck-dependent operations will exacerbate the already high levels of health-damaging diesel fumes in the area. Trailer trucks endanger pedestrians and also cause damage to our landmark buildings.

Our parks, from the world-famous Washington Square, to our other twenty-six sitting areas and vest-pocket parks, are all overused by local citizens and visitors.

We are greatly concerned that city planners have ignored the impact of these changes and have neglected to urge the creation of ancillary services, which these changes require. During these years of conspicuous residential growth in NoHo and SoHo, our planners have not provided for the necessary amenities which make for a healthy and growing residential community, i.e.: schools, open space and parks, and consumer product and service retail space. Our budget priorities for the past few years have focused on servicing our new, as well as our old, population. More specific assessments of services will be set forth throughout this Statement.

Additionally, the growth of tourism in SoHo, which is visited by more people on weekends than Midtown, has not been met with an increase in street garbage pick-up or Police coverage. Both are sorely needed.

### **C. The Hudson River Waterfront**

The entire Hudson River waterfront area within the boundaries of Community Board #2, both piers and bulkhead, historically has been dealt with poorly by the New York State and New York City administrations. From the city, which once floated a prison barge off Pier 40, to a State Administration, which also claims to be committed to a park along the same waterfront, we witnessed the construction by the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey of an above-ground, rather than below ground, emergency egress/access for its PATH system at Morton Street, obstructing precious open space.

Community Board #2, along with the Greenwich Village community and our elected officials, worked to convert a long-awaited dream into the reality of green, open space for the entire Greenwich Village Hudson River waterfront, making use of our open piers for pedestrians to enjoy. We have continued to oppose inappropriate construction at Pier 40.

## **MUNICIPAL SERVICES**

### **A. Public Safety**

Public safety has always been high on our list of priorities, and the demand for adequate 24-hour police coverage has never been greater. We receive continuous complaints from both the residential and business communities, regarding the need for additional police coverage. Law enforcement problems reach not only into our homes and busy streets, but also into the many sites where tourists, residents and theater-goers gather for enjoyment. Drug dealing in our parks and streets hurts our residents and seriously damages our neighborhoods. We recognize the 6<sup>th</sup> Precinct is trying to increase police coverage in Washington Square Park to address the ongoing and blatant sale of marijuana there. However, despite the earnest efforts of the police, the problem appears to be continuing unabated.

We still require additional fire fighters to ensure public safety. The issue of public safety in Community Board #2 manifests in other areas, as well. Timely inspections and their resolutions by enforcement agents from various regulatory agencies are essential to the well-being of our residents and preservation of our Special Districts. More careful attention must be paid to the zoning regulations regarding building plan examiners and sidewalk cafe application certifiers. Illegal construction continues in Community Board #2, we require additional, properly trained inspectors. Building owners, restaurateurs and cafe entrepreneurs have found it 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 citizens continue to complain to the Board office.

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, lighting and directional information for both pedestrian and vehicular traffic, improved safety, enforcement as well as aesthetic improvements. Facilitating pedestrian movements and access between

the six major subway lines, bus routes, hospitals, commercial districts, open space, schools, universities, historic districts and residential communities, needs implementation.

Because Community Board #2's Greenwich Village, SoHo, NoHo, Little Italy and Chinatown areas are internationally known tourism destinations and encourage heavy nighttime and weekend usage of Community Board #2's streets, and heavier usage of private automobiles, a major effort must be made to increase the use of mass transit by the Metropolitan Transportation Authority, by making transit use more comfortable, convenient, accessible, and frequent. Mass transit makes much more efficient use of space and energy and significantly reduces air and noise pollution and minimizes pedestrian/vehicular conflicts.

### **B. Landmarks Preservation**

The strength of the Landmarks Commission is essential to the unique quality of this district and remains evident in the value of properties here and the vigor of tourism. Landmarks enforcement must be expanded, as we have long insisted.

### **C. Quality of Life Issues**

New residents, replacing the manufacturers who previously hired private carters, must now rely on City sanitation collection. The local sanitation forces must keep pace with the increasing twenty-four-hour population. District #2's small and diminishing staff cannot meet the community's growing needs.

Our parks have not fared well. Limited staffing cannot possibly maintain our sitting areas and popular parks. While many of our parks have been adopted by local volunteer groups, their members cannot be expected to give up their regular jobs to remove the refuse each day.

## **PUBLIC FACILITIES/THE INFRASTRUCTURE**

Community Board #2, takes pride in its historic landmarks, yet fears for the future in light of the current state of our antiquated public facilities. A few historical facts can best illustrate our need:

- The first sewers built in New York City were constructed 80 to 100 years

ago; Community Board #2's sewers were among those initially constructed.

- Broome Street, which cuts through Little Italy and the South Village, was first paved in 1809;
- Carmine Street was opened in 1816.
- The Seventh Avenue subway was constructed in 1918; the Sixth Avenue line was built barely a decade later.

Individuals using wheelchairs have a basic right, pursuant to the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, to use our city streets. In May, 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 imperative that the City allocate the necessary funds to address this injustice immediately.

The increasing number of unrepaired, gaping potholes is evident. 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 needs of the children in our district are of prime concern to the community. One such area of concern is the overcrowding and deteriorating plants at our local public schools.

Because we are not, for the most part, a poverty area, the level of funding allocated to our excellent programs falls short of what is needed. As a result, after school services for an ethnically and economically diverse student group cannot operate at full capacity. Funding for these programs has not kept pace with inflation, causing the gap in services to grow wider and denying many of the children in our community essential recreational, educational and vocational activities. This is particularly true of the southeastern section of the Community Board #2 where a full service youth center is overdue.

A source of ongoing concern is the sizable increase in the number of homeless youth congregating in the West Village, on the piers, in the surrounding neighborhood and in Washington Square Park. This population, predominantly 16 to 21 in age range, which includes a significant number of lesbian and gay young people, lives dangerously in a street life dominated by rounds of prostitution and drug use. To help these young people, there is an urgent need for additional outreach services, 24-hour drop-in centers and most importantly, transitional, short-term emergency housing.

On a brighter note, the local library picture has taken a turn for the better, with the opening of the new SoHo branch on Mulberry Street. In addition, we are gratified that funding has been restored for full six-day service at the Jefferson Market and Hudson Park branches. However, we have requested that additional funds be provided to increase the activities for toddler-aged children at the Hudson Park branch.

Community Board #2 has long fought for the rights of our young to safe conditions, and the same has been true of our concern for our elderly residents. Our elderly have not only been neglected, but even pushed out of a community that has been their home for decades. The City must not allow the elderly to be forced to leave the community which they helped build and to which they have given character and stability. Seniors continue to live in rent-regulated walk-up apartments in our area, which do not serve their health and social service needs. More appropriate housing for the elderly is needed. We also urge the City to continue its support of the Title XX, Title V and the Older Americans Act Programs, and to supplement Federal funds, which have been jeopardized.

## **ARTS**

Our district is one of the City's most popular art centers, with thousands of tourists visiting art galleries, theaters, and other art attractions every day. However, over the last few years, due to the influx of retail, dining, and shopping, more and more art galleries and other places of art are disappearing from our district. There is a need for increased support of these organizations by the City in order to preserve our district as an arts center.

## **CONCLUSION/SUMMARY**



Within the next few months, the Office of Management and Budget will receive our specific Capital and Expense Budget requests and priorities. We cannot stress enough - as we have done so often before - the particular needs we have enumerated that deserve special consideration.

Ours is a community of 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. The fact that the historic beauty and integrity of our six neighborhoods has survived is clearly due to their efforts.

It is time that the City make as much of a commitment to our area as have our residents. We strongly urge your assistance in protecting and improving the special quality of Community Board #2.

Each year, we reiterate our request for increased funding for our staff. This is even truer this year than in the past. Due to the city's decision in the 1990's to slash community board budgets, our office staff is over-extended. Without appropriate funding this office is hard-pressed to serve the needs and answer the complaints of a population that is larger than many towns and villages. The money that this administration has appropriated for FY 2000 is woefully insufficient to staff our over-burdened but effective Board office. We also continue to be concerned that, with all of our planning responsibilities and involvement in the ULURP process, our limited budget has precluded any possibility of employing a City Planner to assist us in our work, a requirement clearly mandated in the new Charter Revisions.