

# STATEMENT OF NEEDS

## Fiscal Year 2011

### 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 City Charter changes of 1977. Each year the Statement represents the needs of all of our residents.

We are greatly concerned that city planners have ignored the impact of the district's rapid changes and have neglected to urge the creation of ancillary services, which such changes require. During these years of conspicuous 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, and consumer product and service retail space. Our budget priorities for the past few years have focused on servicing new arrivals to the district, as well as our long-time population. 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 neighborhoods of Little Italy, part of Chinatown, SoHo, NoHo, Greenwich Village, the West Village, Gansevoort Market, the South Village and Hudson Square.

#### **B. Population**

The population in Community Board 2 has increased by seven percent (7.0%) between 1980 and 2000. However, between 2000 and 2006, CB 2's population has increased another 15.4%. The Department of City Planning lists CB 2 among the eleven highest areas of growth in the entire City through 2010.

According to a City Planning Commission report on the percentage change in 0-17 year old population, between 1980 and 2000, this district saw an increase approaching fifteen percent (15%). From 2000 to 2006, number of households with children 0-17 has increased an additional 38%.

In addition, we have five major universities that add thousands of non-permanent residents to our neighborhoods - New York University, the New School, the Cooper

Union, Hebrew Union College, and Cardozo Law School. Several of these institutions are currently in the midst of expansion. 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 in 2004 was \$75,000. In 2006, it increased to \$94,871. At the same time, CB 2's income diversity ratio went from 4.8 to 6.7: Incomes in the bottom two quintiles accounted for 19% of the population in 2004; by 2006 those quintiles represented 23%. The third quintile (\$35,752 to \$60,839) dropped from 18% to 12%. The fifth quintile, \$100,000+ increased 3%.

### **D. Housing**

During this same period, serious housing code violations per 1,000 rental units went from 11.3 to 22.6, while in median monthly rent Community Board 2 ascended to the highest in the City to \$1,691. Rental units that are rent-regulated are 54.6% More than 1,300 buildings are registered with rent-stabilized units. Community Board 2's rank in severe overcrowding rate in rental unit conditions has been elevated from 28 in the City to 19. The poverty rate is 11.9%.

### **E. 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 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, Chinatown and Cleveland Circle 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 offering the passengers a running commentary. Unfortunately, this commentary is often utilizes a public address system that disrupts the peace and quiet of our residents and those who work from home.

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.

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. ZONING and HOUSING**

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.

In NoHo and SoHo, 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 insure 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 East Houston Street, in the northern portion of SoHo have added hundreds 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 ULURP's 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.

## **XI. SLA LICENSING**

Almost every application that comes before the board requires a 500' hearing at the State Liquor Authority ("SLA") because there are more than three existing on-premise liquor licenses nearby. In fact, many have as many as twenty licenses. Several areas in our district, in particular the Bowery area and the Meatpacking District, 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. 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.

Community Board 2 reviewed and passed resolutions regarding 127 applications for liquor licensed establishments in 2008, a slight decrease compared to the 137 resolutions that were passed in 2006. Most of these establishments are in manufacturing/artist live-work areas, driving up the cost of small manufacturing/repair spaces, increasing Board of Standard and Appeals variances for other uses, and effectively driving out small businesses that have been the mainstay of economics within the district.

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. 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 night life.

## **III. SOCIAL SERVICES**

## **A. Education**

There has been an increase in the number of children less than five years of age throughout our district. This increase in school age population has not been matched by an increase in elementary and middle school classroom space. Currently, the schools in District 2 are operating well above one-hundred percent capacity, which puts all of our students at a serious educational disadvantage.

Last year, there was a shortage of kindergarten seats in our district. Only a last minute effort by the Speaker of the City Council, Christine Quinn, who secured a one-year temporary location for a pre-K facility, ensured that all kindergartners were able to start school in their own neighborhoods.

The solution to this on-going problem is the purchase (or leasing), and subsequent renovation and conversion, of 75 Morton Street, for use as a public school. This is our number one budget priority for this year. This currently underused building could easily house our Greenwich Village Middle School, that is currently located on the upper floors of P.S. 3 on Hudson Street, and free up those seats for incoming kindergarten students. This building is wheel-chair accessible and could be converted into classroom space efficiently and relatively cheaply. We are committed to finding space for our elementary and middle-school children to attend school in the immediate neighborhood.

We have also requested that the City fund a renovation of P.S. 130, in Chinatown/Little Italy, and to build an addition in their adjacent school yard. The school has exceeded enrollment capacity and the population in the area is growing rapidly.

## **B. Youth**

There has also been a marked increase in demand for day care services and outdoor play space. 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.

We are also concerned that cut-backs in after-school resources deny many of the 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.

## **C. Seniors**

Our elderly are vulnerable to the negative consequences of gentrification, specifically, when landlords seek to push seniors 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.

Many of our seniors continue to live in rent-regulated walk-up apartments in our area, which do not adequately serve their health and social service needs. More appropriate housing for the elderly is needed. We 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.

We are very interested in the City continuing to fully fund organizations such as Visiting Neighbors and other adult day care facilities, in order to provide the help necessary to allow seniors to live independently in their own homes. We believe that this is a cost effective way to care for seniors, and worry that many good organizations may have to close their doors if a commitment by the appropriate agencies is not made to keep them operating.

#### **D. Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer Community**

Our district has a long history of providing a welcoming environment for members of the Lesbian-Gay-Bisexual-Transgender-Queer (“LGBTQ”) community. We believe that diversity of all kinds is an important factor in building and maintaining stable neighborhoods.

We are fortunate to have two very strong social service organizations, the LGBT Center and Housing Works, attending to the special needs of this community. We will continue our close relationship with both. The Lesbian and Gay Community Service’s Center operates 300 citywide programs that draw thousands of members and participants each year, and Housing Works provides services for hundreds of people living with HIV/AIDS from around the City.

One area of ongoing concern, however, is the influx of an LGBTQ youth on weekend nights to the Christopher Street area. Over the years the Hudson River Park pier at Christopher Street has become a safe gathering place for LGBTQ youth, who may feel they have no place else to go. The crowds, unfortunately, create problems for the surrounding residential community, who are left to clean up after the visitors on a nightly basis, and are increasingly concerned about drug dealing, prostitution, and anti-gay violence. CB 2 is working with the 6th Police Precinct, the neighbors and The Door, with strong support from Speaker Christine Quinn and other elected officials, to try to address the situation. However, we need the involvement of the city to look for solutions that go beyond policing, and focus on the needs of the LGBTQ youth, including finding safe havens such as protected homeless shelters, educational opportunities, job training and general social services and support to address substance abuse and the spread of HIV diseases, among other problems. Each year we include these requests among our budget priorities. Because the city has not focused on meeting the needs of this vulnerable population, our board is in the uncomfortable position, without the expertise or resources, of trying to balance our concern for the youth and the very real problems that are created for our neighborhoods.

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

### **A. Environment**

Our board has a keen interest in environmental issues. We have passed strong resolutions concerning the delicacy of our combined sewer overflow system, the importance of protecting the New York City watershed in order to keep our drinking water safe, the impact of traffic congestion on air quality, and the potential harm of radio waves emitted from the poor placement of cell towers.

Currently, we are working closely with our elected officials to prevent hydraulic fracturing in the Marcellus Shale. We also continue to list as a budget priority a request to convert MTA buses, school buses, and the city's transportation fleet to hybrid electric technology.

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. Sanitation District 2's limited staff is increasingly hard pressed to meet the community's growing needs. Additionally, the growth of tourism throughout our district, particularly on weekends, has not been met with an increase in street garbage pick-up or police coverage. Both are sorely needed.

### **B. Public Health**

Community Board 2 tries to act as a conduit between the City and our community for a number of public health issues. We post on our web-site and send out notices whenever we hear about flu prevention, the H1N1 shots, the follow-up to health issues created by 9/11, and emergency preparedness. We participated in CERT training and are working with NYU to maintain an adequate network of support when needed.

### **C. 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, which has been reduced in recent years. 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 hear consistently from our community that people want to see more of a presence of uniform officers. Most of the problems in our neighborhoods are better enforced with police on the streets, rather than the specialized task forces that address specific crime issues.

## **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.

We have a tremendous problem 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.

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, honking, and driving recklessly to circumvent congestion. A newly formed Hudson Square Business Improvement District has been created address these problems, and we look forward to working with them, and the relevant agencies, to find a long lasting solution.

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. Consequently, New York City Transit should initiate a major effort to increase the use of public transportation by making it more comfortable, convenient, accessible, frequent, and making transit access points more user friendly for both visitors and residents. Public transportation makes more efficient use of space and energy and significantly reduces air and noise pollution and minimizes pedestrian/vehicular conflicts. Therefore, opportunities must be explored and followed through in providing new transit access and routes in areas of need, for example, by extension of the M8 bus to Pier 40.

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. Facilitating 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 implementation.

Opportunities must be sought and identified to reclaim streets for public space that both supports pedestrian activities and builds 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, and other initiatives would be welcome, including a permanent reconstruction of pedestrian friendly improvements on 9th Avenue between Gansevoort Plaza and 14<sup>th</sup> Streets. An opportunity to add significant open space is being lost at Mulry Square, where the MTA intends to build an above ground subway fan plant, whereas an underground facility, although more costly, would allow for substantial public/green space at the site that would benefit the community in perpetuity.

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 imperative that the City take the necessary action to remedy this injustice immediately.

The degraded condition of our district’s streets, particularly those paved with 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.

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 crosstown 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 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.

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 are interested in finding out if appropriate priced street parking will help to reduce unnecessary circulation of cars looking for

parking and eventually encourage visitors to consider mass transportation.

## **VI. PARKS, RECREATION and OPEN SPACE**

For years our parks, from the world-famous Washington Square, to our other twenty-six sitting areas and vest-pocket parks, have been extremely well-used by local citizens and visitors. However, there is a dearth of open space in the district. In fact, our total provision of open space is only .40 acres per 1,000 people, far below the required minimum of 2.5 acres per 1,000.

This past year has brought some improvements to our open space issues. We have seen the opening of the southern section of the High Line Park. This elevated walkway has been an immediate success, and although most of the users in the first months have been visitors, local residents are very proud to have this great amenity in our district. Community Board 2 is grateful to Friends of the High Line for their commitment to this project and for their hard work to maintain the beautiful plantings and accessibility. We are especially pleased to know that the City is now committed to saving the entirety of the structure, including the portion in the Hudson Railyards.

The northwest quadrant of Washington Square Park re-opened this spring, after Phase I of the re-construction project was completed. The renovation of this iconic park has been long overdue. Currently, we are entering into Phase II, and we look forward to working with the Parks Department to approve a new comfort station that will be fully ADA compliant.

Seravalli Park has just been fully returned to public use, after two years of construction for the adjacent NYC Water Tunnel project. This spring the park will close for a much needed, complete renovation, to be fully funded by the Department of Environmental Protection (“DEP”), in part because of our CB 2’s negotiations with the agency.

There are three other Water Tunnel project sites in our district: Houston and Clarkson, Grand and Lafayette, and East 4<sup>th</sup> Street between Bowery and Lafayette Street. We have included these sites in our budget priorities to ask that DEP turn over the acquired construction staging sites to the Parks Department to be developed as new open space.

We just celebrated the opening of the newly-renovated Petrosino Park. For years this was a small pocket park that offered a bit of respite to an underserved neighborhood. The Parks Department suggested ten years ago that perhaps the park could be expanded in a meaningful way by reclaiming underutilized road space from the surrounding streets. Two years ago, the new leadership at DOT decided to work with the Parks Department and de-mapped street space to turn over to public space. Petrosino Park has doubled its size and is now a wonderful addition to the district.

We are hoping that this approach will become a model for Community Board 2 to develop more open space. We have worked with the DOT regarding its new plaza

program. Many of our streets were created hundreds of years ago along historic rural paths that through the years were forced to conform with New York's grid system. This has created underutilized streets with unusual geometries that now lend themselves to opportunities to reclaim public open space. In Gansevoort Market, along Lafayette and in other corridors, CB 2 is actively working with DOT to identify other potential sites.

## **VII. LANDMARKS and PUBLIC AESTHETICS**

This historically rich community is graced by well over two thousand 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. 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 during the last half of the nineteenth century still line the streets today.

Within Community District 2 are nine designated historic districts: Charlton-King-Vandam; Gansevoort Market; Greenwich Village; Greenwich Village Extension; SoHo Cast Iron Historic District, MacDougal-Sullivan Gardens; NoHo; NoHo Extension; NoHo East; and SoHo-Cast Iron, and numerous individual landmarks. Two additional districts, an extension of the SoHo Cast Iron District and a Greenwich Village Extension II, are currently before the Landmarks Preservation Commission and will most likely be designated in the very near future.

The 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 60% 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, PUBLIC FACILITIES and PUBLIC ACCESS**

Community Board 2 has more sidewalk café applications than any other district. We constantly receive complaints regarding illegal sidewalk café operations. Specifically, there are several restaurants, located in residential zones in which sidewalk cafes are banned, that have been operating sidewalk cafés for years. In many cases, inspectors from the Department of Consumer Affairs (DCA) have issued violations for the illegal activity. However, DCA's legal division has inexplicitly and continually adjourned the administrative hearings, thereby allowing the illegal activity to continue unabated. In addition, we think that it is time for the City to review the current sidewalk café rules,

which were instituted in March 2003. Currently, the City makes no distinction between a restaurant and a bar when issuing a license for a sidewalk café. Unfortunately, residents living in close proximity to the establishment must have their quality of life suffer when bar customers are allowed to imbibe on the sidewalk until the early morning hours.

Another issue that causes growing concern is the clutter of street furniture on our sidewalks. There are too many locations where access is just about impossible because of a combination of sidewalk cafes, benches, tree benches, planters, news boxes, sandwich boards, ATM's, muni-meters and bike racks. At a recent forum we hosted, we learned that there are many agencies that have jurisdiction, but that they are not always talking to each other, and they do not have regulations that are keeping up with the latest incursions. It is sometimes impossible for the board to know where to begin when questions arise – who should we be talking to or what the rules are.

We think it is time that the City develop a policy about the parameters of safe access and write clear regulations about what is legal and which agency is in charge, then give them adequate resources to appropriately enforce the law.

## **IX. STREET ACTIVITIES and FILM PERMITS**

Community District 2 hosts more street fairs than any other board in Manhattan. Street fairs are a long standing tradition in our neighborhoods, but increasingly they are no longer about block associations and community groups getting together to celebrate a special event, plant flowers or raise money with a tag sale. There are too many generic multi-block events that have no relationship to our neighborhoods, 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 city-wide moratorium on new multi-block fairs, but there are still too many of them for our liking. Motorcycle clubs from New Jersey should not be allowed to block our streets as they ride en-masse through a tunnel, with engines revving, to the small streets of Little Italy for an afternoon and evening of partying, under the guise of sharing a police and Italian heritage from years ago.

We carefully review every application to make sure that there is some benefit to the community before giving over our streets to outside groups. Unfortunately the Mayor's Street Activities Permitting Office (SAPO) often approves fairs year after year, and leaves us with no other option than to try to negotiate for restrictions in order to minimize the unwanted, negative impact.

There is also a new development by SAPO: approving commercial events and art installations in public plazas that have been newly created by the Department of Transportation. We supported the plaza program wholeheartedly with the idea that our district needs more public open space, but now we find ourselves in the position of having absolutely no say in how the plazas are being used.

In addition to the street fairs, we have an ongoing problem with the issuance of film permits. Our historic streets are some of the most desirable film and photo-shoot locations. Unfortunately, we again have no input regarding the number, location, or date and time of the permits being issued. Some of our streets are repeatedly closed, which causes a great inconvenience to residents and businesses. There are location vehicles parked throughout their neighborhood, cables and equipment everywhere, catering stations on the sidewalks, large crews standing around hour after hour, lights shining into bedroom windows at night, and even security that denies access to their buildings when the cameras are rolling. It takes many phone calls, angry letters, and the intervention of the board and elected officials to get an area deemed a hot spot, giving at least a few months of relief.

All of these factors have created an extremely heavy burden on district services, an antiquated city infrastructure, and City services. Each month our office receives numerous complaints about all of these street-renting practices.

The Mayor's Citywide Events Coordination Management office needs to create a new process that will take into account residents' concerns, business interests and allow for community and board input before issuing any permits that restrict access to our streets.

## **X. 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.

Cooper Union and The New School are in the middle of expansions that will stretch our District's historical references – economically and socially.

However, our biggest concern at this time is New York University's 2031 campus expansion into the core of Greenwich Village. Manhattan Borough President Scott Stringer has created an NYU Task Force that includes the elected officials, Community Board 2 and neighbors, in order to provide a framework to review the process. Over the past 20 years, NYU has been buying buildings and either demolishing or renovating for their 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 over 100 years ago. The residents in the remaining buildings are afraid that their homes will also disappear.

Many of the projects that NYU are proposing as part of their plans will require City

approvals and community board input. We would ask that the appropriate agencies consider the needs of our residents and the history of our neighborhoods before issuing approvals. This is the time for NYU to look to expand into other locations, outside of the core area. Otherwise we fear that Greenwich Village, known throughout the world and attracting thousands of visitors each year to New York City, will be swallowed up by a well-funded and rapacious institution that perhaps has outgrown its roots.

### **B. St. Vincent's Hospital**

St. Vincent's Catholic Medical Center has been our district for over 100 years, and is now in the process of applying to the City for permission to build a new, state of the art facility. They are one of only two Level One Trauma Centers south of 59<sup>th</sup> Street. The hospital provides invaluable services to our residents and to all of lower Manhattan, including in-patient hospitalization, emergency room care, a large variety of out-patient clinics and a dedication to serving anyone who walks through their doors without regard for ability to pay.

We have conducted many public hearings as St. Vincent's sought to obtain their first necessary approval from the Landmarks Preservation Commission. Our board voted to support the new hospital, but had many concerns about its potential to overwhelm the Greenwich Village Historic District. The Commission has approved the project and we will now be hosting further hearings as we prepare to review the project as part of ULURP. We look forward to working with the Department of City Planning and the City Council to be sure that the community's voice is heard in the final design of the project and that we find ways to ameliorate the negative impact of years of construction.

### **C. Libraries**

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. We are especially pleased that the historic Jefferson Market Library has been funded for restoration of the exterior and that the interior will be updated to accommodate better handicap accessibility.

We are still asking that additional funds be provided to keep the large community room open during all library hours, to order to increase the activities for toddler-aged children at the Hudson Park branch. We also ask that the New York Public Library provide a dedicated youth staff to create special youth programming.

### **D. The Arts**

Community Board 2 would like to thank the City for helping to fund the new Museum of Chinese in America, which opened this fall to celebrate the important history of Chinese-American immigrants. The museum will be a great asset to the Chinatown community and the entire district.

We are also very excited that an agreement has been reached with the Whitney Museum of American Art to open a second facility downtown. This important institution, which was originally founded in our district, will be a great asset to the Gansevoort Market area and could help to re-focus the neighborhood as an arts and design district.

Our district has historically been 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, theaters, performance spaces and other places of art are disappearing from our district. There is a need for the City to increase support of these smaller organizations and thereby preserve our district's history as an arts center.

## **XII. 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. And many residents take advantage of the relatively affordable vehicle parking on Pier 40.

However, 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 RFP's.

Currently, CB 2 is working with the Community Advisory Committee of the Trust 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. We also believe that the Pier 40 provides an opportunity to incorporate much needed school space. 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.

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.

## **XIII. OTHER ISSUES**

### **A. Supporting Small Business**

We have become increasingly concerned in past few years by the loss of small retail businesses. Small businesses, and the services they provide, are the backbone of our neighborhoods. They help to define the special character of 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. This problem has become more pronounced with the recent economic downturn.

We will be looking for ways to work with the local Business Improvement Districts, Chamber of Commerce, and the Small Business Services Agency, in an effort to try to address this issue.

## **B. Chinatown**

Our district includes a portion of Chinatown. The concerns of this community are unique and deserve special attention. As one of the oldest neighborhoods in New York City, Chinatown has been a traditional gateway for immigrants, particularly from East Asia. The area struggles 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 the September 11<sup>th</sup> tragedy, due to the restricted flow of commerce under the security zone, and more recently gentrification pressures from the adjacent areas have contributed to a loss of affordable housing and the dislocation of low income residents and small businesses.

In late 2008, our board joined a new planning body called the Chinatown Working Group, which was formed to identify major issues of concern and to suggest mechanisms to allow Chinatown to grow while protecting and retaining its historic character. The Working Group has developed an open, democratic, consensus-building approach, and is in the process of creating a 197a Plan.

The preliminary efforts have focused around a few core issues, including re-zoning for the preservation and creation of affordable housing, combating tenant harassment and illegal eviction, support for small businesses and job creation for local residents, developing more usable open park spaces, improving traffic flow and pedestrian safety, creating spaces for local arts and culture, enhancing educational opportunities for youth and adults, and the preservation of Chinatown's unique immigrant culture and history.

As the Working Group moves forward, we expect to incorporate their specific requests in future Statements of Need.

## **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 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 Business Improvement Districts which 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 make the same commitment to our area 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, again in FY 2011, the City is again proposing cuts to our community board budget. 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 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.