

# District Needs Statement

Community Board 7/Manhattan

FY2016

August 4, 2014



Manhattan Community Board 7 (“MCB7”) serves the residents, institutions, businesses, visitors, and other stakeholders of Manhattan’s Upper West Side. We hold as our guiding context:

**INCLUSION:** valuing diversity, consideration of others, and promotion of the common good.

**QUALITY OF LIFE:** pursuing the availability and continuous improvement of resources, infrastructure, public space, programs, services, and economic, socio-cultural, and educational opportunities that foster safe and active healthy living for all.

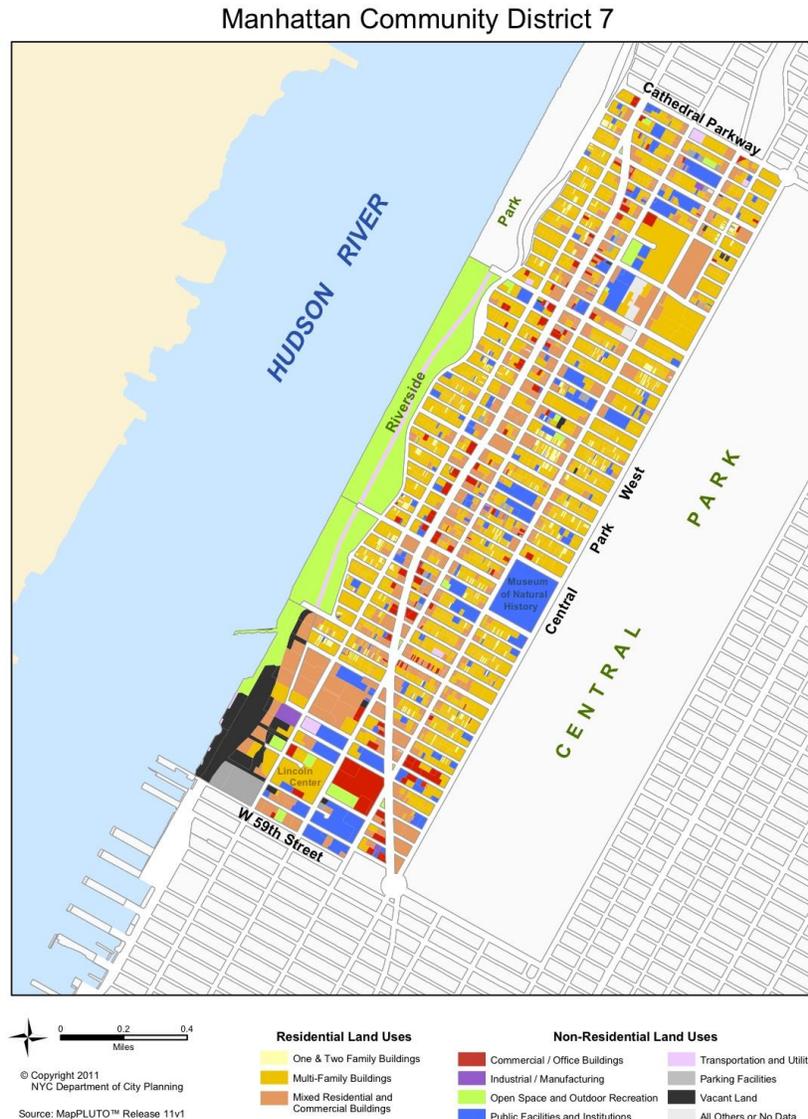
**SUSTAINABILITY:** respecting those who came before us, and those who have yet to arrive; promoting policies and practices that are economically, environmentally, and socially sustainable for generations to come.

**INTERDEPENDENCE:** understanding our place in the world, recognizing that our interests, resources, and actions connect us with communities and ecosystems across the globe; embracing policies and practices that allow all communities to thrive.

**PARTICIPATION:** fostering honest, transparent, responsive, and democratic governance, collaborative engagement, and the right of every person to be informed and heard, even in the context of respectful disagreement.

## 1.0 Geography and Demographics

Manhattan Community District 7 encompasses Manhattan's Upper West Side, from 59<sup>th</sup> Street to 110<sup>th</sup> Street, Central Park West to the Hudson River, and includes approximately 1.9 square miles (1222 acres) of prime New York City real estate. The district is home to 211,073 people, supporting approximately 50% more people per acre than the average for Manhattan, and four times more people per acre than the average for New York City.



In addition to the residents who live in District 7, the Upper West Side attracts millions of visitors each year who come to enjoy its cultural institutions, parks, retail offerings, and architectural diversity. Central Park, the American Museum of Natural History, Lincoln Center, Time Warner Center, New-York Historical Society, and Riverside Park are popular destinations.

**Central Park**



**American Museum of Natural History**



**Lincoln Center**



**Time Warner Center**



**New-York Historical Society**



**Riverside Park**



## 1.1 Population Density

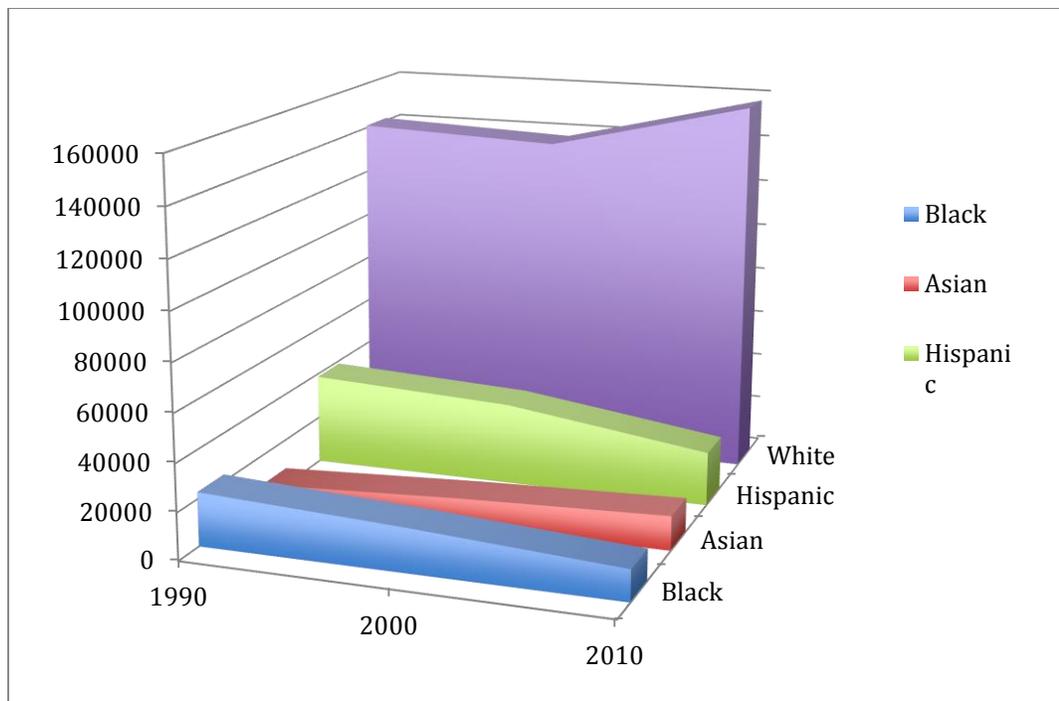
Although population has remained fairly stable over four decades, the geographic distribution of residents has shifted. According to census tract data, approximately 6% fewer people live in the central part of the district (74<sup>th</sup> St. to 96<sup>th</sup> St.), while new development in the southern and northern ends of the district has attracted enough new residents to counter-balance that loss. Reliance on census data carries with it concerns relating to populations traditionally under-counted, which correlate with the perceived areas of population claimed to have been lost in the last decennial census. Almost half (49%) of the occupied units in the district are one-person households.

Total Population	1980	1990	2000	2010
# of Residents	206,671	210,993	207,699	211,073
% Change	--	2.1	-1.6	1.6

## 1.2 Population Distribution

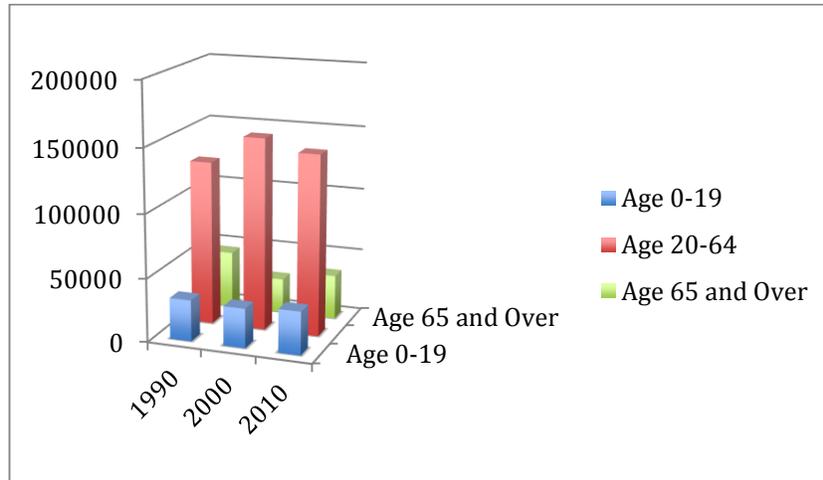
Although population has increased a modest 1.6% over the past decade, notable shifts occurred in the socioeconomic mix of the neighborhood. The decade saw an increase in the proportion of Caucasian residents (66% to 75%) and Asian residents (5.5% to 6.9%), while the proportion of Black residents decreased (9% to 6%) and Latino residents dropped (17% to 11%).

Race



## Age

Similarly, there was a significant shift in age distribution. Overall, adults of working ages 20-64 decreased by 6%, while children under 20 increased by 10%, and seniors over 65 increased a whopping 27% since 2000. In fact, Community District 7 has the second highest concentration of residents over 65 in all of New York City.

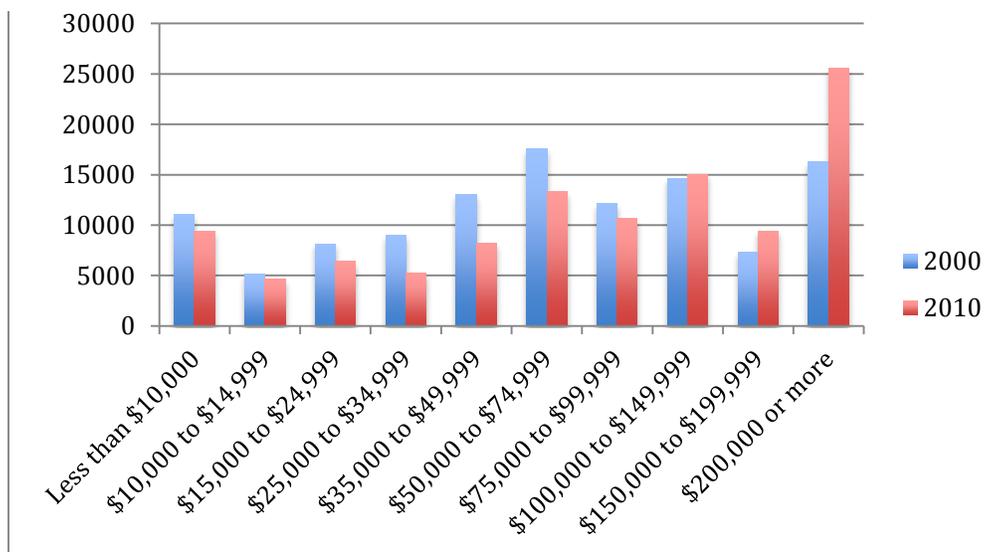


## Income

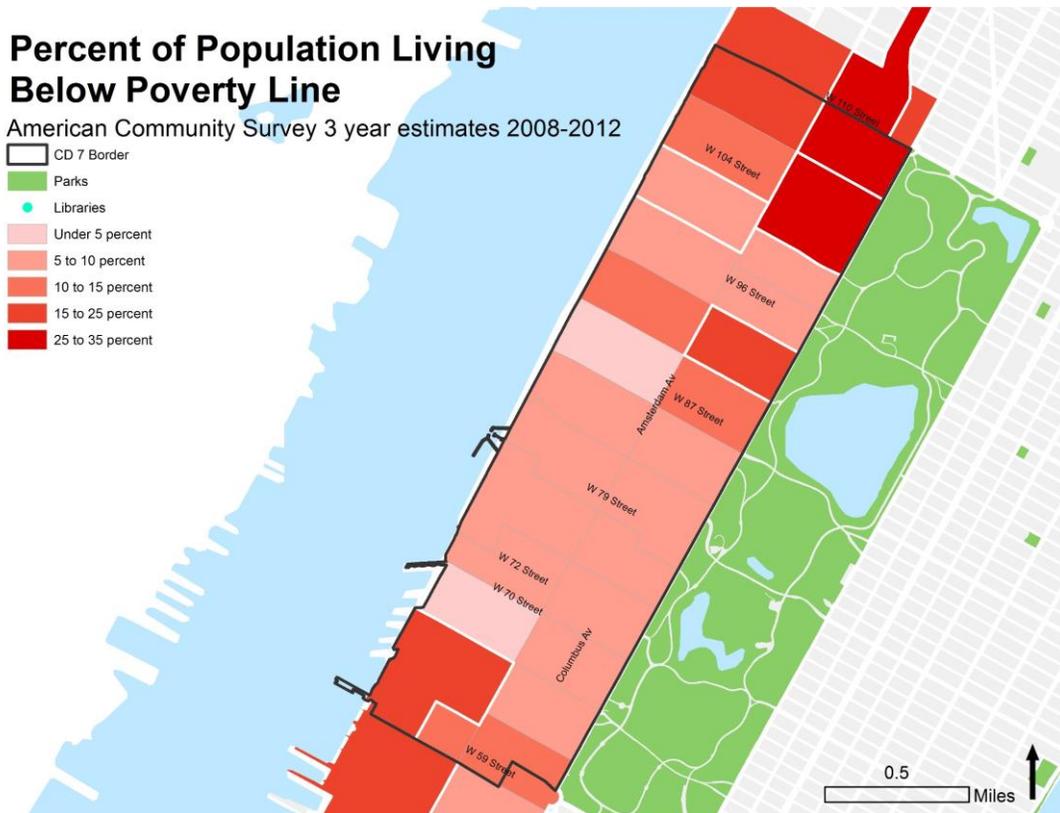
By far the most significant demographic shift occurred in the area of household income. Over the past decade, New York City has seen:

- The largest income gap in the US -- top 20% earn \$371,754, bottom 20% earn \$8,844.
- A 52% increase in homelessness from 31,000 to over 54,600.
- An increase in the poverty rate from 18% in 2007 to 21% in 2012.

In Community District 7, growth in the income gap is even more pronounced, with the proportion of top earning residents nearly doubling over the past decade. In 2012, median household income was estimated at \$99,000 for the Upper West Side, \$68,000 for Manhattan, \$52,000 for New York City, and \$58,000 for New York State.



However, despite a marked increase in average income, most residents would also confirm observable differences in income disparity, homelessness, and growing pockets of poverty.



## 2.0 Countervailing Trends: Rapid Development and Growing Pockets of Need

Since the 1980's, the Upper West Side has seen tremendous economic growth and development. Several factors, including easy access to transit (Subways 1,2,3,A,B,C,D and multiple bus lines), proximity to parks (Central Park and Riverside Park among others), strong public schools, and engaging street life make the district especially attractive to families, seniors, and people who want a short commute to Manhattan's business centers downtown.

During the economic upsurge of the mid-90's and early-00's, developers seized the opportunity to develop housing for a seemingly insatiable demand. Low-density buildings were replaced by luxury towers. Multi-apartment brownstones were consolidated into single-family homes. Vacant lots (what few remained) were purchased and developed into large-scale, mixed-use complexes. Most recently, plans were approved in December 2010 to develop the last open lot in the district (at 59<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> Avenue) into Riverside Center, a 3 Million SF mixed-use complex with 2500 residential units, a hotel, commercial facilities, playgrounds, and a 100K SF school, which will likely increase district population by 3-4% (not reflected in this report).

## Brownstone Conversions



## New Construction



In certain areas, the average price per square foot increased from \$300/SF in 1990 to more than \$1000/SF in 2010.

Despite rapid development and related improvements, many areas throughout the district continue to languish. So called “pockets of poverty” make up approximately 10% of the population and experience unemployment rates over 10%, high school graduation rates under 10%, high instances of obesity, diabetes, and other health problems, and a disproportionate rate of crime (10% vs. 25%).

Furthermore, as budget pressures increase at Federal, State, and City levels, efforts to reduce debt and cut discretionary expenditures have resulted in fewer real funds for pre-schools, senior centers, and support for those living in poverty and/or challenged by illness. Similarly, municipal personnel (teachers, police, fire, sanitation) that not only ensure quality of life, but provide a safety net for vulnerable populations, have also been reduced. These general service reductions are exacerbated by the fact that “pockets of poverty” located within the high-income zip codes of the Upper West Side are systematically overlooked.

## 3.0 Impacts and Opportunities

While rapid economic growth added high-end housing capacity, increased commercial activity, and improved quality of life for many in the district, it has also produced challenges. Resources, support systems, and opportunities for youth, seniors, and low- to middle-class residents have actually declined. Various impacts and related recommendations are outlined below.

### 3.1 Housing

	Total Units	Occupied	Vacant	%Vacant	Median Price \$M	%Change
1990	125,807	115,703	10,104	8%	\$1.45	333%
2000	121,834	114,262	7,572	6%	\$2.95	103%
2010	122,145	110,246	11,899	10%	\$5.54	84%
20-Yr Trend	-2.9%	-4.7%	+17.8%		282%	

Of 110,246 occupied units, 34,555 (31.3%) are owned and 75,691 (68.7%) are rented, of which 66% (or 50,078 units) are subject to some form of rent regulation. As housing values have increased, so has the income of the occupants. In 2010, median household income had risen to \$93,260, with average household income at \$164,244 (approximately 35% higher than the average for Manhattan, and 116% higher than the

average for New York City). Interestingly, despite high incomes, a significant number of both renters and owners spend more than 50% of their income on rent or maintenance fees.

**Affordable Housing.** New York City’s affordable housing programs recognize the strength and stability brought to our communities through economic diversity. A broad spectrum of housing stock tends to enhance the character, mix, and sustainability of a neighborhood. Without local affordable housing, the commercial sector relies increasingly on shopkeepers, service providers, and employees that commute from other boroughs or states. Similarly, goods and services that might be generated locally must be imported, which exacerbates traffic congestion, air pollution, and infrastructural wear and tear.

Although accurate historical data is difficult to obtain, there is a palpable experience that the stock of affordable housing in the district has decreased at an alarming rate. Policy changes that introduced “luxury” decontrol—the elimination of rent protections for occupants whose rent reaches \$2,000 and whose income reaches a threshold amount—make no allowance for the age of the tenants. As tenants reach the height of their earning power, they may lose their rent protection. However, once retired, they would be unable to sustain market rents, or become first-time co-op or condo purchasers because lending policies take into account future earnings.

Furthermore, luxury decontrol virtually ensures that: 1) regulated rents are unavailable to most new renters, with insignificant exception; and 2) that lower- and moderate-income tenants in rent-regulated apartments face escalating rents that will make their apartments increasingly unaffordable. MCB7 urges that housing programs, including Mitchell Lama, Tenant Interim Lease (TIL), 80/20, LISC, and other collaborative private/public relationships be strengthened and expanded. In addition, MCB7 calls for repealing the Urstadt Law, thereby allowing NYC to assume direct responsibility for managing its affordable housing crisis.

**Public Housing.** CD7 is home to three developments managed by the New York City Housing Authority: Amsterdam Houses and Amsterdam Addition, Fredrick Douglass Houses, and Wise Towers, with a total of 6,166 units. NYCHA and its residents face a myriad of challenges, including: the need for improved security, facility repairs, resident services, and programs that support youth and elderly. Furthermore, lack of accessible and accurate data make it difficult to consistently address problems in a timely manner.



MCB7 urges the City to develop an effective data collection and response system for NYCHA developments. Funding is also necessary to sustain programs for (1) DFTA’s senior centers and NORCs, (2) Space for after-school and child care programs, and (3) Community Center programming. Finally, MCB7 urges the City to convene a federal/state/local task force to address comprehensively NYCHA’s persistent structural deficit.

**SRO Buildings.** The Upper West Side is home to more than 200 single room occupancy (SRO) buildings with 13,364 dwelling units, most of which do not contain a kitchen or bathroom. These units are typically the most affordable alternative for young singles, older veterans, the chronically ill, the formerly homeless, and the hardcore poor. Using the low-income benefit categories of Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and Medicaid identifies at least 25,000 people (over 10%) of the district population qualify for SRO housing. However, economic growth has motivated many SRO owners to convert their buildings (often contrary to zoning regulations) from affordable permanent dwellings into transient hotels that serve an increasing number of tourists in search of budget lodgings. Recognizing that existing regulations are not universally enforceable in the current economic environment, MCB7 would welcome new ways to create and preserve affordable single room housing units while also meeting the demand for budget hotels and other types of supportive housing in the neighborhood.

### 3.2 Public School Capacity and Resources

- More than 20,000 students are enrolled in public schools (including 10 elementary, 4 K-8, 10 middle, and 13 high schools)
- More than 7,500 students enrolled in over 35 private/parochial pre-K, elementary and secondary schools
- 6 colleges and post-secondary institutions.

#### **Overcrowding/Scarcity of Seats.**

-- **Elementary Schools.** Overcrowding of public elementary schools in our District is now a chronic condition. One school, PS 199, completed the admissions cycle for the 2014-15 school year with 58 families who reside in its zone to whom the school could not offer admission – effectively falling short by two full sections of students, making it among the most overcrowded zoned schools Citywide in two of the past four years. Nearly every other elementary school in the District, including PS 452, 87, 9, 166, 84, 75, 163, 145 and 165 operates at or above 100% capacity. This overcrowding persists despite the opening in 2010 of PS 452, a new elementary school that repurposed middle school space to alleviate elementary overcrowding. The DoE confirmed that the overcrowding trend on the Upper West Side is not temporary, and is expected to continue into the foreseeable future.

The results of this pernicious overcrowding include the loss of space dedicated to special activities such as music, the arts and science; the loss of a much-coveted "Gifted & Talented" program in one school and the constant threat to a dual language immersion program in another because they enroll out-of-zone students to satisfy their missions; and in many cases class sizes that approach or exceed grade-appropriate limits. In addition, the demand for increased dual language programming at the elementary and middle school levels cannot currently be met because of lack of space.

Overcrowding also has resulted in the erosion of diversity in our public schools. With so many schools able to serve only the children in the local zone, and the resulting inability to welcome students from other parts of the Community School District and beyond, the concentration of students by socio-economic, racial and ethnic classification as well as by other categories appears to be increasing (although for a variety of reasons that observation is difficult to measure directly and must in part be inferred).

The root causes of elementary school overcrowding include an increasing proportion of residents in the district choosing public school combined with increasing residential development, especially in the southern portion of the District. Compounding the increased demand for public school seats, most of the residential development in the District in the last 15 years has been built "as of right," meaning those development projects were not subject to public review or discretionary approvals that would examine their impacts on schools (or transit, sanitation, police, fire or a host of other public services), severely limiting the ability to plan and the resources to mitigate their consequences.



While total education funding from the City and State have rebounded somewhat in recent years, the consequences of overcrowding limit the ability of schools to replace critical enrichment and remediation resources lost during the period of serial annual budget cuts in FY2008 to FY2012, which cuts at the time more than erased any net gains from the Court-ordered increases in funding required to provide students with the sound basic education guaranteed by the New York State constitution. Schools that were forced to maintain class sizes significantly above State-mandated targets struggle to reverse that trend. In light of this fact and the closing of local parochial schools, the DoE should review all possible spaces for public school use or as alternatives to co-location of charter schools. A comprehensive assessment of new development and its impact on the existing public school infrastructure is require for purposeful and successful planning.

-- **Middle Schools.** Overcrowding in middle school grades is fast approaching the crisis proportions of the elementary school grades. DoE has admitted that demand for middle school seats will soon eclipse capacity overall, as soon as September 2015, and demand for certain types of middle school programs already far exceeds supply.

Middle school overcrowding can be attributed to a variety of factors. In part it is driven by the aging-out of overcrowded elementary school classes reaching middle school grades. In addition, a portion of the excess demand for elementary school seats in the last 5-6 years was met by repurposing middle school seats, particularly at the O'Shea Complex on West 77<sup>th</sup> Street, where a building once dedicated exclusively to middle schools is now home to the K-8 Anderson School and PS 452, an elementary school, leaving only about a third of that space for middle school students.

Another cause of actual and potential future middle school seat scarcity is the effect of co-locations of charter elementary schools in other parts of Community School District 3. Many of those charter schools admit students from outside CSD3, who then become eligible for placement in CSD3 middle schools.

-- **High Schools.** The impression that there is a scarcity of high school seats in our District is a function not of diminished capacity, although the repurposing of a portion of the former Brandeis High School to house a charter elementary school did reduce the inventory somewhat. Rather, that impression is a result of recent experience with students from our District being effectively foreclosed from five non-specialized public high schools in neighboring Community School District 2 who have admissions policies favoring students from that District. Since 2004, no public high school in Community School District 3 that serves a general education population has such a geographic preference.

Two high schools in our District, Brandeis and Martin Luther King High Schools, were once large schools that were closed and their space used to house several smaller high schools serving distinct populations. Ten of the 13 high schools in the District are housed in those two sites. Apart from the charter co-location noted above, this does not itself create a resource drain, although it does create a need for additional support and coordination of resources so they can enjoy the economies of scale experienced by larger schools.

The co-location of a charter elementary school in the Brandeis High School building has prevented the placement of additional high school seats in the district, and has physically segregated high school students within their own building.

-- **Pre-K.** Given the overcrowding in public school buildings in our District, new pre-K seats allocated to our District will need to be located in venues other than schools. In fact, the need to accommodate elementary and middle school enrollment has necessitated repurposing pre-K classrooms at many schools and the reduction or elimination of pre-K programs or their relocation, leaving parents at a loss for pre-K seats in local schools precisely at the time that pre-K funding and awareness are at an all-time high. For schools in parts of Community School District 3 that lie outside Community District 7, pre-K is an effective draw for enrollment, and the elimination of pre-K seats has been used as one of several means to create space then seized for co-locations of charter and other schools. While it is not reasonable to expect all pre-K seats needed for our District to be in public schools, forging a positive connection with families of young children builds community from the ground up and should be maximized to the extent possible.

**The Beacon High School Building.** Beacon High School operates in leased space, and is expected to relocate to new space outside the District effective September 2015.

In response to outreach from the DoE seeking community input on the next use to which the Beacon space should be put, MCB7 studied the issue and conducted public hearings. The CSD3 Community Education Council and the D3 Presidents Council similarly examined the issue and conducted outreach, and the three groups shared information and collaborated on a final recommendation to use the space as a new 6-12 middle and high school to be phased in starting with the 2015-16 school year.

This new use of the Beacon building will be a net addition of middle school and, eventually, high school seats in the District. A collaborative DoE planning process is underway with representation from MCB7, CEC3, Presidents Council, and other stakeholders to ensure the new school will meet the needs of the District, and will be a meaningful new option to address seat scarcity while meeting the academic and enrichment needs of a wide range of students from throughout the District, including students at every point along the educational spectrum. To truly achieve these goals, the building will need significant renovation and facilities improvement.

**PCBs and other Toxins.** Several schools in our District have been at the forefront of awareness of contamination by poly-chlorinated biphenyls, or PCBs. PCBs are a known toxin with potentially catastrophic health consequences from excessive exposure. PS 199 was among the first schools discovered to have ambient PCB levels exceeded standards, and since awareness was raised, other schools (including many in our District) have been a source of concern for educators and parents. Community activism and the intervention of the federal EPA have succeeded in hastening the pace of remediation through the replacement of fluorescent light ballasts, which are a common source of contamination. In addition, many schools in our District continue to burn heating oil that produces excessive amounts of particulate matter, the remediation of which is slated for a much longer time frame. Funding is not available to accelerate remediation beyond current schedules.

**Vulnerable Students.** Changes made in the last five years to the funding streams targeting students with special needs have reduced resources available to schools, including zoned schools that are increasingly called upon to create inclusionary models that require additional staffing. One of the net results of the

funding and curriculum changes whose implementation is nearing completion is the increase in class sizes for students for whom more individualized instruction is essential.

An assessment of the program is required to know whether its goal of placing special needs children in their zoned school is successful for those children, their families, and the overall school community.

**Day Care and Head Start.** The need for early childhood care continues to grow, and is crucial for working families. Continued efforts to baseline funding for these programs is crucial to allow for consistency of service and development of these programs and to give families a sound structure of support that endures beyond a single budget cycle. A concern remains over limiting funding for these vital programs in geographic areas identified as high-income or affluent, including most of the Upper West Side, since that leaves “pockets of poverty” that exist within these areas that need such services. For example, the median household income for the Upper West Side is approximately \$99,000, nearly double the City-wide average of \$52,000 and one-third greater than the Manhattan average of \$68,000. Yet 11% of residents in our District, or 24,141 people per a 2012 Census estimate, live below the poverty line. Of those, 3,415 were identified as children. While the percentage below the poverty line compares favorably to the averages in Manhattan and City-wide, the funding scheme ensures the continuation of these pockets of poverty with unmet needs.

The consequences of living in the shadow of wealth for day care and Head Start can mean diminished opportunities for employment or independence as well as a lag in school readiness. Local community agencies are often the best equipped to understand local families' issues. The new RFP process for early childcare agencies should give weighted consideration to a community agency with a history of delivering service in that area.



**After-School Programs.** After-school programs provide a range of educational, social and recreational services in a supervised community-based setting, and are essential for many working families who need to work well past dismissal time at most schools. Stabilization of funding for these programs has restored a degree of certainty and predictability to these programs, but the concerns identified above with funding tied to pockets of poverty continues to raise the specter of unmet needs.

**Youth Employment.** The Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP) is a significant resource for teens living at or near the poverty level, offering both a financial incentive as well as access to job-readiness skills, bankable work history, a sense of accomplishment and self-esteem, and relief from inactivity and doldrums (and the mischief to which idle hands can become prey). It has also been shown to improve school outcomes both in terms of attendance rates and grades the following year. SYEP has not fully recovered from the cuts in funding in FY 2011, which reduced the number of participants roughly in half from the previous year.

The approximately 35,000 positions available in Summer 2014 marks the first increase over the prior year in the scope of the program since those cuts, and represents more than a 15% increase over Summer 2013. Even so, SYEP is able to offer positions to only about 25% of applicants, leaving more than 100,000 youth unable to find a position through this program. Enhancing SYEP would have the dual effect of serving at-risk youth and enabling other summer programs that rely on SYEP for staffing to increase their outreach and service, such as enabling public summer camps and programs to meet their required ratios of supervisory staff. In addition, SYEP wages are typically spent in the community, making the program a boon to local businesses. Refocusing the budget process to make this a priority at both the State and City levels is the only certain path to restoring this important resource, as privately-funded programs with excellent track records have been able to close only a fraction of the positions still lost from the 2011 reductions, and the current SYEP funding stream still relies in part on its own private fundraising.



### 3.3 Health and Human Services

- 8 food pantries.
- 27 programs for seniors, including 9 senior centers.
- 2 nursing homes; 15 ambulatory health facilities; 10 chemical dependency services; 20 mental health programs; 10 programs for people with disabilities.
- 16 residential facilities/supportive housing for adults and families

**Hunger.** Low- and fixed-income neighbors are struggling to keep up with steeply rising food prices. Healthy foods in particular are more expensive and not readily accessible in many parts of the community. Meal programs and food pantries have seen a sharp increase in demand, and a corresponding decrease in government funds and donated foods. The pantries are only able to supply clients with enough food for three days a month.

West Side Campaign Against Hunger (WSCAH) had an increase of 15% in people using their service, which brings the increase since '08 to 68%. Senior participants increased by 22%, while families with children increased by 16%. On-site services from other agencies, which had made WSC a one-stop center for assistance have been cut-back or eliminated.

Use of the food stamp program has also increased. The elimination of the fingerprint requirement for food stamps, which had discouraged many from obtaining needed help, is also expected to increase usage.

**Homelessness.** Like the rest of New York City, the Upper West Side has seen a spike in homelessness over the past year. While shelters and supportive housing exists on the West Side to accommodate homeless people, budget cuts have diminished services available to those living with mental health issues, addiction, and AIDS. The lack of supportive services for these populations increases the risk that they will return to the streets. Also, cuts in Section 8 housing vouchers have left non-profit agencies looking for alternative sources to cover 60% of their tenants' rent. Additionally, the use of single-room occupancy (SRO) buildings as transitional shelters has greatly reduced the number of permanent housing units available to low income people. Lack of communication regarding the placement of homeless shelters has caused considerable turmoil within the community.

**Seniors.** The Upper West Side is home to three Naturally Occurring Retirement Communities ("NORC"s), which receive funds targeted to aging populations. While budgets for the NORCs have been reduced, the Academy of Medicine initiated a pilot project to explore ways in which the city can be friendlier to those growing old. Senior citizens have offered recommendations to improve the safety and comfort of the district. Benches, liberally scattered around the area, would encourage those unable to walk for a distance to feel more comfortable going outside and socializing with their neighbors. Stores accessible to wheelchairs and walkers would also encourage more activity among seniors.



Despite improvements, older members of the community continue to face challenges:

- Senior Centers have had to cut offerings of food and transportation.
- Extended In-Home Services to the Elderly Program, which provides homemaking for vulnerable homebound seniors not eligible for Medicaid, has been drastically cut.
- Adult Social Day Services program, which provides therapeutic environments for disabled seniors (many with Alzheimer's) and respite for family caregivers, has been eliminated.
- Elder Abuse Prevention Programs and Geriatric Mental Health Initiatives have been cut.

Furthermore, contracts for services from the Department of the Aging (DFTA) no longer include fringe benefits in the salaries of employees. This places an added burden on not-for-profit agencies that provide a safety net for seniors. Ultimately, the strain on these services will contribute to the need for institutional placement of many who could have remained in their own homes.

**Accessibility for Disabled Residents.** Access to buildings and services continues to be a serious problem for those with limited mobility. Independent community groups have begun to identify opportunities to improve accessibility. MCB7 supports on-going efforts to make every public establishment accessible to all, even if such access is transitional toward full ADA compliance.

**Child Health.** Childhood Obesity, recognized as a serious problem throughout the country, is especially pronounced in cities where children have limited opportunities to exercise. Many schools do not have gyms. Playing fields are scarce and often leased to adult teams to generate revenue. MCB7 continues to advocate for maximum allocation of public facilities for public school students.

**Public Libraries.** CD7 is home to three NYPL branches and the Performing Arts Library at Lincoln Center. The boom in new residential units throughout the district has resulted in increased demand for library services. Further, local demand is increasing for a variety of library services, and our libraries have become even more important community centers, providing internet access for communications, job-search resources, and self-improvement and skill-building. The renovation of the St. Agnes Branch library expanded service in the central part of CD7. The current renovations under way at the Bloomingdale branch, which when completed will include expanded facilities for teen use, bathroom renovations, and a greater number of computers for public use, all desperately needed in a community that has experienced increased demand from successful outreach and from increased residential construction nearby. However, a computer lab is still a high priority, and new carpeting and lighting are still needed. Similar explosions in residential construction will make the Riverside branch library the next to be considered for long-term planning and supplementation of services. Continuing current funding adequate to sustain a fully staffed 6-day schedule is essential, especially for providing vital resources to low-income residents.

**Rats and other Pests.** The Upper West Side has seen a marked increase in rat, bed bug, and mosquito infestations over the few several years. MCB7 has worked with the Department of Health to offer resources and clinics on pest control. Continued education and collaboration with the tenant associations, Department of Health, Department of Environmental Protection, and the Department of Sanitation are essential to controlling pest populations in a safe and effective manner.

### 3.4 Transportation

- 193.6 lane miles of paved streets.
- 6 North-South Bound Avenues + Broadway Boulevard.
- 51 East-West Streets.
- Six bike paths.
- 14 NYCT bus routes.
- Seven subway routes; 14 stations.
- In 2012, 2030 vehicular accidents in the 20<sup>th</sup> Precinct; 1334 in the 24<sup>th</sup> Precinct.
- 64% of CD7 workers travel by mass transit.

**Street Safety.** Four pedestrian deaths in CD7 in the first six months of 2014 focused unprecedented attention on the continuing danger on our streets and the urgent need for thoroughfares that are safe for all users. The deaths were clustered between 95<sup>th</sup> and 97<sup>th</sup> streets west of Amsterdam Avenue. In response, the Department of Transportation has implemented safety upgrades at two intersections and is proposing changes to a number of intersections along West End Avenue, including implementing proposals included in recommendations forwarded to DOT by MCB7 in 2013.

These tragedies underscore the necessity for DOT to proactively redesign streets and intersections throughout our district so that future calamities are impossible or far less likely. To achieve the goals of the mayor's Vision Zero initiative. MCB7 recommends the use of various tools that would improve safety, including: curb extensions, pedestrian islands, mid-block bulb-outs, raised crosswalks, protected bike lanes, split-phase signals, leading pedestrian intervals, left-turn bans, narrowed lanes, and abrupt changes in road surface. The DOT should consider deploying these tools district-wide to prevent the two leading causes of pedestrian deaths – speeding and failure to yield.

While MCB7 would welcome a comprehensive district-wide analysis on traffic safety, MCB7 has identified a few areas are of particular concern:

- The corridor between 95<sup>th</sup> Street and 100<sup>th</sup> Street, west of Central Park West.
- Amsterdam Avenue: In December 2013 MCB7 unanimously passed a resolution asking DOT to study redesigning this high-speed arterial to include a physically protected bike lane and improved safety for pedestrians and all vehicles. We await DOT's response.
- The Lincoln Square intersection of Broadway and Columbus Avenue, West 63<sup>rd</sup>-66<sup>th</sup> Streets: In spring 2014, DOT held a community workshop to consider safety upgrades to this "bow tie," and we look forward to the agency's proposals for making a perilous intersection safer and more functional for all users.

MCB7 is also monitoring traffic resulting from the newly opened 72<sup>nd</sup> Street connection to Riverside Boulevard, and has called for the full construction of Riverside Boulevard to West 59<sup>th</sup> Street, linking Riverside Drive and Route 9A, which some believe will reduce traffic on West End Avenue.

Concurrently, MCB7 suggests continued measures to ensure pedestrian safety throughout the district, including:

**A 20mph speed limit** around all schools would improve pedestrian and student safety. In addition, adding noticeable striping, signage, and in some cases neck-downs (curb extensions) would alert motorists that they are entering a school block, and would improve safety for students traveling to and from their schools.

**Countdown Timers** would alert pedestrians to how much time they have for a safe crossing of streets, which is especially important to seniors. MCB7 requests that all intersections have pedestrian countdown timers.

**“Stop Here on Red” Signs** for turns along the Broadway Malls would ensure that motorists know they must stop in the medians and wait for a green light before proceeding.

**Red Light Cameras** would discourage drivers from jumping red lights, especially at Central Park West & 63<sup>rd</sup> Street, adjacent to the Ethical Culture School; at West End Avenue & 72<sup>nd</sup>, 79<sup>th</sup>, & 96<sup>th</sup> Streets; and at 66<sup>th</sup> Street & West End Avenue, near Lincoln Towers.

**Shared Streets.** As driving becomes increasingly expensive on the Upper West Side and its effects on both the local and global environment become clearer, a growing number of residents have begun to use bicycles for everyday transportation. Having encouraged construction of a protected bike lane along Columbus Avenue, MCB7 is now challenged to balance the needs of cyclists, motorists, pedestrians, and local businesses on the street. While the lane and its associated refuge islands and shortened crossing distances are a great benefit to cyclists and pedestrians (and to gardeners thrilled to tend the tree pits that punctuate the lane), the redesign elicited two main concerns among some local businesses and residents: loading/unloading and customer parking. MCB7 continues to work with individual merchants to ensure that all loading/unloading issues are effectively addressed, and that local, appropriately priced parking is available to customers who arrive by automobile.



Although the street redesign added new dedicated loading zones, curbside parking was curtailed in order to accommodate “mixing” lanes that allow cars to safely turn left across the bike lane. Some have argued that raising the price and timing of metered parking would greatly increase turnover at available curbside spaces.

**Shared Sidewalks.** As sidewalks become congested with tourists and visitors, street vendors have become increasingly eager to take advantage of new markets. The proliferation of food trucks and sidewalk vendors has many Upper West Siders frustrated by the lack of enforcement and/or licensing limits. Additionally, street furniture (newsstands, bus shelters, bike racks, news boxes, pay phones, mail boxes, benches, etc.) and sidewalk cafes have begun to over-crowd the sidewalks. MCB7 encourages a more comprehensive approach to optimizing shared use and management of sidewalks, perhaps including a coordinated street furniture franchise.



Efforts are also being made to minimize permanently enclosed sidewalk cafes, especially after they have become vacant. Except in rare circumstances, enclosed cafes unduly narrow the sidewalk and cause pedestrian congestion. MCB7 would like some kind of bonding mechanism to guarantee the removal of cafe structures when they change ownership.

**Parking.** The issue of whether CD7 has too much or too little parking has vexed the community for decades. There are contradictory data concerning garage occupancy rates and automobile ownership/usage. There are conflicting positions as to whether additional parking will ease traffic congestion or encourage more automobile use. Many residents urge the city to issue residential permits for street parking, which could generate revenue and mitigate pollution caused by drivers constantly “hunting” for vacant spots.

**Subways.** CD7 has the 3rd highest number of subway commuters in New York City. It is served by two major subway lines with seven different routes. Along Broadway, the IRT #1 serves local and express stations and the #2,3 serve express stations. Along Central Park West, the B/C lines serve local and express stations, and the A/D serve express stations, such as 59<sup>th</sup> Street/Columbus Circle - a major junction where the two subway lines intersect. On the IND Central Park West line, more local trains during “shoulder” periods - immediately after “rush hour” - would alleviate long wait times and congested trains. Recent service cuts have caused most off-peak trains to resemble rush hour trains in crowding conditions. Countdown clocks in the Broadway lines’ stations have received rave reviews by subway riders and would be welcomed on the Central Park West lines as soon as possible.

**Buses.** Bus service throughout the district could be improved, especially after the 2010 service cuts. MCB7 supports “on-street” supervision of bus service to improve NYC Transit’s response to actual operating conditions, especially on weekends.

- M104 service was truncated at Times Square, which affected thousands of riders who rely on the one-seat ride to Grand Central and the United Nations.
- M11 service levels are insufficient to handle growing demand, especially among elderly people.
- The M60 bus, connecting the Upper West Side to Central Harlem and LaGuardia Airport is a major success story for the MTA, and should be extended further south to the Broadway/96<sup>th</sup> Street area.
- The articulated buses on the M79 and M86 lines require longer headways, which can cause buses to “clump up” and cause huge gaps in service.

**Bicycles.** The addition of bike paths and protected bike lanes has dramatically improved safety conditions for cyclists on the Upper West Side. MCB7 encourages continued expansion of protected lanes as well as an extension of the city's bike share program to accommodate thousands of West Side commuters and tourists as soon as possible.

**Street and Sidewalk Conditions.** Considerable automotive traffic, combined with an unusually high number of utility cuts, and a high volume of sleet and snow over the past few years have culminated in poor street conditions on the Upper West Side. A recent survey of east-west streets indicates that many of our blocks are riddled with ruts, potholes, faded striping, and poor curbs. These conditions present unsafe conditions for vehicles and pedestrians. On average, DOT resurfaces approximately 13 of the 193.6 lane miles in CD7 annually. There were 620 pothole complaints and numerous reports of holes in pavement that collect water and restaurant garbage run-off. MCB7 recommends a significant increase in resurfacing of streets and curb lanes.



Similarly, sidewalks are in need of repair, especially at street corners where water tends to pond. Many sidewalks carry violations, especially near sidewalk vaults along Amsterdam Avenue and Broadway. The replacement of a sidewalk vault requires special engineering and can be costly. MCB7 recommends that another method be sought to skim-coat existing sidewalk surfaces over vaulted areas, when sidewalk replacement isn't feasible.

### 3.5 Local Commerce

As the Upper West Side becomes a “must visit” destination for tourists, and home to wealthier residents, it also attracts national retailers interested in building/maintaining their brands. Storefronts on Manhattan’s Upper West Side are seen not only as lucrative high-traffic locations, but also as prime advertising spaces. Consequently, Broadway, Columbus, and Amsterdam Avenues have seen a major shift in commerce, from a diverse mix of local and regional retailers to a parade of outlets for national chains.

Banks and drug stores, in particular, are battling for supremacy over their competitors on these streets. In this context, landlords have great incentive to vacate and combine smaller retail spaces into larger spaces that attract national chains. This process tends to homogenize commercial offerings and deaden street life. Everyday amenities such as shoe repair shops, hardware stores, laundries, and small delis, are losing their footing in the face of high rents and stiff competition from national stores.

#### Local Businesses



#### National Franchises



Efforts to stem the loss of local businesses and maintain the rich commercial fabric of the district include streamlining regulatory burdens on smaller businesses, developing local business networks, discouraging the “warehousing” of small vacant storefronts, and enforcing recently-passed special zoning that limits storefront size and maintains a diverse and vibrant streetscape.

Restaurants with sidewalk cafes are also an important part of the lively Upper West Side street life. There is a need for more clarity in the configuration of these amenities so that they may best serve their customers while not impeding pedestrian traffic.

### 3.6 Public Safety

- 3 NYC Police Precincts (20<sup>th</sup>, 24<sup>th</sup>, and Central Park), PSA6, and Transit Districts #1 and #3
- In 2012, 1028 reported crimes; 1081 in the 24.
- Uniformed police officers: 134 in the 20<sup>th</sup>; 126 in the 24<sup>th</sup>; 85 in CP.
- Civilian Employees: 15 in the 20<sup>th</sup>; 22 in the 24<sup>th</sup>; 13 in CP.
- 5 Fire Stations: In 2012, 728 fires and 9400 emergencies, with a response time of 4:38 minutes.
- 24.8% recycling diversion rate.

**New York Police Department.** NYPD tracks seven major crimes as a primary indicator. Overall, major crime statistics in CD7's precincts, PSA6 (public housing division), and Transit show a continuing downward trend. Six officers of the 20<sup>th</sup> Precinct are dedicated NYCHA's Amsterdam Houses and Addition. MCB7 encourages NYPD to implement this approach at Frederick Douglass Houses and Wise Towers.

Staffing: NYPD has moved to a data-based deployment and response system that utilizes specialized units and task forces. Consequently, the number of uniformed officers in precincts has declined over the past 5 years. In the 20<sup>th</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> Precincts, the number of uniformed officers (134 and 126, respectively) and civilian personnel (15 and 22) have continued to decline. PSA6, whose officers are responsible for NYCHA developments in eight precincts, has 127 uniformed officers. However, actual staffing levels are lower, due to homeland security assignments, military service, and sick leave. Recruiting, retention and civilianization are essential.

**Fire Department.** CD7 is located in the 9<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> Battalions and has 3 Engine and 2 Ladder Companies. In FY12, the Department responded to 10,128 incidents: 9,400 medical and non-medical emergencies, and 531 structural and 197 non-structural fires. The number and size of fires has decreased because of new construction and renovations of occupied and vacant buildings. It does take more time to get to a fire in the new high rise buildings. Average response time to structural fires was 4:17 minutes; ambulance response time to life-threatening emergencies was 6:54 minutes.

Engine Company 74 on West 83<sup>rd</sup> Street needs a complete renovation. So far, it has not been included in the FDNY capital projects. Several houses do not have emergency electric generators, which are needed to charge radios among other things. The houses that do have generators find they are often not maintained and may not function in a blackout.

**Sanitation.** MCB7 supports the goals of the Comprehensive Solid Waste Management Plan (SWMP), including that Manhattan should assume as much responsibility as possible for its waste. MCB7 looks forward to working on plans for West 59<sup>th</sup> Street Marine Transfer Station.

In FY2012, DSNY collected, on average, 205 tons of household garbage per day. CD7's residential garbage continue to be transported to New Jersey by truck, which has a negative impact on air quality, roadways, vehicles, and worker productivity. Annually, MW7 collects 14,600 tons of paper and 7,781 tons of metal, glass and plastic, for a diversion rate of 24.8% of the waste stream. Over 2,464 recycling summonses were issued. More effective outreach and education could increase the diversion percentage and further reduce residential tonnage.

In addition to the use of barge transfer at the MTSs, MCB7 believes Manhattan's commercial waste could also be addressed through (1) expanded commercial waste source separation, (2) use of anaerobic

digesters, (3) a targeted lifting of the ban on commercial waste food waste disposers, and (4) a rapid conversion of the commercial carting fleet to less polluting and quieter alternatives.



DSNY plays an important role in keeping sidewalks and streets clean. In FY12, 94.8% of the streets and 99.5% of the sidewalks were rated 'acceptably clean'. Enforcement agents issued over 4,715 health and administrative summonses, most for dirty sidewalks and failure to clean 18 inches from the curb. MCB7 recommends funding for 7-day enforcement coverage, which would also support rat control.

DSNY completed 99.9% of its mechanical broom routes on 93.6 miles of roadways and serviced over 1,000 street litter baskets with two pick-ups per day. The three business improvement districts and the Doe Fund help by removing and replacing bags while many local businesses and residents misuse baskets meant for litter by discarding their garbage in them. MCB7 finds enforcement of rules prohibiting household and business use of baskets and more frequent service, especially on weekends and holidays, are needed.

### 3.7 Parks and Open Space

- Major Public Parks
  - Riverside Park - 267 acres
  - Riverside Park South - 23 acres
  - Theodore Roosevelt Park - 17.5 acres
  - Central Park (shared with CB 8, 10, 11 and 5)
- 11 Public Playgrounds
- 59<sup>th</sup> Street Recreation Center (Gertrude Ederle Recreation Center)
- 6 Small Parks and Broadway Malls

CD7 is fortunate in having immediate access to two of the City's great parks: Central Park and a substantial portion of Riverside Park, including the new 23-acre Riverside Park South. In addition to the active recreation areas in these parks, the district has 11 playgrounds.

CD7 also has 35.5 acres of additional parkland distributed throughout the district. The Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) maintains this parkland with 10 full-time workers, including a full-time horticulturist, seasonal workers and job training participants, all essential to maintaining the parkland.

With the construction of dozens of new high-rise residential buildings in the district in recent years, the increase in school-age population, the explosive increase in recreational and commuting cycling and other factors, though we are blessed with park space, we still suffer from lack of sufficient active and passive recreational space and chronic conflicts over the use of scarce real estate in our parks.

**Commercialization of Parks.** The drive to increase city revenue has prompted an expansion of concessions in the parks. While certain new or expanded concessions might potentially be excellent revenue producers, many of these concessions would raise the financial threshold to visiting the parks. MCB7 continues to request a formal process for public review of proposed new concessions for all parks. MCB7 also opposes the effective closing of public parkland in favor of private uses.



**Loss of Rear Yard Open Space.** New development is not limited to large buildings, but continues to consume smaller open spaces in rear yards where existing religious, educational or community facilities exist; and between existing "towers in the park", such as Park West Village. Using the open space in the center of a perimeter block or the open space around or between apartment buildings affects the character, privacy, light and air and view corridors of existing dwellings. Furthermore, there is inadequate protection against rear yard developments that encroach upon precious open space and permeable surface area. MCB7 continues to explore ways in which private open space can be effectively valued and managed to the benefit of the community and the environment.

**Open Spaces and Play Spaces in Public Housing Complexes.** The prospect of developing open spaces in NYCHA complexes threatens the historical fabric, environmental health, and quality of life for local residents. MCB7 stands against the sale of open lands in public housing projects in the district. Furthermore, MCB7 encourages the development of community gardens, physical fitness facilities, and playgrounds to enliven these public spaces.

**Car-Free Central Park.** MCB7 initiated a unanimous resolution from all Manhattan Community Boards that surround Central Park asking to eliminate private car traffic along the loop drive in Central Park. This would increase the safety and enjoyment of all users of the park and reduce automotive emissions near and within the park. While the road space for private vehicles and the times when they may use Central Park have gradually been reduced over the past several years, the goal of eliminating all such traffic in Central Park remains strong.

**Responsible Park Development along the Hudson Riverfront.** Since the original schematic plans for Riverside Park South were developed two decades ago, rising sea levels have threatened waterfront development, including waterfront parks. Planning and construction of the remaining sections of Riverside Park South, and renovations of existing piers and other structures in Riverside Park, must take into account the effects of rising water levels in the Hudson River, as well as increasingly strong and frequent major storms

### 3.8 Environmental Sustainability

Tremendous effort at all levels of government has been put into making New York City sustainable. PlaNYC set the goal of reducing carbon emissions by 30% by the year 2030 in addition to improving the amount and accessibility of open space, remediating brownfields, improving water quality, supporting alternative forms of transportation, and addressing air quality issues. MCB7 has identified sustainability as one of its primary goals.

**Transportation Emissions.** Many West Siders feel overwhelmed by traffic congestion, especially in terms of truck traffic and emissions. There is an increasing desire to reduce road traffic (including idle standing) and also create more access to energy friendly transportation alternatives like walking, biking, subways, and buses. Many groups are interested in limiting parking slots, adding bike routes, and redesigning intersections to make walking easier and more attractive. Many have also expressed interest in more frequent buses and subway trains along busy routes (Buses M104, M7, M11, Trains A, 2, 3). While DOT has added a significant number of bike routes in the district, many believe there is further need.

**Building Efficiency.** New development in the district creates opportunities to implement sustainable building systems, but existing building codes are limited and difficult to enforce. Most new buildings have glass facades, which constrict natural airflow and afford little room for energy saving insulation. Few new buildings take advantage of energy enhancements like solar panels and high-efficiency boiler systems. MCB7 supports the use of incentives that encourage energy efficiency and environmental responsibility.

**Building Emissions.** The Upper West Side is also home to one of the highest concentrations of buildings (most built before World War II) that are heated by oil-burning boilers. Such boilers burn a form of oil (#6/#4) that produce a relatively high level of health-threatening particulates. Several schools in the district also burn these oils. Recent amendments to the building code require the elimination of the use of #6 oil. MCB7 encourages accelerated efforts to appropriately tune, retrofit, and/or convert these buildings to eliminate harmful emissions and reduce their carbon footprints.



**Recycling.** Numerous residents have expressed the need to step up recycling in parks and schools, where recycling guidelines are not enforced. Furthermore, constituents are interested in broader efforts to develop composting systems, reduce use of plastic bottles and bags, and encourage the use of biodegradable alternatives. Recently, New York City changed its recycling rules to require the recycling of all rigid plastics. MCB7 applauds this change and supports the installation of more recycling containers in public spaces, including street corners. MCB7 also supports legislation that would ban the use of most polystyrene containers, which cannot be effectively recycled.

### 3.9 Land Use and Preservation

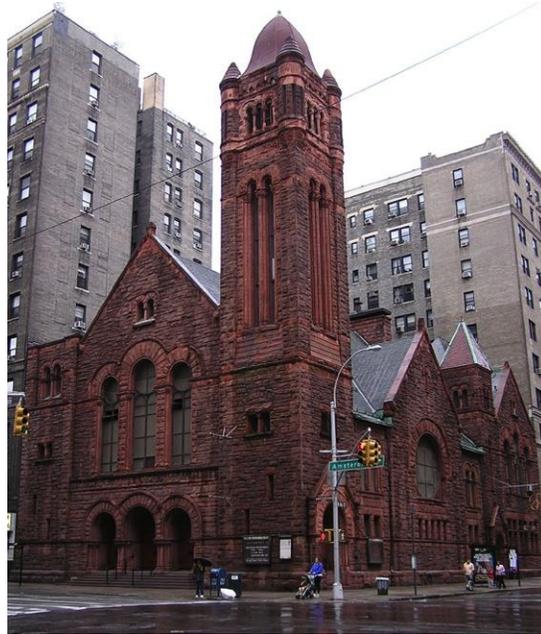
- Nine Historic Districts, including 1100 Buildings
- Seventy Four Individual Designated Buildings
- Four Interior Landmarks
- Four Scenic Park Landmarks

MCB7 is located between 2 historic parks, Central Park and Riverside Park, which delineate the area. The surrounding side streets are filled with a variety of buildings of diverse architectural styles. Brownstone townhouses and elegant apartment buildings line these streets, many designed by the most outstanding architects of their time. More than 11,000 buildings have been included as part of nine historic districts, but many significant buildings are still unprotected and threatened with demolition or inappropriate changes. While not immediately threatened, the Con Edison Power Plant on 59th Street and West End Avenue, designed by McKim, Meade and White, is vastly underutilized, as only a portion is actively used for steam production. Its reuse as an integral part of the Riverside Park cultural area has been suggested.

Although there are notable exceptions, zoning is rarely used as a tool to encourage superior or extraordinary architecture or planning. Moreover, zoning ignores almost entirely the surface treatment of buildings and the choice of building materials. Such considerations should not be restricted to historical districts or landmarks. Creative ways should be found to encourage developers to strive for advances in design as well as efficacy.

**Rear Yards.** One area of concern to the Community Board with respect to Preservation is the building of extensions in the so-called “donuts” - the rear yards of townhouses located throughout the area. Greenery and open space - part of the individual residents' property and enjoyed by all this residing in the block - is disappearing. Schools and other not-for-profit uses are developing these areas, reducing the amount of greenery and open space, and changing the character of neighborhoods. Others seeking more space are building up and out without regard for their neighbors and for the light and air they are altering. A committee of preservationists, land use experts and environmental advocates with the help of public officials are working to address this issue. Some of the solutions may include tax incentives, currently offered for green roofs, and the need for DOB permits for installation of concrete. PlaNYC emphasizes the importance of sustainability and we are working toward that end.

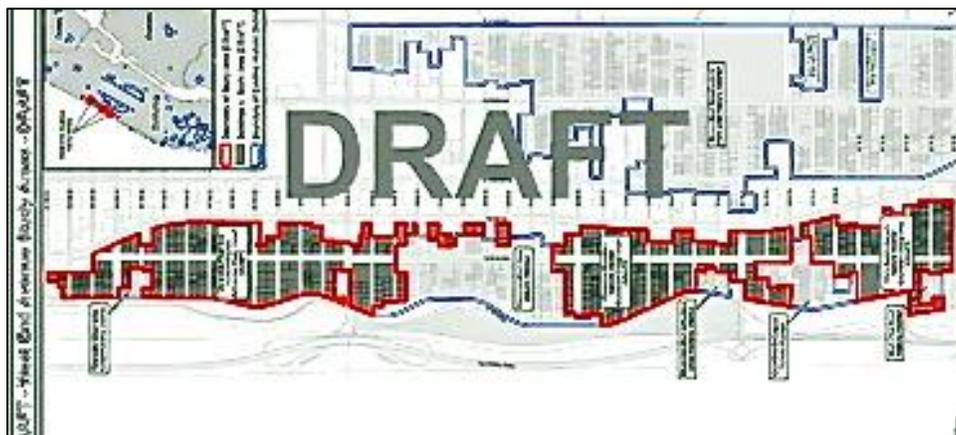
**Maintenance of designated buildings.** An on-going challenge is the maintenance of non-profit designated buildings such as churches and synagogues, who are frequently faced with the dilemma of how to avoid draining their limited resources without resorting to redevelopment (by selling air rights) to generate funds. MCB7 encourages efforts to identify the needs of these designated buildings and provide support to maintain them. West-Park Presbyterian Church recently became a landmark and was saved from demolition by a group of community advocates.



**West End Avenue Preservation.** MCB7 supports the creation of West End Avenue Historic District to protect the rich architectural fabric of buildings from 70<sup>th</sup> to 107<sup>th</sup> Streets west of Broadway. The proposed historic district captures a relatively short window of time in early 20<sup>th</sup> Century architecture when economic and social forces – largely a result of the introduction of service on the revolutionary Inter-Borough Rapid Transit Subway line beneath Broadway in 1904 – contributed to the avenue’s redevelopment from low-rise row-houses to the current grand apartment buildings.

Designed by prominent architects like George Blum, Rosario Candela and Clinton & Russell, these buildings are among the finest examples of New York City’s early 20<sup>th</sup> Century multifamily dwellings and form a cohesive and uniquely “New York” model for upper-middle class living. As Andrew Dolkart - Chair of the Preservation Department at Columbia University’s Graduate School of Architecture, Planning and Preservation – describes them, the buildings on the avenue embody a tremendous sense of place, with consistent height, cladding materials, and build-out to the lot-line. Nestled between these are a number of diverse and impressive churches and synagogues, ranging in style from English Gothic to Neo-Flemish.

Two sections of the proposed West End Avenue historic district have been designated, protecting structures from West 70<sup>th</sup> Street to West 87<sup>th</sup> Street. Designation of the final section from West 87<sup>th</sup> Street north to West 107<sup>th</sup> Street is essential to maintaining the unique fabric of the entire area.



**Expansion of Notification of New Development.** Soaring real estate prices attract rapid development, which is often “as of right,” without any process of public review. MCB7 urges the city to provide some form of public review for as-of-right structures. Many feel that broad landmark designation is one way for the public to gain a seat at the table during periods of rapid development. At a minimum, in order to broaden awareness within the community, MCB7 recommends that any time any city agency receives notice (in any form) of a proposed development, the Community Board is also notified so that affected residents and businesses can be informed.

**New Rules.** Finally, MCB7 has concerns regarding new rules adopted by the Landmark Preservation Commission that limit the need for public review of landmark proposals, especially when no action is taken to designate or disqualify a building. Several buildings in the district merit review. However, delays in decision-making can have deleterious effects as buildings can fall into serious disrepair while they await final determination. Of particular concern is the Con Edison power plant mentioned earlier.

*Community Board 7 welcomes comments and recommendations. Please visit [www.nyc.gov/mcb7](http://www.nyc.gov/mcb7) for more information. Special thanks to the standing committees and members of MCB7 for their contributions to this document.*



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