

The City of New York

Borough of Queens

COMMUNITY BOARD 11

*Serving Auburndale, Bayside, Douglaston, Hollis Hills,
Little Neck & Oakland Gardens*

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**STATEMENT OF COMMUNITY DISTRICT NEEDS
FY 2013**

Community Board 11, located in Northeast Queens is bounded by Nassau County on the east; Little Neck Bay and 26 Avenue on the north; Utopia Parkway and Fresh Meadows Lane and 210 Street on the west and the Grand Central Parkway and Horace Harding Expressway on the south. The District is comprised of the neighborhoods of Auburndale, Bayside, Douglaston, Hollis Hills, Little Neck and Oakland Gardens. These neighborhoods are residential in zoning and character with the major portion of the District comprised of 1, 2 and 3 family houses and several cooperative and condominium apartment complexes, developed 50-60 years ago and a scattering of rental apartment buildings. Douglas Manor and Douglaston Hill are landmarked communities within Board 11. The shopping needs of the residents are met by the commercial strips, all of which are C1 and C2 zoning overlays in residential districts. Community Board 11 is an upper middle income community of approximately 125,000 residents. The District remains a culturally and ethnically diverse community. Approximately 38% of the population is now foreign born, the majority (32%) of which is Asian.

The District is known for its approximately 800 acres of parkland. Alley Park, which is a large regional park, has areas under Federal and State tidal and fresh water wetland protection, as does Udall's Cove in Little Neck. The shoreline in Bayside is part of the Greenway system and supports a marina for recreational boating and fishing and a bicycle and jogging path. Adjacent to this shoreline is Crocheron Park and John Golden Park which have large open spaces with ball fields, playgrounds and tennis courts. Part of Cunningham Park is in CB11 including the historic Vanderbilt Motor Parkway. Additionally, there are smaller parks and playgrounds, a golf course and numerous Greenstreets throughout the district. Oakland Lake is a natural spring fed lake and hosts a large population of turtles, geese and ducks. The Alley Pond Environmental Center, located at the base of Little Neck Bay, is an education center focusing on the preservation of the wetlands areas.

Public transportation is provided by bus lines from the district to terminals at Flushing and Jamaica subway lines and express bus routes to Manhattan. The LIRR is a major transportation link to Manhattan for district residents.

ZONING AND BUILDING

The Department of City Planning (DCP) rezoned 350 blocks of Bayside in 2004, 135 blocks of Douglaston and Little Neck in 2006, 50 blocks of North Flushing/Auburndale in 2009 and 418 blocks of Auburndale, Hollis Hills and Oakland Gardens in 2010. The goal of rezoning was to curtail overdevelopment and maintain the low density nature of the district. New zoning designations were also introduced for single family homes, R2A and R1-2A, to limit the size of the homes. Although there has been some reduction over the past year of new homes, CB11 still has seen an ever increasing number of new homes and expansions of homes to accommodate an increasing population.

Residents are still frustrated by the perceived inability of the Buildings Department to stop illegal construction and illegal

occupancy. The DOB inspection staff increased over the past few years in response to the need and we saw a faster response to complaints. DOB must continue to be funded to maintain the level of staffing. DOB has increased the cost of many types of fines; higher fines should help to be a deterrent. However, many times inspectors do not obtain access to the premises they must inspect. Access warrants are difficult to obtain in the courts and the complainants feel that nothing is being done to stop illegal conditions. Unfortunately, in many cases this may be true but balancing private property rights with government enforcement continues to be a dilemma. City Council Members have introduced various pieces of legislation and are working with the Department of Buildings legal staff and Court Administrators to try to overcome some of the legal issues to improve enforcement.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT:

Bell Boulevard, between Northern Boulevard and 35 Avenue, is a Business Improvement District (BID). The BID helps fund improvements along the Bell Boulevard commercial strip. The Economic Development Corporation, working with the BID, will be starting a streetscape project on Bell Boulevard. There are more restaurants and bars and less and less small retail stores due to high rents and competition with large discount stores. This is a concern here as well as at the commercial strips adjacent to the Douglaston LIRR station. Local residents recently formed the Douglaston Limited Development Corporation to organize a revitalization effort in the area.

Leviton, a large manufacturer and distributor of electrical supplies vacated their offices on Little Neck Parkway last year. This M1-1 zoned property was purchased by Steel Equities, a real estate developer. We met with the owners and the Borough President to discuss possible future plans for the site and raised concerns of area residents about the use of the property. At the time of this writing, there has been no further information about development.

Last year, the Waldbaum's grocery store left the Douglaston Shopping Center. There is no other grocery store within walking distance of this area which is populated by several large developments. Fairway Supermarkets came before the Board with a variance to lease the building and increase its size. They should be open for business by December, 2011, much to the relief of the residents.

Along Northern Boulevard several new commercial retail stores were developed. While many of the stores have been leased, due to the economic downturn, a number of the spaces remain empty.

EDUCATION AND YOUTH:

This school year approximately 16,500 students are enrolled in School District 26 in its 19 public elementary and secondary schools located in CB11. There are three high schools in the district; Bayside, Benjamin Cardozo and Francis Lewis High School with a total population of approximately 12,000 students. The population in all three high schools has increased greatly with utilization rates at 151%, 138% and 170% respectively. With students housed in buildings meant for half the number, the already overutilized schools have become dangerously overcrowded. Since high school entrance citywide is based on an application process, these high performing schools attract students to apply from outside the district. Cardozo HS and Bayside HS have transportable classrooms, but permanent building space should be added to the school or a new school built or leased to relieve overcrowding. We have brought this concern to the attention of the Chancellor.

Queensborough Community College, located in Bayside, continues to grow and be a premier community college with upgraded computer and science classrooms, an art museum and the Kupferberg Holocaust Resource Center.

The Beacon Programs at Middle School 158 and Middle School 172 (located in CB13) operated by the Samuel Field “Y” continue to be successful serving the youth and community groups of our district. Additionally, the City Council funds Out of School Time Programs. These after-school programs operate in several schools in District 26, PS 115, PS 186, PS 178, PS 188, PS 169 and PS/IS 266. There are several sports groups run by volunteers that are funded privately and, in some cases, with support from our local elected officials.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

The Alley Creek Drainage project, which has been a Board priority since 1972, is finished and an official ribbon cutting was held in July, 2011. The project included the reconstruction of the pumping station that will bring combined sewer overflows to the Tallman Island water treatment plant and wetland mitigation for the Oakland Ravine Area and Oakland Lake. Additionally, the Department of Parks and Recreation was given funds, by the Borough President, to build a raised walkway around Oakland Lake. The natural springs feeding the lake flood the asphalt walkway and this project will allow visitors to enjoy a dry walk around the lake.

Street cave-ins, catch basin and sewer flooding complaints account for most frequent service complaints to DEP. The time frame from identification of necessary projects and design and funding takes an excessive number of years. There are several projects planned for the district between 2011 and 2013. They include water main installations in sections of Bayside Hills, new sewer and catch basin installations in various areas of the district, including a large section of Little Neck north of the LIRR. These projects have already been delayed and cannot be delayed further.

Repairs to catch basins are backlogged and often take over a year from the time of complaint to repair. Broken and sinking catch basins pose a hazardous condition at corners. More funds and personnel are needed for catch basin cleaning and repair. The district also has many seepage basins which fail over time. The only solution is the funding of combined sewer projects.

A major concern is the poor storm water drainage on 223rd Street between 37th Avenue and 42nd Avenue. Presently, storm water runs along a ditch on the eastern edge of 223rd Street. This project will require joint planning with Department of Transportation since capital reconstruction of the street is necessary. It is now in the planning stages but is not funded.

FIRE DEPARTMENT

In June, 2011 one of our Fire Companies, Engine 306 in Bayside, was threatened with closure due to budget cutting by the administration. CB 11 joined elected officials and residents denouncing the proposed closing. In budget negotiations with the Mayor, the City Council saved all the proposed fire houses from closing.

HEALTH

This past winter, for the fourth time, Board 11 sponsored a flu vaccine clinic with St. Mary's Hospital and the NYC Department of Health. It was very successful and we were able to vaccinate about 100 people. We look forward to providing this service in the fall of 2012.

Last summer, mosquitoes were a big problem in the District. Anticipating infestations again this year, following a wet and hot Spring, this summer DOH sprayed larvicides in the Alley Pond Park Marsh areas.

LIBRARIES

A new library building or expansion is a necessity for the Little Neck/Douglaston Library. Its space is inadequate to meet the needs of the residents. We are working with the Little Neck Pines Civic Association, Friends of the Library and the Douglaston Women's Club to garner support and funding from the Queens Public Library System (QBPL), the Mayor and our local legislators. The circulation in this library with only 5,700 sq. ft. of space is far greater than other libraries twice the size, such as the Far Rockaway and East Elmhurst branches.

We were distressed to learn that the Queens Public Library System was not buying books this year, due to budget cuts, but rather are relying on donations. Thankfully, the FY 2012 budget restored some of the funds. We continue to ask QBPL to revise their hours of operation to be open more in the evening and on weekends to accommodate those who work, even if this results in fewer weekday daytime hours.

PARKS & RECREATION

Forestry complaints account for the greatest number of 3-1-1 calls from our district residents. The Parks Department still has an enormous backlog of stumps to be removed; approximately 1000 in CB11 alone. Following last summer's two macro bursts that ripped through our district, many trees were uprooted causing damage to homes and vehicles. In one area in Little Neck, residents complained prior to the storms about various trees that were dead and needed removal. Unfortunately, these trees were not removed and came down during the storm causing harm. This pointed out the desperate need for the Queens Forestry Division to be funded at a greater level for street and park tree pruning and maintenance. The new pruning cycle was reduced to seven years but now, due to budget reductions, the cycle will increase again to

a ten year cycle. Despite this, the City is planting more trees under the Million TreesNYC project and, therefore, there is a genuine concern as to how the Parks Dept. will be able to maintain the existing trees and all these additional trees. Public safety is being compromised by ignoring hazards caused by trees that are not pruned regularly.

Tree roots account for the lifting and destruction of many sidewalks. The Tree and Sidewalk program which provides for the reconstruction of sidewalks is the answer for many homeowners; however, it needs to be funded at a higher level to meet the need.

Several playgrounds adjacent to schools need various improvements. Francis Lewis Playground needs new fences, safety surfaces and handball court rehabilitation. The Challenge Playground at PS 177 needs the removal of an old wading pool, the installation of a new sprinkler system and the rehabilitation of the existing park house. Ball fields in Alley Pond Park, John Golden Park and Underhill Park need new turf.

Joe Michael's Mile, the greenway along Little Neck Bay, needs to be resurfaced and new lights installed from the Bayside Marina to Northern Boulevard. This is a popular scenic route for walkers, bikers and skaters. Dermody Square in Bayside needs new sidewalks and benches. We have supported funding for the new Alley Pond Environmental Center building. It has now been fully funded and is in design.

The Douglaston Golf Course is a beautiful public course. Unfortunately, the residents across the street have errant golf balls hitting their property and vehicles causing expensive damage. We are working with the Parks Department, the Borough President's office and Council Member Mark Weprin to obtain funding for high safety netting.

In Udalls Cove Ravine there are still eight more lots that need to be acquired by the Department of Parks, in order to stop potential development and preserve these lots that are adjacent to the wetlands of Little Neck Bay. Therefore, the City must continue to dedicate funds for further acquisition. We would also like to see Old Oak Pond, at Northern Boulevard and Douglaston Parkway, become a passive park, with a stairs to the pond and a sitting area.

This park district has insufficient personnel and vehicles to clean and maintain our parks. With over 800 acres of park and Greenstreets, more park workers are needed just to maintain Alley Pond Park and additional staff is needed for playground and Greenstreet maintenance.

POLICE AND PUBLIC SAFETY

The 111th Precinct, which is located on Northern Boulevard in Bayside, patrols the 9.4 square miles of Community Board 11. The area is considered a safe, low crime area. Historically, the precinct has always been understaffed, placing a greater burden on the officers. It is the position of the Community Board that more officers are needed in order to maintain this level of safety. Burglaries of private residential homes and auto thefts remain the predominant and troubling crime statistic in the precinct. The theft of expensive car tires and rims has become a big problem in the district. Some arrests were made but the thefts continue. Youth on youth crime has been on the increase, especially the stealing of expensive electronic devices and cell phones.

The interior of the precinct house is showing its age and is in desperate need of renovation and remodeling. Money has been in the budget for years for renovations but the work has never been started.

SANITATION

In order to maintain the good record for cleanliness, the district must have broom service and dedicated litter basket collection in the commercial areas. This year, due to budget cuts, CB11 had broom services cut and limited litter basket collection. Brooms are available only on an as-needed basis. This is not acceptable. There is no regular broom service in residential areas and we need sweeping in these areas also, particularly in the autumn when leaves fall from street trees. The Board urges DSNY to return broom service at least three times a week, and increase litter basket service to six days especially in our busy commercial districts.

In addition, our District contains several miles of street malls and triangles which need to be cleared of weeds and litter during the summer and autumn months. Weeds interfere with visibility and they must be cleared regularly for pedestrian and vehicular safety.

SENIORS AND AGING

The 2009 American Community Survey indicated that there are almost 20,000 seniors aged 65 or over representing about 18% of the population living in Community Board 11. The district has the second highest median age in the City, 41.6. Although there has been a decrease in population of 60-75 year range since the 2000 census, there is an increase in seniors over 75 years of age. Senior programs and services must be available to a senior population with possibly greater needs. As the baby boom era population continues to age, the City must be prepared to meet the needs. The Bayside Senior Center is the only major senior center in our district, funded by the Dept. of the Aging.

The Samuel Field YM-YWHA operates the C.A.P.E. program for homebound seniors and Alzheimer patients and their families. The “Y” also has a small senior leisure center and runs the Deepdale NORC (Naturally Occurring Retirement Community) senior program. S.N.A.P., Services Now for Adult Persons has the contract with DFTA for case management in CB 11.

DFTA released an RFP for innovative senior centers. SNAP and the Samuel Field “Y”, working together with other social agencies, have applied to obtain this funding for the expansion of SNAP in order to enlarge their catchment area to CB 11 and serve more of our senior citizens.

TRANSPORTATION

Curb repair and replacement must be funded. Curbs are deteriorating and causing trip hazards. Metal rebar sticks out of the curbs on Union Turnpike causing a serious safety hazard and a potential for significant personal injury and claims against the City. Curbs also provide a course for rain water runoff. Without curbs, areas adjacent to the street wash away. The only curbs that have been installed are in conjunction with sidewalk projects.

In Douglas Manor, a capital project, in conjunction with the Department of Environmental Protection, is now funded and designed to reconstruct a section of Shore Road that is collapsing. The project should start in the winter of 2011.

CB11 has asked repeatedly for the reconstruction of the streets between Francis Lewis Boulevard and the Clearview Expressway and between Northern Boulevard and 48th Avenue. While DOT has acknowledged the need, the project is not funded. We urge DOT to make this a priority in FY 2013.

This year a “Quiet Zone” at the Little Neck LIRR station, funded by former State Senator Frank Padavan, was implemented by

NYCDOT and MTA/LIRR. This quiet zone, requested by residents living near the tracks, allows trains to pass without sounding the horn at high decibel levels because of the new safety features recently installed.

Street traffic has become a serious problem. There are more cars and trucks on our roads. With increased building development and with an ever increasing population, neighborhoods are starting to experience more local traffic congestion. We receive many requests for various traffic safety measures, stop signs, speed humps, traffic signals etc. NYC DOT should look at creative traffic calming methods in Queens similar to those initiated in Manhattan.

A Truck Traffic Study initiated five years ago made recommendations to improve signage, develop new routes and educate truckers on the City regulations. The promised new signage has not been installed due to design problems with the NYS DOT. CB 11 still wants to see new truck signage on the highways to warn truckers not to exit at non-truck routes.

Our commercial areas are underserved with available parking. The most severe condition exists in the area of Bell Boulevard and the LIRR station. Commuters and shoppers compete for very limited muni-meter parking. One request made by the BID members, and adopted by DOT, was to extend the time allowed on muni-meters to two hours in order for shoppers to enjoy more time on Bell Boulevard. The areas of Auburndale, Bayside, Douglaston and Little Neck adjacent to the Long Island Railroad stations are also congested during commuting hours and parking is at a premium.

CB11 has advocated for more express bus service, limited stop service, and, during rush hours, additional buses to the LIRR stations. Unfortunately, this year the NYCTA terminated the Q79 bus line on Little Neck Parkway. It was the *only* north/south route

linked to the Port Washington branch of the LIRR at the Little Neck Parkway station and the Hempstead branch at the Floral Park station. The Taxi & Limousine Commission piloted a private van service for the route but the operators did not continue the service. The Queens Civic Congress, working with the elected officials, is advocating for the return of the service and plans on meeting with the MTA to discuss the route.

Many residents look forward to the planned addition of a LIRR station on the east side of Manhattan at Grand Central Terminal.

In conclusion, Community Board 11 continues to work with city agencies and community groups to enhance the neighborhood's quality of life. We have seen many good things happen in the district and look forward to continuing to advocate for the residents.

Jerry Iannece
Chair

Susan Seinfeld
District Manager