

## ASSESSING and WRITING the STATEMENT of COMMUNITY DISTRICT NEEDS

Before a board can ask City agencies to fund projects and programs in its district, it must know the needs of the district. This assessment of conditions in the area becomes the basis for developing budget requests, monitoring service delivery and long range planning.

When a board knows both the existing resources and the needs of the district, the members can let agencies know their priorities.

The needs assessment, which develops this information should be on-going and regularly updated. New York City neighborhoods can change so quickly that available services no longer meet the current needs of community residents. A thorough needs assessment is especially important for these neighborhoods in transition.

As concerned residents, board members have a good sense of the conditions of their district facilities and major service delivery problems. This knowledge, when supplemented by concrete information from the sources suggested in the **Manual**, forms the nucleus of the **Statement of District Needs**. Specific data is needed to back up board perception. Knowledge of legal mandates, eligibility requirements and funding sources help boards evaluate information, set realistic expectations and plan for new services.

### Statement of Community District Needs

The **Statement of Community District Needs** is a planning document which presents the board's assessment of its needs along with proposed long term strategies and solutions.

The **Statement of Community District Needs** provides a framework for your board's budget requests and enables City agencies to evaluate and prioritize your proposals in relation to your overall assessment of community needs. The Department of City Planning compiles the **Needs Statements** in separate volumes for each borough. Each borough volume also contains City and local demographic data, board area maps. Also listed are all current capital projects located in your community district and a breakdown of lump sum projects.

Helping to place the board's Needs Statement in context are separate borough volumes of **Selected Facilities & Program Sites in New York City**. Listed by community board are park and recreation facilities, fire stations, police stations, correctional facilities, public libraries, ACS day care centers, senior centers, hospitals, ambulatory programs, homeless shelters, mental health services, public, private, parochial schools and colleges.

Ideally, your **Statement** should open with a short description of your district. This profile can present information about population, neighborhoods, housing stock, employment opportunities, capital facilities, social services, and commercial and industrial activities. As a guide, please look at the sample **Needs Statement** at the end of this chapter.

After this brief profile of the district, proceed to lay out the board's assessment of its needs. Organize needs around functional areas such as housing, transportation, sanitation, etc. Stress the district's current unmet needs and problems as well as potential future concerns: for example, a concentration of vacant buildings; inadequate services for an increasing population of elderly; problems of the handicapped or youth; deteriorating streets and sewers, etc. In order to help agencies address the district's needs, it is important that boards recommend what kinds of programs, projects or activities would be most useful to meet these needs. The recommendations can then become the basis for many of the boards' capital and expense budget requests submitted in the fall.

## **NEEDS ASSESSMENT AS A BASIS OF BUDGET REQUESTS**

A comprehensive, carefully prepared needs assessment is an important tool for community boards' development of budget requests. Each step of the community board budget process acts as a building block for the next. Therefore, the **Needs Statement** should build on district consultations where boards meet with their local service chiefs to discuss the needs of the district and the current level of service delivery.

Community boards submit up to 40 requests for capital projects and 25 expense requests. Budget requests for any given fiscal year should focus on the **most urgent** needs, while the **Needs Statement** also deals with long range problems and strategies.

## ASSESSING NEEDS

The starting point for developing a strategy to deal with the critical issues facing your district is deciding what those critical issues are. This means a careful assessment of your needs. To help boards begin this task, the **Manual** outlines useful approaches and information sources. Many information sources are available on the City's website: [www.nyc.gov](http://www.nyc.gov).

- WHEN:** Year-round  
The **Statement of District Needs** is due by early August.
- WHAT:** Community boards evaluate conditions in their district. The process involves two phases:
- I. An inventory of resources and conditions.
  - II. Preparation of the **Statement of Needs**
- WHO:** Board members, community and civic groups, and individuals help assess the district's needs. The Department of City Planning liaisons are also available provide help in the use of resource materials.
- HOW:** Use the suggested resources as well as the board members' own experience and on-site inspections.

The following suggests what information to gather and where to find it.

### PHASE I - Inventory of Resources and Conditions

Consider the following steps before preparing your **Statement of District Needs**:

- A. Review land use information
  1. Type of use and percent of area occupied
  2. Changes in the amount of vacant land
- B. Review available demographic information including:
  1. Age information
  2. Population information
  3. Birth and death rates
  4. Ethnic groups - countries of origin
  5. Income, or meaningful proxy data
  6. School enrollment
  7. Public Assistance reciprocity

Sources: Department of City Planning  
 The United States Census of Population and Housing, 2000  
 Department of Health & Mental Hygiene, Bureau of Health Statistics & Analysis

C. Inventory existing resources

1. Schools
2. Hospitals
3. Clinics
4. Police stations
5. Industries
6. Parks open spaces
7. Commercial strips
8. Parks
9. Multi-service centers
10. Cultural facilities

Sources: **District Resource Statement**  
 Office of Management and Budget

**Selected Facilities & Program Sites in New York City**  
 Department of City Planning

D. Inventory Conditions

1. Housing
  - condition
  - change in number of dwelling units/density of the units and the population within them
2. Streets
  - condition
  - circulation
3. Social Indicators
  - school reading levels
  - crime rates

Sources: District service chiefs who are familiar with complaints about their agencies and may know how to solve the problem with existing resources can suggest other improvements in the district.

The District Manager's records of service complaints

The Department of City Planning liaisons can assist with field surveys and information

Individual community board members

E. Inventory existing programs

1. After school/youth services
2. Alcohol/drug abuse services
3. Community development
4. Day care
5. Economic development
6. Health care
7. Homecare services
8. Housing
9. Job training
10. Mental health and counseling services
11. Public social services (food stamps, medicaid, welfare)
12. Recreation
13. Senior centers, etc.

Sources: Local service chiefs

**Community Development Statement of Objectives**  
Office of Management and Budget

**District Resource Statement**  
Office of Management and Budget

**HRA Services Handbook**  
Human Resources Administration

**City Services for Older New Yorkers**  
New York City Department for the Aging

**Selected Facilities & Programs Sites in New York City**  
Department of City Planning

F. Inventory service complaints

1. By functional area
  - resolved
  - unresolved
2. By geographic area
  - resolved
  - unresolved

Sources: Board records of service complaints  
Local service chiefs

G. Inventory budget requests from past fiscal years

1. Capital Budget project requests
  - funded
  - not funded
2. Expense Budget service requests
  - funded
  - not funded

Sources: **Register of Community District Budget Requests**  
Office of Management and Budget

You will develop an extensive inventory as a result of the preceding steps. Next, refine and consolidate the list, and begin to develop budget proposals to meet your district's needs. To verify that a problem still exists, either conduct an on-site inspection or check with your local service chief. You can try to substantiate the problems with statistical data.

After hopefully eliminating some items, look at the rest of your list and then:

- consider the relative importance of each
- identify general patterns of need
- propose ways to meet those needs

All of these efforts will help you to develop your **Statement of District Needs**, and begin to establish priorities for your budget requests later in the process.

### **PHASE II - Prepare the Statement Of District Needs**

- A. Begin with a direct overview which reflects and analyzes land use, population and existing resources.
- B. Summarize outstanding issues and budget requests.
- C. Organize by agency, either by neighborhood or district-wide.
- D. Stress the district's unmet needs and problems such as a concentration of vacant or in-rem buildings, inadequate services for the elderly, handicapped or youth, and deteriorating streets and sewers, etc.
- E. Recommend what kinds of programs, projects and activities would meet the identified needs. These recommendations are the basis for your board's Capital and Expense Budget requests.
- F. Limit the **Statement** to 20 pages, including any maps and photographs. Type single space, using upper and lower case. Leave 1 1/2" margins on the sides and bottom. Use

letterhead for your first page. Type all subsequent pages on plain paper. While community boards may submit original copies of their Needs Statements, to maintain an attractive and consistent look, the Department of City Planning encourages submissions by e-mail or on 3.5" diskettes. Be sure your document is formatted in Word and send in a few sheets of letterhead for your first page.

G. Submit the original copy to the Department of City Planning by August 8.

H. Send a copy to the Office of Community Board Relations at OMB.

Send the original of the **Needs Statement** (diskette, original copy or e-mail) to:

Department of City Planning  
 Planning Coordination Division  
 22 Reade Street - Room 6N  
 New York, New York 10007

Attn: Marlon Anderson  
 e-mail: andersonm@dcplan.nyc.gov

Both the Office of Community Board Relations and the Department of City Planning liaisons will provide technical assistance to the community boards on needs assessment and preparation of the **Statement of District Needs**.

At the end of the chapter is a sample **Statement of District Needs**.

## CITYWIDE STATEMENT OF NEEDS

New information about future plans for public facility sites in the City is available to help the community boards develop their **Community District Needs Statements**. By November 15 of each year, the Mayor releases a **Citywide Statement of Needs** which identifies by agency and program for the following two years:

- all plans for new or significantly expanded City facilities.
- all plans to close or significantly reduce City facilities.

For new or expanded facilities, the **Citywide Statement of Needs** describes the public purpose, the size and nature of the facility, the borough and if possible, the community district. Also specified are the criteria to be used in locating or expanding the new facility. The reasons and

specific criteria for proposed facility closings or reduction in size of service capacity are also listed.

A map and accompanying text presents the location and current use of all City owned property, all final commitments relating to the disposition or future use of City owned real property and the location of State and federally operated health and social service facilities.

Published in conjunction with the **Citywide Statement of Needs** is the **Atlas of City Property**. The **Atlas** is a comprehensive listing of all 35,000 properties owned or leased by the City and its related authorities. Also indicated is which agency uses each site and for what purpose.

The **Atlas of City Property** is published in five borough volumes. Maps of each community district are divided into block numbers with shaded areas indicating the areas owned or leased by the City. Accompanying the maps is an inventory of City owned and leased property listed by block and lot number, name, address, type of use of each property and the agency responsible for the property.

### **Community Board Role in the Citywide Needs Statement**

While preparing their **Departmental Statement of Needs**, each agency must review and consider both the **Needs Statement** and budget requests submitted by each community board.

### **Responses to the Citywide Needs Statement**

After receiving and distributing the **Citywide Needs Statement**, each community board holds a public hearing and within 90 days, may submit comments to the Department of City Planning. Within the same 90 days, each Borough President may propose different locations for proposed facilities in that borough.



example:

**COMMUNITY BOARD 19  
Borough of Queens**

**STATEMENT OF DISTRICT NEEDS**

Community District 19 consists of three vastly different neighborhoods: Steel Park is the City's largest industrial area, Rockford is a residential neighborhood with deteriorating housing stock and pockets of poverty and Westbury is a rapidly growing mixed residential and commercial area where luxury co-ops are replacing housing which was affordable to middle income families.

**STEEL PARK**

The southern half of the community district is Steel Park, the city's largest concentration of industry which employs 50,000 people or 10 percent of all industrial employment in the City. The types of manufacturing in the area include printing, electrical products, food processing, garments, metal products, and plastics.

The nearly continuous flow of traffic in and out of Steel Park requires high levels of maintenance, repairs and reconstruction of the major truck routes.

**Highways** - Truck routes in the areas which now are in poor condition are: Morris Avenue, Thomas Avenue and Kings Boulevard. The capital projects to repair the routes and bridges are high priorities: HB-992 -- Thomas Avenue bridge; HB-900 -- Kings Avenue bridge; and HW-947 -- Morris Avenue repaving.

**Parking** - Parking is a serious problem for employees in the industries. Many plants have no parking lots and the streets are narrow. Cars park on the sidewalks and in driveways on 30th, 33rd and 34th Streets. This problem needs to be resolved. The Association of Steel Park Industries wants to work with the community board and the Department of City Planning on a solution.

**Environmental Protection** - Ponding and flooding occur on Arnold Avenue between 30th and 34th Streets. Community Board 19 has discussed this with the Department of Environmental Protection and we are requesting design money for a new sewer project in that area.

**ROCKFORD**

This neighborhood in the northeast quadrant of the community district consists of 45,000 people of diverse and changing ethnic backgrounds. Income levels are primarily lower middle class to poverty level with 22.7 percent of its population receiving some form of public assistance. The rapidly changing population has meant an increase in younger, larger families as evidenced by our overcrowded schools and intensively used parks and an average family size of 3.2 persons in 2000.

**Education** - School enrollment has increased by 49 percent between 1990 and 2000. The two elementary schools, P.S. 101 and P.S. 333 have utilization rates of 112 percent and 120

percent respectively. Consequently, the capital budget project E-1931 "Purchase a building for P.S. annex" is a high priority.

**Day Care** - There is only one Day Care Center serving a neighborhood with 6,000 children under the age of twelve. Clearly the increase of day care services is a high priority for the area. This should include after school day care for children between 6 and 12 years of age.

**Parks** - The two neighborhood parks are used to maximum capacity by both senior citizens and youths. They have suffered from heavy use and deferred maintenance. Green Park has a large number of benches used by senior citizens and mothers with small children. The benches need to be rehabilitated, the chess tables are crumbling and disfigured, and the playground equipment is broken and unusable. The P-245 project for rehabilitating Green Park should be moved ahead in this year's budget.

The seriously depleted Parks personnel are almost totally incapable of coping with their workload demands. Equipment shortages still abound although several pieces of automotive equipment were obtained. Grass cutters and smaller maintenance equipment are desperately needed. The Forestry Division is also non-responsive, with year-long delays in caring for our magnificent trees which are dying for lack of care. A drastic all out effort must be made if we are to salvage these resources.

**Housing** - According to the 2000 census, 70 percent of Rockford's population lives in multiple dwellings although one and two family homes make up half the housing stock. The vacancy rate is only 3 percent. Twenty percent of the housing units are owner-occupied, mostly one and two family homes. Two New York City Housing Authority developments - Meadow Gardens and Fern Lake - have a total of 385 units. Both the owner-occupied housing and the public housing units lend stability to the neighborhood. The problems are occurring in the privately owned multiple dwellings which are deteriorating.

Owner occupied and public housing units both help stabilize the neighborhood. Problems occur in some privately owned multiple dwellings and two family homes, below Eastern Avenue, which are illegally converted to increase tenancy. Other illegal uses such as chop shops also flourish. The Rockford community needs government help in developing programs and strategies to alleviate this problem. Recent legislation regarding illegal occupancies and construction should help the Buildings Department issue and follow up violations.

Some of the finest quality multiple dwellings were constructed in western Rockford during the 1920's and post World War II years. Today, many of these aging, medium rise apartment buildings need to upgrade electrical and plumbing systems. In 2001, the Department of Housing Preservation and Development estimated that 35 percent of the privately owned two-family homes also have significant violations. Other related problems include conversions or construction without plans or permits and builders, plumbers and electricians without licenses. We hope that the latest legislation as well as increased HPD and Buildings Department inspections and staff will help curb these largely ignored abuses.

Many seniors have remained in the community and need neighborhood based affordable senior housing. A former group home on Weeks Avenue is an excellent location for senior housing.

## WESTBURY

This year the community board is working with the Department of City Planning to study the impact of the new construction and the rapid increase of both dwelling units and population on the services and infrastructure in the neighborhood of Westbury.

The area from 88th and 96th Streets between Kentucky Avenue and the West River is changing rapidly in scale and density, and in types of residents. What was once an area of Old Law tenements and five-story apartment houses occupied by families with modest incomes is now becoming a part of the fashionable North End with luxury co-ops and high rises. Between 1995 and 2000 the neighborhood had a net increase of 2,416 dwelling units, and the population, already a densely packed 79,756 in 1990, rose by 5.4 percent, or 4,350 more persons by 2000 and continued expanding during the decade.

Because of these real estate pressures we ask that the Buildings Department pay particular attention to Building Code compliance. Many landlords violate the code with impunity and illegally rent for higher profits than they could receive from legal stabilized residential rents. We strongly oppose this practice, and when applicants appear before us seeking to legalize such de facto occupancies, we consistently recommend disapproval by the Board of Standards and Appeals. We also ask that the Buildings Department carefully monitor building sites to ensure that the developers keep the sites safe, clean and free of as much disruption as possible to neighbors, pedestrians and traffic. The outstanding issues in Westbury are housing, police and fire protection.

**Housing** - Among the Board's expense budget requests for the coming year are several relating to housing and development matters. We need better enforcement of the Housing Maintenance Code, Zoning Code and Buildings Code, and in all cases we request not just more inspectors, but attorneys and other staff who bring full compliance through vigorous litigation efforts.

**Police** - The district's number one expense budget priority is more uniformed and civilian police services to deal with increased drug-related crime in our neighborhood. The Board's third capital budget priority is construction of a new 19th Precinct House on 67th Street. The Precinct was to be built in conjunction with the College expansion planned ten years ago. Now the College buildings are nearing completion and basic architectural plans are only beginning for the police station. Current facilities are antiquated and it is crucial that plans move forward immediately.

**Fire** - High on the list of expense budget requests are more fire inspectors for routine fire prevention and inspections of the many high risk buildings in the area. These include high-rise, older buildings, night clubs and theaters. Other expense budget requests to the Fire Department include establishing an Eastern Branch of the Third Division. Since the Fourth Division was eliminated a few years ago, high level fire fighting supervisors have not had quick access to our district from their headquarters on 30th Street.