



CITY OF NEW YORK

MANHATTAN COMMUNITY BOARD No. 4

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MANHATTAN COMMUNITY BOARD NO. 4
STATEMENT OF DISTRICT NEEDS

Fiscal Year 2008
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DISTRICT OVERVIEW

Manhattan Community District No. 4 is comprised of two West Side neighborhoods, Chelsea and Clinton/Hell's Kitchen. The District (CD4) generally covers the area between 14th and 59th streets - to the west of Eighth Avenue, north of 26th Street, and west of Sixth Avenue, south of 26th Street. CD4 shares borders with Greenwich Village, the Flatiron, the Upper West Side and the Midtown central business district. Portions of several other well-known areas exist within CD4's boundaries: Hudson Yards, the Garment District, the Flower District, the Gansevoort Meat Packing District, the Ladies' Mile Shopping District and the Theater District. Other notable sites in CD4 include Restaurant Row, the High Line, Columbus Circle, Maritime Piers 56 - 99 including the Passenger Ship Terminal (Piers 88, 90 and 92), the Farley Building/Moynihan Station and the northern half of Hudson River Park.

The total population of CD4 is approximately 100,000. Many residents are long time residents; others are relative newcomers. An estimated 10,000 new residents already occupy or are expected to move into housing developments completed or begun since the last Census. Chelsea and Clinton/Hell's Kitchen remain desirable residential neighborhoods for their streetscapes, building types and local institutions, as well as their proximity to world-class cultural resources and amenities. It is the diversity of residents, however, that is their greatest asset.

CD4 is central to Manhattan and the region's core. The physical character of CD4 is defined as much by its neighborhoods as by the infrastructure that supports the citywide economy. At the local level, transportation infrastructure exerts the greatest impact as it channels hundreds of thousands of visitors through CD4 every day. Streets and avenues are exceedingly congested, trucks are an increasing presence on residential streets, off-street facilities for all types of buses and commuter vans are inadequate and environmental pollution is a constant quality of life complaint and threat to public health. These problems are a condition of the sometimes competing goals of neighborhood protection and improvement and the efficient flow of traffic.

Currently, development of all types is considerable, but housing production is predominant. In-fill construction, building enlargements and substantial renovations have filled in gaps and improved the housing stock in core residential areas. Housing development activities in less dense areas have preserved and strengthened the character of existing neighborhoods (Hell's Kitchen South and the Clinton Urban Renewal Area) and created new population centers (42nd Street and far west 23rd Street).

A range of economic activities exists within CD4. Many reflect the area's historical development as an immigrant, working-class neighborhood once closely tied to an industrial waterfront and later serving as a "backstage" community for the theater industry. Local businesses and cultural organizations are vital to the community. Many provide essential services to the midtown central business district, the city's garment trades, or nearby entertainment and tourism industries. Neighborhood shops, restaurants and other enterprises serve area residents and workers, but also are widely known for high-quality goods and services and have become important destinations for art, culture and recreation.

As a result of recent rezonings, significant new commercial and residential development is now possible in formerly industrial districts in western Chelsea and southern Clinton/Hell's Kitchen. Local goals for growth have been developed with an eye toward balancing the redevelopment of these areas with the preservation and expansion of CD4's residential neighborhoods. Most important is strengthening our diversity by ensuring that new development produces permanent affordable housing.

The rejection of the proposed West Side Stadium requires the reconsideration of the planning goals of the Hudson Yards rezoning, especially those for the MTA rail yards and the Eleventh Avenue corridor. Development of other large scale proposals for the corridor between 30th and 35th street - an additional trans-Hudson River rail tunnel, the conversion of the Farley Post Office into the new Moynihan Train Station, and the expansion of the Jacob K. Javits Convention Center - will similarly require an approach that balances local and regional needs.

DISTRICT PRIORITIES

CD4 is defined by its homegrown, unique characteristics, both physical and social; its symbiotic relationships with surrounding neighborhoods; and our communities' reaction to the unique characteristics, both physical and social, of those surrounding neighborhoods. In the current setting of growth and development, Manhattan Community Board No. 4's priorities are (1) preventing displacement, (2) maintaining neighborhood character, stability and quality of life, and (3) attracting development that enhances diversity and positive neighborhood relations among disparate groups. Concrete efforts to realize these priorities include advocacy for increased supply and access to affordable housing, improvement of the area's physical infrastructure, and adequate delivery of social and public services.

LAND USE PLANNING

Hell's Kitchen/Hudson Yards Follow-Up

The Hudson Yards Rezoning was approved by the City Council in January 2005, but the proposed stadium that was integral to the City's Hudson Yards plan failed to receive the necessary approval of the Public Authorities Control Board in June 2005, and is no longer part of the City's plan. The proposed No. 7 Subway Extension has not yet been fully approved by the MTA and its funding remains in doubt. Without mass transit to the area, the high density commercial development allowed by the Hudson Yards Rezoning west of Tenth Avenue is unlikely to be realized. In the meantime, residential development under the new zoning is underway, and several large commercial development sites are being used for unintended uses such as budget hotels.

A new comprehensive plan for the Eastern and Western Rails Yards is required. The Rail Yards and the areas east of Eighth Avenue between 30th and 35th Streets should be established as the area's main high density commercial corridor. Hudson Boulevard and the high density commercial development planned for Eleventh Avenue should be eliminated. This new plan should be developed through a public process to select the best possible mixed-use development proposal to serve the City's planning needs and the capital needs of the MTA, as owner of the Rail Yards.

The following items were agreed to by the Administration and the City Council in connection with the Hudson Yards Rezoning, and await completion:

- Additional Follow Up Corrective Actions Text Amendment. The initial amendment was completed in December 2005 and added several items of great importance to this community, in particular the addition of a harassment and cure provision to the Special Hudson Yards District text, updating of the harassment and cure provisions of the Special Clinton District text, and prohibition of conversion of ground floor residential uses in the Hell's Kitchen mid-blocks. A further text amendment is required, and has been agreed to by the local Councilmember and the Commissioner of HPD, to make the central provisions of the Special Clinton District, Special Hudson Yards District and the P2 portion of the Special Garment Center District more consistent. This further amendment should also include reform of the Theater Row bonus text amendment and reinforcement of contextual zoning in the Hell's Kitchen mid-blocks.
- Development on "Site M" located on the west side of Tenth Avenue between 40th and 41st streets of 150 affordable housing units as detailed in the letter agreement between the Administration and the City Council.
- Development on the "NYCHA Harborview Site" located at 56th Street just west of Eleventh Avenue of 155 affordable housing units (see letter agreement for details).
- Development on the "Studio City Site" (now referred to as the "PS 51 Site") located between 44th and 45th Streets, between Tenth and Eleventh Avenues of 600 affordable housing units and an expanded elementary school (see letter agreement for details, and the Board's letter dated March 3, 2005). This development should also include the Morgenthau Police Athletic League Community Center and a permanent facility for the NYPD's Mounted Unit B.
- Creation of an affordable housing fund from proceeds of the disposition of the Studio City Site.
- Rezoning of the northwest corner of 42nd Street and Eighth Avenue.
- Establishment of a taskforce to work toward creating open space on Port Authority sites in the Hell's Kitchen mid-blocks (see letter agreement for details). We continue to believe that this open space should be created through a combination of land acquisition and long-term development strategies, as well as street tree plantings and use of DPR's Green Streets program in the immediate term (see our letter to DCP dated March 5, 2005 for further details).

Enhanced relocation assistance is required for a small number of residential tenants and businesses if the Hudson Yards condemnations proceed. Except for the acquisition of Block 675, those condemnations are not necessary. See the Board's letter dated July 8, 2005 to the Law Department.

Several other matters still require attention in order to complete the Hudson Yards planning process, including planning for a new consolidated bus parking facility with direct access to the ramp system of the Port Authority Bus Terminal and the Lincoln Tunnel, and LPC protection of the principal architectural historic resources that will be affected by the Hudson Yards rezoning. (See our letter to our local elected officials dated June 14, 2006 for a more complete discussion of Hudson Yards “unfinished business.”)

Clinton/Hell's Kitchen

Clinton/Hell's Kitchen continues to experience an explosion of commercial and residential development. This has created opportunities in some areas, such as the accelerated pace of redevelopment in the Clinton Urban Renewal Area, and challenges in others, such as the increased pressure on affordable and contextual residential properties in the Special Clinton District.

Clinton Urban Renewal Area

The Clinton Urban Renewal Area (CURA), which has long been the focus of the Board's land use efforts in Clinton/Hell's Kitchen, continues to be part of this development boom.

The recent, substantial progress toward completion of redevelopment in the CURA reflects the cooperation that has developed between CB4 and HPD with the assistance of DCP. The Board also acknowledges the ongoing assistance of the Clinton CURA Coordinating Committee, a coalition of not-for profits, in developing and sponsoring affordable housing in this area. The coalition includes Clinton Housing Association, Clinton Association for a Renewed Environment, Clinton Housing Development Company, Encore Community Services and Housing Conservation Coordinators.

A small number of sites await redevelopment: Sites 7E, 7F and 7G (portions of which could be combined into a single project), the undeveloped portions of Site 9A, and Site 9C-1 (500-508 W. 52nd Street). We look forward to continued cooperation by the City, the Board and the Coordinating Committee to redevelop these sites without delay.

Consistent with the Board's past positions, we maintain that all city-owned property developed in the CURA should maximize the number of units dedicated to affordable housing. Other CURA principles adopted by the Board include a new mixed-use zone to accommodate existing commercial, light manufacturing, cultural and non-profit institutions on site; urban design controls to reconcile the community's need for more housing with the preservation tradition and limits of the Special Clinton District; and the maintenance and development of only low-rise buildings on the west side of Tenth Avenue to match the low-rise character of the District to the east. Any action by HPD to facilitate development in the CURA must reflect these principles.

In addition, we note that the only acquisition parcel that has yet to be acquired by the City in the CURA is Site 6, which is the western portion of block 1082, on Eleventh Avenue between 53rd and 54th Streets. As such, this property is not subject to the development restrictions of the Clinton Urban Renewal Plan and, because it is located within the CURA boundary, it is also excluded from the height and bulk restrictions of the Special Clinton District. This site is now being actively marketed by its owner, Verizon. This Board will oppose any future request to permit redevelopment of Site 6 for a use inconsistent with residential use or at a density that exceeds what is allowed in an R8A zoning district (FAR 6.02).

Special Clinton District - Other Area

The western area of the Special Clinton District beyond the boundary of the Preservation Area is primarily zoned for light or medium industrial uses. The Board supports a rezoning of this area to create a mid-rise residential corridor along both sides of Eleventh Avenue and preserve industrial uses west of that corridor. The rezoning should contain the following elements:

- Extend R-8 zoning west to Eleventh Avenue between 43rd and 55th Streets.
 - FAR 6.02 within 100 feet of Eleventh Avenue
 - FAR 4.2 from 100 feet east of Eleventh Avenue to present R-8 boundary
- Extend Preservation Area boundary west to 100 feet east of Eleventh Avenue.
- Create MX zoning district west of Eleventh Avenue from 43rd to 57th Streets, allowing residential uses along the Eleventh Avenue blockfronts and surrounding DeWitt Clinton Park, and preserving industrial uses throughout the district, particularly those that serve the theater district and other midtown businesses and residents.
 - FAR 6.02 within 100 feet of Eleventh Avenue
 - FAR 5.0 from 100 feet west of Eleventh Avenue to Twelfth Avenue
 - Industrial retention mechanisms (to be developed)
- To preserve existing loft character of Eleventh Avenue and avoid blocking Preservation Area core from the waterfront:
 - Limit street-walls on Eleventh Avenue to 150 feet, and overall building height to 180 feet
 - Developments occupying most of an Eleventh Avenue blockfront require lowered street-walls for 25 to 30 percent of the Eleventh Avenue frontage
- Allow ground floor commercial uses on Eleventh Avenue that serve area residents
- Limit clubs and adult uses
- Pedestrian bridge over Route 9A from DeWitt Clinton Park to Hudson River Park

Special Clinton District - Preservation Area

The development boom throughout Clinton has put considerable pressure on the Special Clinton District, which was established in 1973 to, among other things, preserve and strengthen the residential character of the community, and permit rehabilitation and new development in character with the existing scale of the community and at rental levels which would not substantially alter the mixture of income groups then residing in the area. Continued attention must be paid to enforcement of the protective provisions of the Preservation Area of the Special Clinton District, the neighborhood's residential core. Building permit applications should be reviewed by DOB plan examiners; self-certification has been abused in too many recent cases. The proper training and assignment of inspectors with detailed local knowledge is also a must. Without adequate and informed enforcement, the district goals will not be fulfilled.

Ninth Avenue is thriving as the main commercial corridor of the Special Clinton District and the Hell's Kitchen neighborhood extending south to 34th Street. We request streetscape improvements such as better lighting and more street trees to improve the pedestrian experience and create a stronger connection above and below the Port Authority Bus Terminal.

Chelsea

The Chelsea 197-a Plan created by this Board for the protection of the traditional core of Chelsea east of Tenth Avenue together with the rezoning that implemented it have now been supplemented by the West Chelsea Rezoning for most of the area west of Tenth Avenue.

This action centers on the preservation and conversion of the High Line into a park, but has major implications for land use in the area. Actual acquisition of the High Line, final design, and construction of the first segment including access to it are only the beginning of a long process to which we are glad to see the City appears fully committed. There also are a number of land-use related items that require follow up, requiring action by a variety of agencies and the City Council. In many cases prompt action is required to attain the desired goals.

Carrying to completion the numerous provisions supporting creation and preservation of affordable housing within the action itself or listed as "Points of Agreement" in a letter from the Office of the Mayor is essential:

- Extending the demolition restrictions developed for the Hudson Yards into appropriate areas of the rezoning;
- Implementing the proposals for creation of affordable housing by HPD on two NYCHA sites: in Elliott-Chelsea Houses at the northwest corner of West 25th Street and Ninth Avenue, and in Fulton Houses on West 18th Street between Ninth and Tenth Avenues. Residents of these Projects and other affected community members must be included in the planning and design of structures on these sites;
- Constructing affordable housing on the underused Department of Sanitation lot on West 20th Street between Sixth and Seventh Avenues, or failing that, on another site in Chelsea. Relocation of the existing uses must be a priority: the few office spaces seem manageable, but relocating the section station may be difficult and DSNY must cooperate in the task;
- Permitting City, State, and Federal programs in the inclusionary programs in order to provide greater incentives and ensure permanent affordability of the housing produced;
- Tiering of inclusionary bonuses to include higher income levels;
- Creating a West Chelsea Affordable Housing Fund to produce more affordable housing in Community District 4. Provisions must be found to ensure this Fund is actually funded and produces affordable housing in the West Chelsea area;
- Ensuring a community preference of 50% in the bulk of affordable housing created;

- Introducing provisions for an Inclusionary Housing Bonus for conversions mirroring those for new construction.

The number and complexity of these provisions and the pressure for immediate development will require long-term monitoring, first to ensure they are promptly finalized and adopted, and then to ensure their effective use over time. The official position of the Community Board and the expertise of its membership and staff indicate that it is the appropriate body to take the leading role in this process. A special committee of members of the Board and the community has been set up for this purpose.

The Board is concerned that most of the proposals for development in West Chelsea, as in many other areas, are planned to produce luxury condominiums rather than the rental units on which the provisions for affordable housing are based. This appears likely to reduce the number of affordable units actually produced. Future development in the area needs to be monitored to see if revisions will be required to produce the projected number of affordable units.

Two other commitments listed as “Further Study” will require prompt action and timely follow up on the results to ensure that the development of West Chelsea takes place in appropriate fashion. Otherwise changes directly or indirectly stemming from the rezoning may well change the situation on the ground beyond recall.

- The first is described as “Study by the Department of City Planning of areas west and south of the rezoning area with an eye to future actions appropriate for the neighborhood.” The purpose of this is to insure studying the areas between Eleventh and Twelfth Avenues north of 22nd Street and other areas near the High Line further south with the goal of including them in the Special West Chelsea District and making other appropriate changes designed to preserve neighborhood character in this portion of West Chelsea, including the important area near the Gansevoort Market.
- Study by the Landmarks Preservation Commission of the proposals put forward by Community Board 4 and production of recommendations concerning the proposed West Chelsea Waterfront Industrial Historic District as well as individual landmarks. The report, which was not completed by its due date preceding the time of adoption of this Statement, will be meaningless unless timely action is taken on its recommendations to protect the identified historic resources in an area undergoing major changes.

The Board also again reminds the Department of City Planning that its long delayed commitment to study rezoning at an appropriate scale of the blocks of West 14th Street between Seventh and Ninth Avenues on the basis of the proposals in the original Chelsea Plan is likely to be overtaken by events as the area becomes more and more desirable. The potentially glorious old brownstones and the buildings once housing the center of the first Latino community in the city risk being lost. Loss of the historic character of this area would affect as well the character of the Gansevoort Market nearby.

TRANSPORTATION

More and more vehicles crowd our streets and avenues each year. This creates high levels of congestion increasing pollution, leading to dangerous situations for pedestrians at street crossings, impairing the ability for cyclists to safely travel, and raising competition for the limited curbside parking space on neighborhood blocks. There are no easy solutions. A real sense of partnership between the community and the DOT, NYPD and the Port Authority will be required to make progress and enable a more livable community.

As plans develop to add considerable new density in CD4, we must work together both to enforce existing and to create new policies to maintain livability and growth. We should devote increased resources and develop more creative strategies to encourage use of mass transit and car-pooling and create new pedestrian and bicycle friendly corridors.

Ninth Avenue

From 14th Street to 59th Street, Ninth Avenue is the neighborhood-serving commercial center for residents and thus an important pedestrian corridor. However, increased development, traffic and congestion are diminishing the neighborhood and pedestrian orientation of Ninth Avenue. During the last year, CB4 has made several recommendations to address the situation and improve Ninth Avenue pedestrian access and reduce unsafe congestion:

Lincoln Tunnel Access

One of the critical areas of concern is Lincoln Tunnel Access. The intersections on Ninth Avenue between 42nd Street and 37th Street have among the highest pedestrian accident rates in the city, and the traffic is typically clogged north to 50th Street for several hours each day. Over 500 pedestrians have been injured on Ninth Avenue between 34th Street and 57th Street during the last two years. The Community Board has made several recommendations to improve the situation, only a few of which have been acted upon to date:

- The Community Board is appreciative that an officer has recently been stationed at West 37th Street and Ninth Avenue during rush hour (and has noticed a difference in reducing traffic congestion north of that corner and safety at that corner). However, additional officers are needed, particularly at West 41st Street and West 43rd Street and during peak times during the weekend.
- Enforce the ban on bus traffic on 45th Street between Eighth and Ninth Avenues: Community residents have noticed bus parking and bus traffic on this street, despite the no-bus policy. Bus turning and bus crossing of Ninth Avenue at 45th Street disrupts both Ninth Avenue and 45th Street traffic and full enforcement of this policy is needed;
- Placement of no-honking signs and increased enforcement of that policy on Ninth Avenue between 47th and 46th and between 43rd and 42nd Street. Constant car horn honking has become the norm on Ninth Avenue during rush hours. The placement of signs and their enforcement would likely improve that situation.
- Add a sign on 37th Street, near the corner of Ninth Avenue indicating no left turn into Lincoln Tunnel entry lanes;

- Encourage use of Eleventh Avenue as an alternative for entrance into the Lincoln Tunnel, including making Eleventh Avenue above 42nd Street southbound only;
- The Port Authority installed “Smart Signs” earlier this year at several locations on Ninth, Tenth, Eleventh and Dyer Avenues. We are pleased with the results and request that, in consultation with the Community Board, additional similarly sized "Smart Signs" be used to replace static signs to better inform traffic traveling into the Lincoln Tunnel.
- The Community Board feels strongly that the substantial increase in traffic around Lincoln Tunnel and the expected development from the rezoning of Hudson Yards and Chelsea require a comprehensive traffic plan for the area and for Lincoln Tunnel access.

14th - 16th Streets

We recommend making all lanes on Ninth Avenue from 14th to 16th Street southbound. Currently, with the northbound lane from 14th Street to 16th Street, there is traffic from five directions (east and westbound on 14th Street, southbound on Ninth Avenue and Hudson Street and northbound on Ninth Avenue) for pedestrians to observe before crossing. This causes confusion for pedestrians. During the last few years, as ground floor commercial uses have increased on West 14th Street and the streets to the south, this has become a highly used pedestrian area.

Parking

Vans and buses

There is a pressing need for additional off-street parking sites for tourist and commuter buses and vans. There are currently an inadequate number of available spaces and more parking lots are being converted into alternative uses. The parking and standing of these vehicles on our streets, particularly around the Port Authority and side streets up through 47th Street from Eighth Avenue to Tenth Avenue, brings with it serious traffic and pollution problems. Using the streets as terminals for loading and unloading commuter vehicles and parking/standing when not in use is an unacceptable problem, particularly as residential and related ground floor commercial uses grow. There should also be increased enforcement to prevent illegal on-street parking of buses and vans. A comprehensive plan for off-street parking for buses, van services and waiting "black cars" should be devised.

We understand that the Port Authority is studying building a new bus garage in the area. While we are supportive of such a garage, we propose that the Port Authority permit the use of the garage for a wide variety of bus and vans and that they consult the Community Board on its exact location and uses.

Parking/Standing regulations

We appreciate the responsiveness of the DOT to our request for changes in parking/standing regulations and taxi stands as the community grapples with changes, such as the increased number of night clubs in West Chelsea from 27th to 29th Street. With these changes in signs, we request more vigilant enforcement. The mixture of commerce and residential uses in our Board area makes imperative budgeting for adequate enforcement staff.

We also appreciate the spirit of cooperation DOT has brought to our proposals for requested parking sign changes between Ninth and Eleventh avenues from West 45th to West 48th Street. However, we are concerned that after several months the signs have yet to be changed and request that DOT move more rapidly in processing these requests.

Mass Transit

Improving service

Much of CD4's population uses mass transit. Keeping the City's system operating at an optimal level is therefore a continuing basic need. In addition to efficient movement of surface traffic, the accessibility of bus stops and subway stations contribute materially to the usability of public transit. Subway stations must be designed to be as accessible and friendly as possible for all riders. Bus stops should have clear signage. Where feasible, shelters are desirable, and standing vehicles must be kept away so that buses can "curb" for passengers with mobility limitations. We note that new development along the waterfront and in the far west reaches of the district has created new demands for bus service in those areas, especially on Eleventh Avenue.

Fairly addressing budget cuts

The Board and the surrounding community must be kept apprised of temporary and emergency changes in bus routes, subway station closings, and schedule alterations. We are aware that the MTA is going through a severe budget crisis and join with transit officials and advocates in calling on the State and City to more seriously address the budget needs. We also appreciate the notification we have received in proposed cutbacks to subway and bus services. We urge the MTA to continue to consult with Community Boards before implementation of permanent changes in types of equipment used, schedule modifications, and bus stop relocations.

We also encourage the use of dedicated bus lanes on the avenues within our Community Board. We feel this can mitigate what are often substantial delays, particularly around the Lincoln Tunnel.

Bicycle and Pedestrian safety

The Bike Lane on 8th Avenue between 14th Street and 59th Street (with the exception of 39th to 42nd Street) is a welcome addition to the Community Board. We look forward, along with DOT, to monitoring its use and impact on safety in the area. We also note the safety issues related to vehicular uses along the Hudson River Park. The recent death of a bicyclist highlights our concern. We encourage DOT to install improved and additional electronic signage along the pedestrian/bicycle path of the Hudson River Park.

There are several parts of the district where we hope DOT will consider creative pedestrian improvements to enhance the pedestrian experience and environment. We recommend that DOT consider widening the west side of the Eighth Avenue sidewalk between 30th and 38th streets by 6 feet. The pedestrian level of service there is "F" (the lowest possible rating) during the morning and evening peak periods. It is often so crowded that hundreds of people end up walking in the street, creating very dangerous conditions. We recommend that DOT consider other pedestrian improvements, in consultation with the Community Board, for the two major neighborhood retail areas for the Chelsea (Eighth Avenue from 30th Street to 14th Street) and Hell's Kitchen (Ninth Avenue from West 34th to West 57th Street) communities.

During any future roadway work, DOT should widen sidewalks within CD4 as much as possible, especially at corners to create "bulb-outs." Bulb-outs increase pedestrian safety by increasing the turning radius around corners, thus slowing motor vehicles. Bulb-outs also shorten the crossing distance for pedestrians. Bulb-outs that were already created at various intersections in the 40's are welcomed by the pedestrians who use them.

As the primary entry/exit route of the Lincoln Tunnel, Dyer Avenue receives heavy traffic and requires special attention to ensure pedestrian safety. These basic concerns must be addressed:

- Intersection of Dyer Avenue and 40th Street. Pedestrian signals have been installed at this location; however, pedestrian crossings are still problematic. Two pedestrians have been killed at this intersection since 2001. Crosswalks should be realigned to avoid the columns of the ramp leading to the Port Authority Bus Terminal. In addition, improved signage is required to alert drivers that they have left the Tunnel and entered the New York City street grid.
- 35th Street and Dyer Avenue. Not all pedestrian crossings are striped; none are hatched. Vehicles associated with the Midtown South Police Precinct are often parked in pedestrian crossing lanes.

Enforcing all laws regarding the proper use of bicycles substantially contributes to pedestrian safety. NYPD should increase enforcement of laws prohibiting bicycle riding on the sidewalk and target businesses that are repeat offenders. We appreciate the consultation with the Community Board undertaken before the installation of several bike racks in our area and hope that will continue.

QUALITY OF LIFE

Police Department

CD4 is served by four New York City Police Precincts: Midtown North, Midtown South, the Tenth, and the 13th.

We commend the achievements in major crime reduction achieved by NYPD. For example from January to June 2006, Midtown North was the number two Precinct out of 76 in the entire city in CompStat's crime reduction index. Effective community policing strategies, close attention to the problems in our District, and cooperation with this Board and our Precinct Councils have had a major impact on the decrease in the major crime categories.

Quality of life issues, however, continue to bedevil us. Given PD's reduction of major crime, we now have an opportunity for increased enforcement of quality of life regulations. We are under no illusion that police enforcement on its own can entirely solve complex quality of life issues. We believe, however, that much can be done.

Midtown South, Midtown North, and the Tenth Precincts are responsible for a vital part of the City's residential, commercial, tourist, and entertainment areas. It is critical that staffing levels at these precincts be brought up to full strength.

The Tenth Precinct must have sufficient capability to manage the thousands of patrons arriving nightly at and leaving from the large number of clubs in west Chelsea. It also must be given all the support it requires to manage the traffic mayhem resulting from taxis and limos discharging and collecting these thousands of patrons.

Midtown North should be given any support it needs from the Manhattan South Task Force and from Manhattan South Vice to deal with sudden surges of street prostitution in Clinton/Hell's Kitchen.

The Midtown South Precinct must have enough officers to deal with the increasingly dangerous traffic situation in the vicinity of Port Authority.

Traffic enforcement especially in the primarily residential parts of the district is of vital importance. PD and Traffic Enforcement must assiduously address the daily traffic congestion at the entrance routes to the Lincoln Tunnel and on Ninth Avenue above these entrances. Regulations prohibiting illegal parking, standing, and idling in all parts of the District and especially in the West 40s and 50s where many tourist buses illegally park after evacuating their passengers in midtown, must be enforced on a regular and continual basis.

We request that the Manhattan South Borough Command closely monitor the needs of precincts containing public housing previously policed by the NYCHAP. These precincts may be facing a burden out of proportion with their current staffing levels.

This Board feels that it is vital to improve communications technology capabilities at all our precincts. At the very least, more cell phone accounts are needed for Community Affairs and Community Police officers. Cell phones play an increasingly important role in managing demonstrations, parades, and public events and in responding to emergency situations. Cell phones also enable officers to respond quickly to calls from community members.

We note, with pride, that our District is a diverse one. People of many backgrounds, religions, and lifestyles live, work, and visit our neighborhoods. Bias crimes cannot be tolerated. We commend our precincts for their continuing sensitivity to these issues. We commend NYPD for graduating, for the first time, a Police Academy class which was over 50% minority, thereby more accurately reflecting the city's diversity.

Office of Midtown Enforcement

This Board has consistently requested support for OME. It is the one agency that can best deal with a range of complex issues which arise particularly in our District, from the proliferation of Adult DVD stores in Clinton/Hell's Kitchen to the storage in or next to residential building of the gas containers in food carts, to problem clubs in Chelsea.

And more is being asked of it. The investigation of illegal "hotels" on the West side is another task OME has been assigned. Fortunately, through the efforts of Councilmember Gale A. Brewer, the Administration has allocated funding to OME for an additional staff member to investigate illegal hotel activity. More needs to be done.

For more than 25 years, Midtown Enforcement was a multi-agency task force of attorneys, inspectors, investigators and police officers that addressed quality of life issues often harmful to both the District's businesses and residents.

However, OME's budget has been cut severely and basically has been subsumed into the Criminal Justice Coordinator's Office. OME is no longer a stand-alone agency and, because of drastic cuts in personnel, can no longer address all of the problems that it became famous for solving.

This unit of the Mayor's Office was an active partner with community groups and business groups in our District. It used to be able to quickly respond not only through its own enforcement efforts, but also by ensuring that other City agencies did what is necessary on behalf of this community. It responded the way a city agency should. CB4 strongly urges that OME be restored to its previous personnel and budgetary strength.

Air Quality

Air quality is directly and negatively affected by emissions from motor vehicles, especially from diesel engines in trucks and buses. As both the Lincoln Tunnel and the Port Authority Bus Terminal lie in our District, we are concerned about our air quality and the health risks associated with these emissions. While we recognize that attributing a direct causality is better left to the experts, we note with some alarm that according to the NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, our community, compared to the City as a whole, suffers a 25% higher incidence of chronic lung disease. We are not reassured by assessments by the EPA that the City is in violation of new air quality health standards.

Given these concerns, we would like to review any long and short term studies about the effects on air quality of increasing vehicular traffic in our District and the impact of air quality on our health. If there are no such studies, we urge they be undertaken.

In the short term, all our precincts, especially Midtown South and the Tenth, as well as Traffic Enforcement need to be aware of DOT's new truck routes, which mandate that long haul trucks keep to major cross-town arteries such as 57th, 34th, 23rd, and 14th Streets and keep off of residential side streets. Enforcement of idling laws, which carry substantial penalties, must be given a priority, considering the negative effect the idling internal combustion engine has on air quality.

Noise

Noise complaints from CD4 consistently rank among the highest registered by DEP and are rising in the Board area, especially at night. We hope the new noise code will help in reducing sound from construction and offer a more flexible standard and enforcement schedule for bars, clubs, and cabarets. We also hope that a couple of critical components of the Revised Code which were left out, including the consideration of the human voice at full cry — shouting, yelling, and braying — will be considered for future inclusion.

We note, with appreciation, that DEP has been consistently responsive about inspecting HVAC systems, nightclubs, and other sources of commercial noise. It is critical that these resources be maintained, given the level of relevant business development in this area. We'd ask that consideration be given to supplementary funding for additional initiatives in the area of sound mitigation, perhaps through a study of best practices or an effort to develop strengthened regulations.

Sanitation

We applaud the increase in litter and trash pickup and commend sanitation workers for their consistently good marks in achieving their mandated goals. Concerns remain, however, about illegal household dumping, restaurant garbage on the sidewalks, and the accumulation of construction site debris in the District.

We also are concerned about the reduction in the number of sanitation police officers. A community/sanitation district may have only one police officer and that officer may have to cover more than one district. With the current lack of a maintenance facility in our District, the sanitation police assigned to CD4 are headquartered outside our neighborhoods. Even, apparently, outside our borough. Given the large number of restaurants in CD4 and the increasing commercial and residential development, we believe that, at very least, one Sanitation Police Officer should be assigned solely to, and stationed in, our District. And we request that additional funds be allocated to designate and train more sanitation police officers.

CULTURE, EDUCATION, AND LIBRARIES

Cultural Affairs

CB4 Applauds the fact that funds for the Department of Cultural Affairs have been restored from past budget cuts. However, there still is concern about funding for small theatrical companies within our community. Small theatrical arts groups develop new talent in areas of writing, performing, and directing. Many of these groups have their offices and creative spaces in the Board 4 District. An increasing number of these groups have lost or are losing their homes as development pressures originating from the Hudson Yards and Chelsea rezoning changes impact the value of real estate.

Support services for theater and other artistic services within CB4 in the areas of rental storage space for art, costumes, scenery, lighting, and rehearsal studios have long been located throughout Chelsea and Clinton/Hell's Kitchen. These services are also losing viable space due to development and real estate costs. The money generated from these industries provides employment and maintains the artistic life of the city. CB4 is also concerned with the loss of artists' studios in the District and the displacement of working artists.

An increase in the overall budget of the Department of Cultural Affairs with a subsidy program that could ensure permanent locations for existing and displaced nonprofit arts entities is an ongoing need for this community.

Schools

CD4 has many schools of all grades serving local children as well as children from other school districts and boroughs. We have always supported education and are committed to developing and maintaining high standards for teachers as well as students. We must also provide assurances to parents that their children are in safe and healthy environments, both during the school day and during after school programs; this means on the streets as well as indoors.

There exists a heavy concentration of high schools within CD4; therefore, we would like to be consulted when new schools (provided through either new construction or space rental) are planned.

The reason for this provision can best be seen in the case of Park West High School and Graphic Communication Arts, which are within one block of each other. The 3,500 students attending these schools come from all five boroughs. This has led to clogged neighborhood streets at varying arrival and dismissal times, problems at subways and at other transportation points, and disruptive situations affecting our residents and businesses.

In addition, greater consideration should be given to community residents in terms of their needs, which include better sanitation around schools, and cleaner and safer streets for pedestrians. Joint planning between the Department of Education and CB4 can result in a more harmonious relationship, which will lead to a better educational environment.

In regard to the schools' challenge to recruit and retain qualified teachers, and the severe levels of turnover, this Board supports efforts to increase teachers' salaries to levels in parity with the surrounding suburban areas.

There has been an ongoing experiment by the Department of Education to have schools running from kindergarten through high school in order to improve the educational environment. The results of this experimentation are not conclusive. We are concerned that the large high schools in our district will suffer from possible reductions in funding for this experiment.

Libraries

We are happy that five day funding for libraries has changed for the better: currently, the libraries are not at risk of losing their base funding.

We support increasing branch library funding to bridge the "digital divide" through free computer training and broad access to the Internet. Ninety-eight percent of all free public access computers in the City are in public libraries. We strongly urge the City to provide funding so our libraries remain open on Saturdays for those residents who are unable to use them during the week.

CB4 also believes library funding for expanded hours and technology training and services should be increased. This Board seeks funding for building and technology infrastructure, which would serve to protect the investment that the City has made in computers and electronic information resources while ensuring well-maintained and secure libraries.

In regard to the libraries' challenge to recruit and retain qualified librarians, and the severe levels of turnover, this Board supports efforts to increase librarian salaries to levels in parity with the surrounding suburban areas.

HOUSING

CB4 is committed to the preservation and expansion of new affordable housing within our district. It is the Board's policy that 30% of all units in new residential developments be affordable to a range of low, moderate and middle income households. Those units developed must be affordable to a range of incomes. Specifically, 20% be for those earning up to 80% AMI, 50% for up to 125% AMI and 30% for up to 165% AMI to meet the current needs of our diverse population.

Today, CD4 is a mixed-income community offering a range of services and resources to people of lower income that are not available elsewhere. Since its inception, the Board has worked to create a community open to people of all income levels. Unfortunately, the economic upswing of the past ten years has made tenants in Clinton/Hell's Kitchen and Chelsea vulnerable to rising rents and displacement. The Board requests that the City recognize the long-term benefits associated with mixed-income neighborhoods and mixed-income buildings when considering the best use for the remaining government-owned property within the district as well as when reviewing any zoning changes, variance requests or development plans.

The District's diversity is in danger. CD4 is primarily a rental community that relies heavily on rent regulations, government subsidies and public housing to maintain its affordable housing stock. To date, rent regulations have played a large role in maintaining our economic diversity. However, changes in the rent regulations enacted by the NYS legislature have led to widespread deregulation of previously affordable units and a significant loss of our affordable housing stock. In CD4, units that now become vacant are inevitably decontrolled and no longer are affordable.

In addition, CD4 stands to lose a significant amount of affordable housing due to expiring uses in the immediate future. Section 8 contracts on two properties will expire in the next year and the property owners are considering opting out of the programs. Furthermore, the 20% affordable component in many 80-20 (80% market-rate-20% affordable) developments will soon approach expiration, and those apartments will revert to market-rate. The City must work to achieve a permanent solution and to develop a long term strategy to prevent the displacement of these households. In the short term, the City must ensure that rental subsidies (Section 8 Certificates or other programs) are in place to meet the needs of those tenants faced with displacement by their inability to afford increased rent due to opt outs.

The loss of rent regulated units to illegal use persists as an escalating problem. For example, residential units are often leased to corporations; bed and breakfast operations are created in long-term residential units; residential apartments are used for commercial use; others are illegally subdivided for multiple occupancy; SRO units are now used for tourist occupancy and other short term rentals. Illegal hotel and bed/breakfast use of apartments has grown significantly over the past year. Such uses violate a number of City codes, creates security and quality of life problems for neighboring tenants, and removes apartments that would otherwise be rent regulated from the market.

CB4 supports increasing the annual income limits for both the Senior and Disabled Rent Increase Exemption programs (SCRIE and DRIE) from \$25,000 per year to \$32,000 per year to reflect today's economics. Recent annual adjustments, while appreciated, are not adequate to meet escalating costs. Seniors who receive both social security and pensions often earn slightly more than \$25,000, are ineligible for SCRIE, but are unable to afford their rents.

CB4 believes significant government attention and creative investment are required to ensure new permanently affordable (low, moderate, and middle-income) housing is built in our community. We are encouraged by the City's commitment to develop affordable housing in the Hudson Yards and Chelsea districts and are hopeful this will lead to varied and creative new mechanisms to support this goal.

Little, if any, new affordable housing has been constructed in recent years outside of the 80-20 Housing Program. We are concerned that recent development in our district has included a significant number of market-rate condominium and cooperative development that provide no mechanism for an

affordable housing component, depriving our community of units that could otherwise be affordable to low, middle and moderate-income residents. Even the 80-20 program, in which the affordable component is time-limited, offers no long term benefit to the community, and does not respond to the need for permanent housing affordable to a range of low, moderate and middle-income residents. We strongly believe that this program is not the best use of public funds. Furthermore, the City must develop and share with each community board a database that tracks all government-subsidized affordable units (including those developed under the 80-20 program), to ensure on-going occupancy and compliance with affordability restrictions.

Since the long-ago demise of the Mitchell-Lama Program, most government funding opportunities have not addressed the needs of middle-income housing. In a community with a minimal supply of publicly-owned land, the best use for the remaining government-owned property within the district must be affordable housing. New means of creating and encouraging affordable housing on privately-owned property must also be considered. Text and map modifications of the Zoning Resolution, new funding mechanisms, and innovations in housing type/construction must be explored.

Department of Housing Preservation & Development

CB4 continues to support HPD programs that fund the rehabilitation of buildings, prevent evictions and improve the living conditions of those who live there. The current needs of our District, including the significant loss of privately-owned affordable housing and the increasing need for housing that is affordable to a range of incomes (low, middle and moderate), however, require new creative approaches.

Over the last ten years, most city-owned residential property within CD4 has been transferred to non-profit and tenant-ownership programs that have provided opportunities for preserving and increasing the supply of decent, affordable housing. As the supply of city-owned housing diminishes, the City must work with the Board to develop creative approaches that meet CB4's desperate need for affordable housing. In addition to the specific sites identified for affordable housing in the recent Hudson Yards and west Chelsea rezonings, flexible programs that provide for property acquisition and mixed-income housing are needed throughout the District.

CB4 continues to support capital programs such as HPD's Neighborhood Revitalization Program (NRP), which funds the rehabilitation of city-owned buildings. Not-for-profit rental buildings are a long-term stabilizing force in our neighborhood. CB4 also supports the continued use of the Supportive Housing Program to preserve and expand the supply of affordable SRO housing for homeless persons and community residents. This housing, with on-site supportive services for tenants, has been a successful model in housing very low-income persons. It is the sole HPD program that provides funds for acquisition of privately-owned property for conversion to affordable housing, and provides a means to expand the supply beyond currently publicly owned land.

CB4 strongly supports the expansion of service programs, such as the Community Consultant Contracts and Anti-Illegal Eviction Legal Services, which preserve affordable housing through eviction prevention and improvement of living conditions. These programs, among others, are critical to several community groups in our district working to preserve and increase affordable housing. Our community-based groups have utilized these programs to restore deteriorated buildings to excellent, long-term affordable housing and the rights of tenants have been protected. Their funding sources, which are always in danger, should be increased.

General Code Enforcement

Residents of Chelsea and Clinton/Hell's Kitchen continue to experience the negative impact of insufficient government response to conditions that threaten life, health and safety. In the 1980s, there were 685 housing code inspectors citywide. There are many fewer today. CB4 requests that HPD increase the number of its inspectors; fill the vacancies in its Litigation Bureau; and step up code enforcement as well as increase the number and timeliness of litigation against the most egregious violators of the housing codes. We also request that HPD, DOB, and Corporation Counsel pursue with due diligence the collection of outstanding fines owed by repeat violators, ensuring better enforcement and creating badly needed income for the City. An atmosphere of lawlessness now exists because corrupt landlords know there will be few consequences for disregarding relevant statutes and codes.

DOB and HPD inspectors and those assigned to the Mayor's Office of Midtown Enforcement (OME), do essential work in our area. Their work is particularly important within the Special Clinton District (SCD), where we depend on their skills to enforce arcane, but essential provisions of the SCD. The Board continues to see cases where owners have made renovations in SCD buildings without first applying for a required Certificate of No Harassment. The Board is concerned that the spread of self-certification by architects and engineers in applications to DOB and other agencies has led to a lowering and evasion of standards, particularly in areas like the SCD where special zoning regulations apply. Close monitoring of the effect of self-certification is essential. The city must continue to work closely with CB4 to establish the Hudson Yards special district and to set up a workable enforcement mechanism. Finally, while CB4 applauds the Mayor's commitment to increase funding for OME to provide one inspector dedicated to enforcing violations for illegal use, we foresee that additional inspectors will be necessary to properly address this situation.

Regulations are only as effective as the system in place to enforce them. We therefore request that DOB, HPD and the OME dedicate specific inspectors to concentrate on SCD enforcement and illegal use violations. These inspectors must receive rigorous and adequate training to ensure that they have the particular knowledge essential to preventing the flagrant disregard of SCD regulations that continue to occur too frequently. We also commit to taking such actions as are appropriate and necessary to stop illegal conversions, and to ensure that tenants are not harassed. We also call upon the DOB's Legal Department, Corporation Counsel and HPD to begin prosecuting the most flagrant violators of the regulations of the SCD and other housing codes and regulations. It is crucial that an on-going procedure be implemented by DOB to meet regularly with the Board and the community regarding these issues.

Single Room Occupancy Housing (SROs)

A large number of SROs (including rooming houses, SRO hotels, and converted tenements) exist in our District. However, SROs continue to disappear from the neighborhood at an alarming rate, due to either legal and illegal conversions to transient hotels or other uses. SROs have become the single most important source of affordable housing for single adults and an important resource for the prevention of homelessness. Affordable housing within our District is critical to house the diverse population of artists, students, minimum wage earners and those on fixed incomes. This mixed population includes the backbone of the service and cultural economy of the city, as well as many of the most frail and isolated members of our community.

The largest concentration of SRO housing in our community lies between Eighth and Ninth avenues from 42nd Street to 57th Street. In that area, there are 62 buildings that contain nearly 2,200 SRO units.

The majority of those units are found on 51st Street where twelve buildings contain 574 units. Forty-sixth Street is home to the largest concentration of SRO buildings, with 21 buildings housing 289 units.

CB4 supports the acquisition, renovation and new construction of sensitively-sited supportive housing developments to preserve and expand the SRO housing stock. The OME and HPD must strengthen the SRO anti-harassment laws and enforce them to protect this valuable and essential community resource. Continued funding of the efforts of the West Side SRO Law Project to protect tenants' rights and to preserve SRO housing is essential.

New York City Housing Authority

Security and enforcement are issues facing all property owners in the city. In particular, the Board is concerned about security concerns at Harborview Terrace, a senior NYCHA complex in Clinton. As reported in the New York Times, residents report drug dealing, elder abuse and threats from a number of younger people who are illegally occupying units at the complex. Similar security concerns are raised regarding the Elliot Chelsea Houses. We encourage NYCHA to work with CB4 to help coordinate solutions using a community-wide strategy instead of isolating developments and the people living within from the resources that surround them.

CB4 is extremely concerned over the proposed maintenance increases and new fees to be incurred by residents for specific services. Public Housing is home to those in our community with the lowest incomes, who can least afford to pay extra costs for services.

HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES

With major rezonings in West Chelsea and on the Far West Side, CD4 anticipates a substantial increase in the residential population. However, CD4's public infrastructure and human service programs are insufficient to meet the needs of the current population, and cannot be stretched to cover the anticipated growth. CB4 firmly believes that any new residential or commercial development in the area must be supported by adequate growth in public resources and facilities including public schools, health care facilities, and core support for organizations serving young people, homeless adults and families, working families and senior citizens.

Homelessness

Tragically, homelessness continues to be a terrible problem citywide and a particularly visible one in the CB4 area. We continue to appreciate the City's various efforts over the past few years to address the root causes of homelessness and, especially, the new resources devoted to the production of additional units of critically needed affordable and supportive housing.

Nonetheless, street homelessness remains a very visible problem in our district - actually increasing over the past few years. Over the years, efforts to "clean up" Midtown and other "high visibility" areas have only driven a larger number of homeless people into other parts of our community. Large public facilities located within our district, such as the Port Authority Bus Terminal, are also a natural gathering place for people without homes. Many homeless people need social services, in particular drug treatment and/or mental health services. Inclusion of these services is essential to any effort to address New York's homelessness situation.

Currently, two of the twelve citywide drop-in centers for homeless individuals are located within CD4. We encourage the City to continue funding these centers, as well as to maintain and expand funding for effective outreach, to ensure that the comprehensive interventions that are needed can be provided. We are also deeply concerned about the inadequacy of family shelter slots, especially for victims of domestic violence, as well as the lack of adequate resources for homeless youth. It is especially troubling that the needs of women, children and youth at risk are still far from being met.

Supportive Housing

CB4 recognizes the need for residential facilities and has consistently welcomed them into our neighborhoods, but we also realize that they can only be successful if they are well planned and staffed and appropriate for the location and population served.

Again, we are pleased to see the Mayor's plan focus on the provision of permanent housing. We believe that, whenever possible, such projects should mix supportive housing units with other low and moderate-income units. Community boards must be given an opportunity to assess any proposal for residential facilities in terms of the needs for specific facilities, the adequacy of the plan, and the quality of the provider. The City should work with the community to determine the size, site and design of each facility. Any facility must provide adequate and essential social services as well as access to health services and other necessary support services.

HIV / AIDS

New York City continues to account for a major proportion of the nation's AIDS cases; CD4 is home to the nation's largest percentage of people with AIDS. In order to slow and hopefully stop the spread of this disease, we actively support educational programs, condom distribution and needle exchanges. For our neighbors who are stricken with this disease, we welcome community-based care facilities, supportive housing and other programs geared towards people with AIDS. HIV/AIDS infection rates have long been increasing especially within communities of color, and among women and youth, however, funding for prevention and services to these communities has not kept pace.

Core Support for the Young and the Old

CB4 is concerned that the youngest and the oldest among us have adequate access to services necessary to assure their health, safety and security. For young children, adequate, supportive, licensed and affordable child care must be available for all those eligible, especially those newly moving into employment. Easily accessible and responsive health services for children and pregnant women are essential. For the elderly, a comprehensive range of services, including community centers, in-home supports, transportation, supportive housing, and preventive health and social services, are essential to assuring that they can live out their lives with dignity within their home communities.

Accessibility

We call upon the city Human Rights Commission to increase funding for more inspectors to investigate and enforce disabled accessibility building code compliance. We continue to receive complaints about deficiencies in various aspects of the paratransit system, including serious limitations in Access-a-Ride service.

Environment and Health

Hospital Care

CD4 lacks a municipally funded hospital. The nearest ones are Bellevue Hospital in CD6 and Gouverneur Hospital in CD3. With the Chelsea rezoning and Hudson Yards plans, the population of our district will increase significantly. Therefore a reassessment of community health care needs is necessary. It is anticipated that the voluntary sector will meet the needs of new residents with health care coverage or in self-pay status. However, there is concern for our Medicaid and Medicare-only reliant residents and those who lack any health care coverage who are often referred to the municipal hospital system. Our board is opposed to any cuts to health care service in the district and/or the imposition of increased co-pay requirements for these patients. We also feel the elimination of existing hospital beds will impact negatively on our community.

Substance Abuse

CB4 is concerned about reports that the use of crystal methamphetamine is gaining a foothold in our community. In addition to other health and mental health dangers, use of this drug has been associated with increased use of other illicit drugs and sexual practices that enhance chances of contracting HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases. CB4 feels strongly that the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene needs to increase funding for education, prevention, treatment and rehabilitation programs to address the growing use of crystal meth.

Other Health Concerns

Residents of Clinton/Hell's Kitchen and Chelsea are faced with a variety of other health and environmental concerns. We continue to be concerned about the need for adequate pest control and urge maintenance of funding for this critical service. Similarly, we are concerned that sufficient resources be focused on addressing issues of maintaining, repairing, and upgrading the sewer and storm drainage system, especially west of Ninth Avenue. This has been the source of chronic problems in the past that are likely to be exacerbated by new construction and needs constant monitoring from the DEP and DOT.

YOUTH SERVICES

The Chelsea and Clinton/Hell's Kitchen community is home to more than 8,400 children under 18 years of age, more than 17% of whom receive public assistance and more than 77% of whom receive emergency food assistance. Youth services in our district have been woefully under funded for many years. While we appreciate the recent attention given to the issue of youth services citywide, the changes implemented through the Out of School Time (OST) process left us with serious concerns regarding the overall adequacy of available funds to create and sustain high quality programs and to reach all those in need of such services.

More specifically, we are extremely distressed by the dramatic reduction in general youth services funds for school-age children and teens that was allocated to our district through the OST process. The design of the RFP rendered organizations in our district virtually ineligible to receive funding. We feel that this is due to a misperception that the number of young people in CD4 is not substantial enough to warrant public support for youth services.

Despite what aggregate statistics might suggest, this is a district with a large low-income population - especially concentrated in several local public housing developments, several severely underperforming schools, and significant social needs, as evidenced by measures such as substance abuse and child abuse and neglect. The planned elimination of ACS school-age classrooms in the district compounds this problem and leaves little, if any, safe, affordable, year-round child care for working parents. In neighborhoods such as ours, which include many low-income working families, quality, publicly-funded day care - including school-age child care - is a primary concern.

Four percent of our older youth, ages 16 to 19, are not enrolled in school and are not working. While there are a number of reputable community providers trying to address the needs of this population through alternative schools and the provision of employment training and other support services, these organizations are under-funded and have already exceeded their program capacity. We are concerned that the City's clear preference for funding school-based OST programs does not address the needs of this population.

While we are encouraged by the City's increased attention to workforce development and employment initiatives, we continue to be distressed by the decline in funding for the Youth Employment Program (YEP) overall. Across the City, an overwhelming number of older youth are not prepared to finish high school or to enter the workforce. Through YEP, these young people gain valuable vocational and soft skills, discipline and leadership. We feel strongly that funds should be restored to the level available as of four years ago.

We have experienced a decline in the availability of program slots for summer youth programs. In May of 2004, the Chelsea Recreation Center opened in our district. While this facility is available to all ages, over half of its summer members are under the age of 21. The Center is in need of additional staffing, specifically playground assistants and other youth workers, to coordinate youth activities. Recreation Center members also have voiced the desire for services to be expanded to include Sundays, but have been informed that budgetary constraints do not permit this expansion.

With regard to other youth needs, we urge that housing for homeless and run-away youth be maintained and expanded, and that alternative to violence and creative justice programs, as well as job training and placement programs, be maintained and expanded.

CULTURE & EDUCATION

Schools

CD4 has many schools of all grades serving local children as well as children from other school districts and boroughs. We have always supported education and are committed to developing and maintaining high standards for teachers as well as students. We must also provide assurances to parents that their children are in safe and healthy environments, both during the school day and during after school programs; this means on the streets as well as indoors.

There exists a heavy concentration of high schools within CD4; therefore, we would like to be consulted when new schools (provided through either new construction or space rental) are planned. The reason for this provision can best be seen in the case of Park West High School and Graphic Communication Arts, which are within one block of each other. The 3,500 students attending these schools come from all five boroughs. This has led to clogged neighborhood streets at varying arrival and dismissal times, problems at subways and at other transportation points, and disruptive situations affecting our residents and businesses.

In addition, greater consideration should be given to community residents in terms of their needs, which include better sanitation around schools, cleaner and safer streets for pedestrians, etc. Joint planning between the Department of Education and CB4 can result in a more harmonious relationship, which will lead to a better educational environment.

In regard to the schools' challenge to recruit and retain qualified teachers, and the severe levels of turnover, this Board supports efforts to increase teachers' salaries to levels in parity with the surrounding suburban areas.

WATERFRONT & PARKS

CD4 is home to about 100,000 residents who share 700 acres of dense city blocks. Yet the District has only 3 parks and 11 pocket parks or playgrounds, totaling less than 16 acres. We also have a long narrow strip of Hudson River Park that still is under development eight years after the Hudson River Park Act was signed, and with no firm timetable set for the development of the more than 50% of it within CD4. Many years ago it was reported by the Manhattan Borough President that of the 59 community districts in the City, CD4 ranks 57th in terms of open space with less than 1/5 of an acre of open space per 1,000 residents, compared to a citywide average or 2-1/2 acres per thousand. Sadly this is still true today. Delays in the development of key parts of Hudson River Park (in particular Pier 97, still home to DOS garbage trucks, and Pier 76, still Manhattan's tow pound - not to mention Gansevoort Peninsula, at the southern edge of CD4) mean that this imbalance will continue for at least a few more years, and will only improve marginally at best.

Further, expense and capital budget cuts and the dramatically low staffing levels of the Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) make it harder and harder for the Department to maintain the few parks we have, threatening the quality of life. Over the past 30 years, the DPR budget has fallen sharply. As a result of reduced funding, DPR now has less than half of the full time staff that it did ten years earlier and parks are cleaned less frequently, fewer recreational programs are offered and less security is provided.

CB4 strongly urges that the administration make a greater commitment to open space in our community by restoring the Parks Department budget. We should be ashamed of a simple comparison of two similar cities - Chicago, where parks enjoy 4% of the annual budget, and New York, which has to make do with less than 3/10 of 1%. Our goal at the moment, as it has been for several years, is for parks in NYC as a whole to be funded at a paltry 1%. In particular, several areas need special attention:

- Each park in our district should have a full-time, on-site park keeper to address constituents' concerns, provide security and perform routine maintenance of that park alone;

- Funding must be directed towards full-time gardeners, maintenance workers, PEP officers, as well as seasonal aides and playground associates for the summer;
- Funding for requirements contracts should be increased so the Parks Department can maintain the parks in the best fashion;
- Funding must be dedicated to support Green Thumb Community Gardens and pruning for street trees;
- Hudson River Park must be completed as planned as soon as possible.

Waterfront

Hudson River Park remains the one bright star on the horizon - but for many parts of the park it has been far too long on the horizon. Happily, Pier 84, which will be the jewel of HRP in CD4, will have opened by the fall of 2006. Work is proceeding or will begin soon in the Chelsea segment, including the balance of Chelsea Waterside Park. But, as mentioned above, significant portions of the park (Pier 97, Pier 76 and Gansevoort) are still being used for municipal purposes despite the terms of the Hudson River Park Act. Even as we wonder when these portions will eventually become parkland (or 50% parkland in the case of Pier 76), a plan to build a new transfer station for recycled trash at Gansevoort Peninsula plus the conversion of Pier 99 to commercial waste, was recently approved by the City Council and Mayor. We cannot lose sight of the vision of a complete Hudson River Park. Here are several areas of concern:

Piers 92 - 97

The newly opened Clinton Cove Park is delightful - but small. Pier 97 needs to be vacated by DOS as soon as possible as per the terms of the Hudson River Park Act. The northern stub of the Pier 94 head house must be reclaimed for public space, especially now as the city contemplates the use of both Piers 94 and 92 as a midsize convention center. A pedestrian bridge between Dewitt Clinton and Clinton Cove Parks is needed for both safety and convenience in crossing the busiest section of Route 9A.

Passenger Ship Terminal

The new design for the Passenger Ship Terminal must be inclusive of, and sensitive to, park visitors to the maximum extent possible. Traffic flow must be dramatically improved. Waterfront access must also be improved as the terminal is being redesigned. Security measures must be sensitive to visual access and its setting within a park.

Piers 81 and 83

A resolution must be found with Circle Line/World Yacht parking areas in order to free the upland area of Piers 81 and 83. For several years, CB4 has supported the building of a garage on Pier 81 to accomplish this in exchange for Circle Line voluntarily relinquishing its lease on these upland areas.

Heliport

CB4 remains opposed to any heliport within Hudson River Park, and calls for the heliport in the vicinity of 29th Street to be closed immediately.

Pier 76

The tow pound at Pier 76 must be relocated as soon as possible so that this pier can be developed with 50% allocated to new park space. The fact that the Mounted Unit is being relocated there on a temporary basis must not slow down this effort. A permanent home for the Mounted Unit must be identified (preferably within CD4) as well as a new home for the tow pound so that this pier can be developed as called for by the Hudson River Park Act.

Piers 63 - 66a

Work on Pier 64 should begin as soon as possible, along with the demolition of Pier 63, so that this long planned segment of the park can be completed. In addition, funding must be secured for the concession and comfort station in the eastern part of Chelsea Waterside Park. CB4 also supports moving of the very popular public access pier called Pier 63 Maritime to Pier 66A just north of Pier 64.

Gansevoort Peninsula

The Hudson River Park Act requires that the salt pile at Gansevoort Peninsula be removed by December 2003, and that remaining DOS uses be vacated as soon as possible. Further, some significant mitigation for the continued occupation of Gansevoort is expected. The notion that a new un-permitted use be placed there – a transfer station for recycled trash – is simply unacceptable.

Inland Parks and Recreation Centers

Inland parks within CD4 are a mixture of good news and ongoing problems and challenges. The good news includes the restoration of Hell's Kitchen Park and the recent allocation of significant funds for the playing fields at DeWitt Clinton Park, both due in great part to the efforts of the new Speaker of the City Council, Christine Quinn. In addition, we are pleased about the continued progress on the new High Line Park. It also seems that progress is being made toward the restoration of the 59th Street Recreation Center. But attention needs to be paid to the following areas:

Clement Clark Moore Park

Maintenance is an issue at Clement Clark Moore Park. The park needs a horticultural master plan and the park's trees desperately need pruning. One corner of the park near a gate that is permanently padlocked should be reused.

Chelsea Park

The stone columns, which date back to Tammany days, should be moved to a more appropriate location than the current random spot. Long term solutions for homeless in this area are still needed.

Dewitt Clinton Park

CB4 was pleased to hear about the \$3.2 million set aside to renovate the ballfields at Dewitt Clinton Park. These fields are heavily utilized by leagues, colleges, and the local community and are in grave need of repair. CB4 believes, however, that the entire park is in need of major renovation including play areas, fully functioning restrooms, the steps at the western end of the park, and seating areas. CB4 continues to make the restoration of this park a priority.

Hell's Kitchen Park

Our only disappointment with Hell's Kitchen Park is the lack of a comfort station which was originally planned. Unfortunately the children's water feature at the southwest corner of the park has poor drainage. We fear this will be problematic in the future.

High Line

Now that the High Line is moving in a positive direction, the City must ensure that this important project is funded and completed. We understand that advertising on the sides of the High Line is being retained for an interim period and we hope that the income from these signs is, in fact, retained for use on this project.

New Parkland

CB4 continues to pursue potential sites for new parkland including 49th Street and Tenth Avenue, currently held by the DEP for construction of the Third Water Tunnel and the Ninth Avenue frontage of MTA's Rail Control Center Project between 53rd and 54th streets, which is no longer needed by MTA. More parkland for the Chelsea neighborhood needs to be identified and secured such as the DOS parking lot on the south-side of 20th Street between Sixth and Seventh avenues. Furthermore, Hell's Kitchen Park South, shown in the City's Hudson Yards plan, must be created with a combination of public and private funds for land acquisition and long-term development strategies.

Street Trees

More street trees, a major influence on the quality of life in Chelsea and Clinton, and more Green Streets are needed in CD4. Street trees should be planted on Ninth Avenue from 34th to 42nd Streets and between Ninth and Tenth Avenues from 35th to 41st Streets. DPR's Green Streets program should be used on Port Authority marginal land adjacent to Dyer Avenue and the Lincoln Tunnel approaches. More trees are also needed on Ninth Avenue from 42nd up to 57th Street, as well as other locations. DPR should share its tree census data with CD4 so that further locations can be identified.

August 2006



Robert J. Benfatto, Jr.
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