

# District Needs Statement

## Community Board 13

### Statement of District Needs

#### FY 2009

Community Board 13Q is located in Southeast Queens along the Nassau border. It is made up primarily of one and two family homes, with a scattering of garden apartments and apartment buildings. The district encompasses nine distinct communities, which includes, Bellerose, Cambria Heights, Floral Park, Glen Oaks, Laurelton, Meadowmere, New Hyde Park, Queens Village, Rosedale, and Springfield Gardens. There is a strong sense of neighborhood commitment in each of these communities. This June Community Board 13Q conducted three meetings specifically to ascertain the needs and desires of residents and civics. The meetings were attended by up to one hundred residents who were not shy in expressing their desires.

The needs in each community differ greatly. One community may fight for a long awaited library, while another struggles with overcrowding and overtaxed utilities due to illegal conversions. Too many of our neighborhoods have a desperate need for street resurfacing, or more accurately street reconstruction, and other communities suffer from regular flooding or chronic illegal dumping. Many issues affect the entire board such as a proliferation of group homes and day programs significantly beyond the fair share due our communities. Other quality of life issues prevail as well. One of the constant complaints in fair weather is backyard parties with loudspeakers the size of garages, which run until early morning. Also, illegal social clubs start around midnight letting boisterous, unruly patrons file out around dawn. While our youth population is greatly increasing, they have no place to go for good, honest, supervised fun, City agencies are taking away areas near the bay with great recreational and environmental potential, to establish projects that will create more congestion and pollution in areas already severely polluted and congested with airport-related truck and car traffic.

This district has a large senior population, growing larger as people tend more to stay in the area as opposed to migrating down south. We believe that our overall population is increasing. The transition in many communities involves young families with children moving into the community and requiring services. In addition, many new houses are being built anywhere there is vacant land - one recent complaint was a house ten feet wide being added to a lot. Developers have demolished viable one and two family homes to build larger multi-family buildings. While these buildings attract young families and add to the diversity and vibrancy of our district, the younger couples coming in will create need for more classrooms and additional out-of-school activities. The stay-put seniors and new youth population trends indicate a critical need for programs to provide activities for youth and services for seniors.

This area is clearly not getting its fair share of city services from any of the agencies. We were devastated recently when it was announced at July 2008's Borough Board meeting that the City's new SCOUT program reported the most "conditions" in CB13 than in any for the other thirteen districts. This is very disturbing for a district routinely receiving 97.5% to 99% ratings from DASNY and DEP. Storm damaged tree branches seem to lay in the gutter for weeks, curbs are non-existent or barely a memory in some areas. We are fortunate that most of our constituents clean up their sidewalks and gutters and often pick up rubbish from streets, malls and nearby parks. But they don't have the skills or equipment to repair curbs, prune trees or prevent crime. We deserve and demand our fair share and improvement to our quality of life from City agencies as follows:

### **Police Department**

Community Board 13 has not received our fair share of manpower and equipment since "Safe Streets-Safe Cities" became a non-priority. Most recent academy class graduates, for example, were assigned to our bordering precinct. Our 105th precinct got none of the rookies. Meanwhile, there has been a pattern of rapes and sexual abuse cases developing and the response has been inadequate to nonexistent. The residents of Southeast Queens, deserve and demand significantly more police attention, yet the 2008 staffing is twenty percent lower than in 2004.

More than twenty-five years ago the southeast CB13 neighborhoods were promised a dedicated precinct - the 116th. This was not only because of the enormity of the precinct but also its shape and location at the Nassau County border. Furthermore it must be noted that this precinct borders on JFK International Airport, one of the City's potential terror targets. Last year's thwarted attempt to attack the oil pipelines clearly demonstrates the potential. Should an incident occur, police manpower would be drained to the south leaving the north residents unprotected. In a catastrophe the 105 should be able to backstop the 116th force in the residential area while maintaining sufficient presence in the north.

In spite of promises and community demands, in July 2007 we were informed of the opening of a satellite office in Rosedale, covering only five sectors and operating only two shifts a day with limited supervision and resources. The community has made several requests but has not received a formal report on the "pilot" satellite, now in operation over a year without a public accounting except oral assurances that response time is up and crime down in the covered five sectors. However, the recent spasm of sexual crimes has occurred primarily within the new satellite area.

At one time violent crimes were not the issue in our district, but recently that has changed with an increase in gun and knife crimes and burglaries in commercial and retail buildings in various communities. The Cambria Heights neighborhood, which is usually quite placid, has experienced a significant increase during the past year in violent crime, illegal clubs and potential gang activities. Gangs were never a serious problem in our district, but according to our community

meetings, at least one murder and it is likely that several burglaries have been the result of increased gang activity.

The community was extremely receptive to the community-policing program years ago. However, that program has diminished from 36 beats to only 3 beats covering the whole 12.3 square miles. Therefore, many residents complain that they never see an officer in their neighborhood. Our community is concerned that quality of life and misdemeanor complaints receive no response in the form of an officer appearing at the scene in a timely manner. Each year during the summer months there is a dramatic increase in noise complaints due to large and disorderly backyard parties in our area require an immediate increase in enforcement of noise restrictions. For fiscal 2008, the City's 311 records show noise, with 1,998 complaints, by far the highest complaint reports. These parties also prompt illegal parking, DWI, possible drug sales and criminal activity.

Quality of Life concerns continue. Graffiti continues to be a major problem on public and private property. Motorcycles, ATV's, and noisy mopeds on local streets break the summer quiet and drag racing on some streets has become a safety problem; people cannot sleep and have expressed total frustration in this matter. The district office and 311 have also received a dramatically increased number of calls for other non-criminal activities such as illegal parking particularly truck on-street storage throughout the district. In 2008 there were 2,079 complaints for illegal parking and derelict vehicles many of which, we believe were truck storage violations intended to ensure a peaceful, safe and tranquil "bedroom community" lifestyle. Without adequate police response or a minimal effort to enforce clear and long-standing regulations, we will not continue to enjoy this quality of life.

Community Board 13Q, is 13.2 square miles or 354 block miles which makes it the second largest board by land mass in the City of New York. This also means that police vehicles are over used and abused. Patrol cars are used at the rate of 1,000 miles per week or 100 miles per tour. Everyone in the community can immediately spot the precinct's unmarked van.

The 105th precinct lost 6 police administrative aides and they have not been replaced. Full time, highly trained and skilled police officers are doing the job that administrative aides could do at lower cost while leaving an officer on the streets.

Therefore, Community Board 13Q requests the following:

The establishment of a second precinct, the 116, with a combined staffing with the 105 of no less than 30% above 2004 staffing.

The immediate response and strict enforcement of noise restrictions, parking violations, graffiti and on-street truck storage, including no less than five permanently assigned boots for trucks.

Additional attention must be paid to the possible formation and growth of gangs and to the education of youth and parents of the signs of gang recruitment and problems associated with gang activity.

Additional civilian personnel must be assigned to free up uniformed police officers to address crime and quality of life conditions.

A shorter service life for vehicles and at least one large capacity non-descript van for responding to certain crimes and for surveillance.

A mobile command post permanently assigned to the 105/116 so it can be promptly dispatched to problem areas to permit rapid response of command and control into communities and an enhanced "show of force".

Increase enforcement at elementary schools to discourage double parking, stop dangerous j-walking and improve traffic flow near these schools.

### **Fire Department**

Our board has determined that in order to have quality fire prevention we must continue to support quality fire investigation. More education for community and particularly to school aged children is necessary regarding fire prevention, safe evacuation and currently emergency response due to terrorism potential in our area.

The most serious problem with illegal residential or commercial conversions is the fire safety issue due to overcrowding and substandard electrical and building systems, as well as the danger to firefighters due to moved or additional partitions or doorways. FDNY has access authority not available to the Department of Buildings.

Fire fighters face danger as they exit and re-enter their firehouses in an emergency. As has been the case in Nassau County, it would be helpful on busy New York City streets, and at intersections to have a dedicated traffic light, controlled from the fire house, to prompt vehicles to stop for emergency vehicles, and eliminate any delay in getting out of the firehouse. This is particularly important in a primarily residential area, like ours, where there are typically less traffic controls and more relaxed driving standards. These controlled devices could mean slightly faster response and possibly saving someone's life and property.

Therefore, Community Board 13Q requests the following:

Provide additional fire marshals and enhance the Queens fire marshal headquarters in Fort Totten with all needed staffing and equipment.

Reinforce fire education in schools and increase outreach to community groups, especially immigrant groups.

Increase use of firefighters for the inspection of illegal conversions, both residential and commercial, where the district manager has validated the conditions of the complaint.

Install a signal light in front of every firehouse within Community Board 13.

### **Public Safety**

Our communities rely heavily on the emergency medical service for assistance and transportation in crises. Our area is served by the Cross Island Parkway, Grand Central Parkway, Laurelton Parkway and Belt Parkway, all very heavily travelled roadways, not to mention the hundreds of street miles in the district, often very confusing and difficult to maneuver.

With so many miles of highways, older wood-frame buildings and a major airport in our area we strongly support the CityWeb initiative currently placing antennas for data and video communications to transportation and first responder agencies. However, numerous calls came in during the installations and we had no knowledge of the program.

In our community meetings the topic of traffic signal interrupters came up. We strongly encourage the appropriate use of traffic signal interrupters during the response to a fire or medical emergency, even at the inconvenience of some drivers and minor, temporary traffic congestion.

Therefore, Community Board 13Q requests the following:

At least four additional ambulances to be staged at appropriate locations in the north and south and two in the central district area.

An increase in EMS service and availability in Community Board 13Q.

Advance notification to community boards of the exact plans for locating CityWeb towers in the districts.

To be consulted on appropriate locations and advised of installations of traffic signal interrupters.

### **Department of Buildings/Code Enforcement**

Illegal residential conversions and illegal commercial uses are escalating at an alarming rate. We continue to be very concerned with illegal residential conversions due to the over taxing of city services that invariably results, but also because of the safety implications of substandard electrical and other building systems when inspections will not be conducted. Too often only one wall remains under a partial demolition permit, but frequently even that is removed, replaced and enclosed before inspection and often these buildings incorporate illegal dwellings and deprive the City of tax revenue of new buildings. It is also noted that most of the time illegal or unpermitted construction is performed by non-union firms. Seventy-five percent of construction-

related deaths and accidents involving damage to surrounding structures in 2006 were non-union jobs.

Illegal commercial uses has become a serious and increasing problem in our area, primarily because of immigrant populations taking over buildings and using them in ways noncompliant with zoning. For example, a new merchant takes over a storefront in a commercial area intended for small very local uses with limited parking and other requirements. With success brought by attracting other new residents he buys and expands to adjacent stores, makes unapproved doorways between buildings and subdivides areas with stalls. This is very dangerous and creates serious potential fire hazards, but the Department of Buildings is not responsive for inspections. Furthermore, as the stores get bigger, patrons are drawn from a wider area bringing more cars, out of compliance with zoning regulations. DOB does not consider this a Buildings issue, but it affects the residential neighbors who lose their parking places and have to deal with unregulated congestion.

These commercial and residential illegal installations must not just be cited; they must not be allowed to continue. There must be personnel sufficient to insure adequate inspections on an on going basis.

A resident of our area recently died of lung cancer caused by asbestos. While fighting cancer he noticed that numerous houses in his area were being demolished with asbestos pipes insulation, siding, roofing and other materials exposing neighbors and workers to friable asbestos without the proper abatement procedures. The gentleman was able to get the construction halted and the project was closed down for several months.

Finally, we believe that professional certification (self-certification) of residential permits dealing with major building alterations is the primary source of illegal conversions and use of Directive 14 on professionally certified major alterations or new building projects eliminates any Buildings Department oversight on such projects. Likewise, professionals' authority to self-certify the objections will be corrected is a "fox in the hen house" issue, possibly depriving the community of safe and compliant construction.

Therefore, Community Board 13Q requests the following:

The prompt inspection of all demolition complaints and the establishment a strict, clear and consistent standard for requiring a full demolition permit.

Increase training requirements in safety and construction procedures and more inspection, particularly for non-union firms.

Closer enforcement of zoning code with regard to local vs. regional commercial properties.

Ensure adequate DOB inspection/examiner staff to review all permit applications and respond more quickly to all complaints.

Enforce the building/zoning code, including mandating the removal of new construction, modifications and expansions that are in violation of code.

Fully enforce all inspection of asbestos-containing materials during demolition of older residential structures in our area.

Discontinue in the Queens Community Board 13 area professional certification all major alteration and new building permits and establish a special unit to monitor construction continuously.

Disallow Directive 14 for any professionally certified application and eliminate authorization for professionals to certify any permit application change required due to examiners' objections or site inspections.

### **DoITT - 311 and Community Boards**

Community Boards have lost some ground over the past year with a budget reduction which will be very difficult. We are relieved that the second reduction was rescinded by the Council, but is still planned for the 2010 budget. This will be very difficult to implement while trying to meet our Charter obligations.

311 has become a vital resource and a staple service to the residents and businesses of the city, however, it must be noted that there appears to be a lack of training of 311 operators about the meaning of some complaints that come in, resulting in the routing of some calls erroneously and dispatching the wrong forces. For example, in a recent complaint a 311 call about a disco operation being set up in a residential garage was routed to the Buildings Department, rather than to the 105th Precinct. This resulted in a delay of several weeks before any response and deep frustration and loss of sleep for the neighbors.

However, there is a vast array of data gathered every month that could be of great assistance to community boards in their Charter-mandated overview and coordination of delivery of city services. While certain static detail is available to the general public as well as city employees of community boards, enhanced access is necessary for our district offices to take greatest advantage of the data and to tie it in to service delivery. Particularly, the exact location of problems, such as potholes, sinkholes, cave-ins, water main breaks, etc. would provide an opportunity of the local district offices to investigate and identify potential cross-agency issues and effectively address them in district cabinet meetings and capital budget requests.

In addition, district managers and other CB staff have no priority access to filing complaints or making service requests. As highly trained city employees with thorough knowledge of local neighborhood issues, these staff should be provided special filing access and priority.

Therefore, Community Board 13Q requests the following:

Renew and increase Community Boards budgets.

Ensure continued, enhanced training of 311 operators and a feedback mechanism for district managers to identify topics to be addressed.

Establish enhanced community board access to 311 data, particularly exact location of infrastructure related conditions.

Give priority access for district managers to a dedicated 311 operator or assigned PIN code for staff to establish appropriate legitimacy and credibility with operators.

## **Education**

With the significant additional building that has occurred, there has been a rapid influx of families with school age children and the Mayor's prediction of 900,000 city-wide increase in population by 2030 means that this growth will do nothing but continue to increase. But school buildings are very overcrowded. Parents see a diminished range in classes offered to the students at the elementary school level, and particularly in extra curricular activities. Parents are concerned with the quality of education and fear for the safety of their children as they move to Middle and High Schools. Many families are seeking to relocate for better educational opportunities and safety inside and outside the school buildings. We are obliged to make sure that every child in our Community Board has a seat in his or her neighborhood school and each school must provide a full range of educational services.

The physical plant of many of our school buildings needs attention.

Headstart and/or Pre-Kindergarten facilities are rapidly becoming too costly. School enrollment projections indicate that many more school seats will be required over the next decade.

Therefore, Community Board 13Q requests the following:

We need a rational plan to increase classroom seats to meet the growing demand.

We must be prepared for additional ESL programs with an increase of immigrants from Asia and the Indian sub-continent.

After-School programs must be increased at every neighborhood school and high school.

Gyms, school equipment and supervisory staff must be available to provide safe after school activities for youth.

Cultural programs and extra-curricular activities, such as music and art must be expanded to provide a more well-rounded education and create interests that might not otherwise be tapped.

Building maintenance, always a source of pride to custodial staff, must be supported and enhanced with sufficient budgets and oversight.

School safety staff must be adequate in number and appropriately trained to provide a safe learning environment.

## **Youth**

Youth programs are limited within our district. Currently, the Department of Education and the Department of Youth and Community Development provide limited after school and evening programs to the Board area. Some programming exists in local religious institutions. However, the board area is not eligible for Community Development funds and has few community based organizations eligible to apply for the funds that for the most part do exist.

Schools buildings offer the primary source of space for youth programs in Community Board 13Q. The opening and space fees for evening programs in a school building still exist in prohibitive amounts. This factor inhibits program initiatives that are needed in the primary site resource available during the day and evening hours. Public buildings should be available for public use and there is no use we can think of more important than providing a safe haven for our youth after school hours.

It is imperative the DYCD and Education establish a program to keep all public schools open after school until the evening. It appears obvious that youth cannot, and probably will not travel a long distance to get to after school programs. If they have to travel far they will just stay local and hang out. While Beacon programs are exceptional for their supervised programs and learning opportunities, there are only two Beacons in our district and they are far from many of the neighborhood youths. However, there is a school in walking distance of each neighborhood and each school has facilities for recreation. They should be opened and available every school day after school.

The Department of Youth and Community Development Community Share Allocations to the Community Board and the local School District have been the best means of meeting local youth programming needs in a competitive funding stream with a local review process. Only the Community Board and Community School District can pinpoint the programmatic needs of the community and under a locally controlled recommendation process, direct any funds available to fill those needs. Programs in local communities are providing the front-line youth service programs available to all children in all communities throughout the city. These program decisions must be supported and the community's recommendations respected by city officials and the agencies that serve youth.

Community Board 13Q has identified some of the priorities in youth programs within the board. They include expanded recreation and leisure time activities to provide year-round youth programming and to serve the growing need for latch-key type programs; educational and career choice counseling; youth employment; programs addressing the high school dropout rate; substance abuse prevention counseling; support programs to help resolve personal and family

problems and the need for expansion of appropriate education and prevention programs addressing health needs and the growing threat of AIDS to the youth population.

Therefore, Community Board 13Q requests the following:

The maintenance and enhancement of the Department of Youth and Community Development/Community Board cooperative planning efforts and coordination for all youth programming located in/or serving the youth population of the community board.

Provide a youth coordinator position and protections for the prerogative of each Community Board to plan for youth services with a full time staff position specific to that individual board.

Increase Community Share Allocation funding to Community Boards/Youth Services Planning Committees and After School Program funding to Community School Districts to permit new program development, program expansion and needed salary increases.

Eliminate opening fees and space costs for all school building day and evening youth programs to encourage expanded use of these site resources for our youth population.

Focus on reaching out to youth, empowering them, and increasing their self-esteem, their understanding and their sensitivity to others in a multicultural society. Youth must be encouraged to be involved in identifying, planning, implementing and evaluating various projects to achieve various goals.

Establish multi-generational programs to take advantage of the experiences of the elderly and have youth provide help and support.

## **Health**

Our district has only one hospital, Long Island Jewish Medical Center (LIJ). Situated at the extreme north eastern edge of the district, this hospital is extremely inconvenient for most of our population and many southern residents travel to Franklin General Hospital in Nassau County for treatment, particularly for outpatient services that could be offered locally at clinical facilities. We need more health clinics in Community Board 13Q. One such neighborhood clinic is in the planning stages by LIJ and others by Queens Hospital Center.

Animal borne diseases such as west Nile Virus and Lyme Disease are serious and potentially deadly ailments. It is almost impossible to keep ticks, mosquitoes and rats under control if there is no way to mandate that owners remove stagnant water and maintain their unimproved lots or land with a structure upon it. The current method appears not to be sufficient, and it should be reviewed by joint groups i.e. Sanitation, Health, Environmental Protection (sewers), and the Department of Transportation. Presently, the pest control program appears to be fragmented and should be revamped.

We must have a new program for pest control. The rat population seems to be increasing. This is due at least in part to accelerated construction in our area, which disrupts rat nests. We request baiting of properties; however, there is no follow-up to many of our requests.

Our Community Board is experiencing an escalation of rat and raccoon infestation of private residences, lots, and in the streets in all areas of the district.

Animal Control should be responsible for raccoon removal especially from the homes of our residents. In the past ASPCA took raccoons' out of people's houses that program worked out great. Our Senior Citizen population cannot afford to get a company to go into their homes to trap raccoons', and get them out. It should be the obligation of the City to remove these dangerous animals.

Community Board 13 has been receiving numerous complaints about feral cats roaming in packs. This is very disconcerting because of health related issues of fleas, feces and the possibility of biting and rabies. We urge Department of Health to address the problem of roaming cats as well as raccoons, rats, etc.

Nurses should be returned to schools because of the escalation of contagious diseases and their expertise in the recognition, and prevention of problems.

Therefore, Community Board 13Q requests the following:

Support and encourage development of community medical clinical facilities in our communities.

Penalize property owners who do not maintain their property personally or through contracted services at least on a semi-annual basis

City-owned and government property must be properly maintained or Pest Control must similarly enforcement mechanisms for the public landlord.

Establish an interagency task force to review and revamp pest control programs, particularly with regard to construction activities, but by government and private builders.

Improve department of Health response to raccoon and feral cat complaints since these animals, even on private property can be dangerous and carry infectious diseases.

### **Economic Development**

Several very active and effective local development corporations and business groups have been established in our area and are making strides in moving their local projects forward on our commercial strips. Security, regular street cleaning, daily household and basket collection, creating additional parking, improved lighting, and infrastructure improvements are on their agendas. These business groups seek ways to attract additional businesses compatible to the

abutting residential communities. Many of these groups survive only on State grants or federal funding, but they provide a vital service to city government, increasing sales and business taxes and reducing City staffing necessary to provide direct support to businesses. Additional support from government would assist them in making more progress. Our local merchants need help to remain stable and avoid illegal use of business property.

What Community Board 13 does not want is for the Economic Development Department to sell every piece of vacant land to commercial developers. There is space that is just not appropriate for development. In particular, the section of Rockaway Boulevard adjacent to Kennedy Airport has been a buffer to the airport and should appropriately remain forever wild or provide some recreational access. Yet, the department has attempted to sell large portions of this space. While one project went down in flames thanks to objections of the community and the board, two projects (Logan Bus and Quick Courier) are going forward and one (NYPD Impound Lot) is in the review process, likely to be supported by the administration.

Therefore, Community Board 13Q requests the following:

Increase funding and grants available to community-based business

Increase incentives to businesses to upgrade their operations

Encourage minority and women business development and growth, since they are more likely to hire locally and grow quickly.

All undeveloped property under the control of the Economic Development Corporation be turned over to the Parks Department to prevent any future commercial development and maintain a buffer to the airport.

### **Social Services and Senior Citizens**

Seniors comprise a large segment of our population. It is imperative that programs be developed and maintained to meet their needs.

Senior programs provide important services that our older residents lack entirely. Transportation and regular, fresh not frozen, Meals-On-Wheels service available to all seniors is needed. The Access-a-Ride service has just been expanded to permit direct travel to Long Island Jewish and North Shore Hospital Centers. This is a significant improvement that will eliminate the need to meet another van at city line to get to vital medical services.

There is a need for a series of multi-purpose centers throughout the community so that residents do not have to travel long distance for services, with incubators from different City agencies housed within. Until these are in place there should be outreach with a transportation component, if necessary. We have two excellent programs providing senior services - Services Now for Adult Persons (SNAP) and NORC (see below). SNAP has two facilities - in Creedmoor and

Rosedale. SNAP's Creedmoor facility is in need of replacement and plans are underway for a replacement facility on campus. Funding must be continued for these vital senior programs.

In addition, there should be multi-generational centers where youth and seniors can interact and support one-another. Seniors can use assistance in so many ways and in turn can provide life learning experience to youths, including advice and suggestions.

There is a clear need for seniors, who may be living alone or are unable to do normal household maintenance functions, to have some help. Things like changing light bulbs, shoveling snow and mowing lawns, and other help like balancing checkbooks or figuring our medication schedules or applications for Medicare part D, often need some outside help. Naturally Occurring Retirement Communities, known as NORCs, can provide that help. Usually NORCS are in apartment complexes. Community Board 13 has the first NORC in a single home residential community. There is a serious need for additional NORCs in other areas of Community Board 13 as our residents get older. Rosedale would be a very good place to establish another NORC.

Therefore, Community Board 13Q requests the following:

Maintain delivery of fresh, not frozen meals for seniors through the Meals-on-Wheels program, with a personal visit from the deliverer and assurance that the senior is home and well.

Continue the expansion of Access-a-ride to nearby Nassau County especially for health and shopping needs.

Continue to provide funding for SNAP and provide a replacement facility

As mentioned in the Youth section, provide multi-generational centers that can create opportunities for seniors and youths to share experiences and provide help

Create one or more new NORCs in the southern communities of Community Board 13.

### **Department of Environmental Protection**

Poor drainage and flooding has been a long-standing problem in our community board. Existing outlets are not sufficient to handle all the water that flows to us above and below ground. Severe problems exist in southeast Queens, and throughout the remainder of the district there are areas of intersection and corner flooding, as well as areas where sanitary sewers do not function, and water flows into the basements of the buildings. These problems can usually be solved through major storm and sanitary sewer projects. In fact, the Mayor's Storm Water Mitigation Study (April 2008) identified Cambria Heights as one of the ten most affected areas on Queens. Community Board 13Q believes that this report's immediate 10 point plan as well as the long term resolution should be applied to Rosedale, Laurelton, Queens Village and Southern Bellerose as well, thus following DEP's plan for correcting storm sewer in Southeast Queens.

As the Meadowmere and Warnerville Sanitary Sewer projects come to completion, it is imperative that this area be promptly considered for a permanent storm sewer system and complete roadway restoration. The sanitary sewer project has addressed the court order to provide sanitary sewers for the area, but the roadway remains susceptible to mood tides and storm surges and the roadway is presently uneven, creating pools of water that may remain for days after a storm, possibly attracting mosquitoes and making walking very inconvenient.

Unfortunately, for the last 8 years or so, the Department of Environmental Protection has had a consultant study of the drainage throughout southeast Queens. Every major new project that Community Board 13 has requested during this time has been listed by Management and Budget as delayed pending the completion of the drainage study. Commissioner Lloyd stated in January 2007 that the study for CB13 would be complete by March 2007, yet there is no sign of any movement on any of the projects as of summer 2008.

The response time for catch basin cleaning and repair is excessively long. Funding should be made available for the preventive maintenance of basins and for emergency repair of defective basins, which are hazardous, and a threat to public safety. We understand that catch basins have a useful life of only fifteen years.

Since we are in a poor drainage district, and so many of our Bureau of Highway Operations Capital Improvement Projects are moving along the pipeline, a process must be established to ensure that sufficient new catch basins are being installed to assure proper run-off and, construction waste is being properly disposed of to prevent clogging of existing catch basins.

Therefore, Community Board 13Q requests the following:

Continue and complete on-going storm and sanitary sewers in southeast Queens.

Implement findings of the Mayor's Water Mitigation Study, particularly with regard to District 13.

Conduct a major study and design program for storm sewer and street reconstruction in the Meadowmere and Warnerville sections of Rosedale.

Implement all sewer construction projects that have been included in C13's capital priorities, but delayed pending completion of the SEQ Drainage Study.

We are in need of ongoing routine maintenance of catch basins, all connections to the sewers, and the sewers themselves.

Establish a major district-wide catch basin replacement program to replace catch basins that are out of date.

**Department of Sanitation**

The residents of the district take great pride in their homes and neighborhoods. However, there are problems they need help with. At least 3 dozen locations in our community board frequently fall victim to illegal dumpers.

Our community board is subject to hundreds of illegal posters placed on street poles, and medians. These signs are usually not offensive but do cause a blight on the community and are annoying to the residents of the community. Civic leaders have gone out and made lists of the locations of signs and when forwarded to the Department of Sanitation Enforcement Unit, the signs are usually removed. However, it seems that less than one percent of the violators receive a summons for placing these signs on City property. This removes a strong disincentive to putting up signs in the first place.

Community Board 13Q contains many concrete malls that need to be cleared of weeds and litter and maintained in presentable order. Driver and pedestrian safety depends on good visibility at all intersections. Weeds interfere with visibility and they must be cleared on a regular basis. The clean team must be restored. Downed tree limbs after storms overwhelm the Parks Department. Downed limbs cause safety problems, attract Asian Long Horn Beetles, look terrible and take parking spaces. Sanitation has offered to collect tree limbs in our district and bring them to a designated location if a dedicated truck is provided.

Therefore, Community Board 13Q requests the following:

Provide one additional basket truck.

Provide two additional mechanical sweepers.

Provide one truck for dedicated tree limb collection.

Increase vacant lot cleaning capabilities, and institute fencing programs

Increase the number of W.E.P. workers available.

Purchase for district use one new van for carrying W.E.P. workers and other personnel as necessary.

Additional enforcement personnel to have more stringent enforcement, particularly against dumping and poster violations.

Increased fines for those convicted of dumping and some form of incentives for reporting illegal dumpers.

Increase funding to provide personnel to clean malls.

Increased snow removal efforts and enhanced coordination with other agencies in advance of anticipated major snow events.

## **Department of Transportation and MTA**

Our district is completely dependent on surface transportation for mobility; as a result, quick repair of potholes and other roadway problems is essential. We are vigorously pursuing capital improvements (see DEP) for most of our streets, but clearly, improved maintenance is necessary while plans are developed for capital projects.

We require additional personnel in the traffic department, including field engineers, installers and maintainers to improve service delivery. The backlog for this work is tremendous and there are dangerous areas waiting too long for completion of surveys and installation of traffic safety devices.

Commercial vehicle incursion into residential areas is a serious problem in our area, particularly because there is a large amount of construction; significant areas of low density residential construction with light-duty, narrow streets; and many trucks originating in Nassau County, unfamiliar with City truck regulations. With major construction in residential communities it is necessary to move large trucks such as earth movers, cement trucks, large equipment carriers, etc., to and from the construction site. These can devastate the infrastructure on small residential streets and homeowners fear water pipe damage, which is their responsibility and costs upwards of \$3,500, sometimes lots more.

When the bureau of electrical control approves a site for a new streetlight, there is a lengthy wait for installation. Similarly, when a capital project i.e. park construction, street construction, is completed we must sometimes wait for years for the new streetlights to be put in place.

Street signs in our area and some stop signs are frequently failing due to apparently defective paint. We are very concerned that these faded signs could cause serious accidents if a motorist is looking for a particular street. Many of these have been called in months ago, but not yet replaced.

District schools are in need of speed humps or all way stop signs, traffic signals or other controls are necessary to increase the safety of children in the area. In addition, parents dropping off children during the morning at all public elementary schools violate double parking rules and often allow children, unaccompanied, j-walk to get into school. School administrators and community folks are concerned about the safety of these young children.

Many intersections in our area are dangerous due to blocked vision as drivers attempt to enter. Most requests for daylighting parking restrictions are rejected out of hand.

In addition, we request authorization to access accident data at particular intersections if they have been recommended for traffic intersections. We seriously review all requests for all way stop signs and traffic signals, but we are currently unaware of traffic accidents at the location,

which is a major condition for ultimate approval. It would be much more efficient if the committee could request and obtain traffic accident data.

With regard to mass transportation, our area is completely reliant on surface transportation and we are very poorly served in that respect. Thousands of daily commuters travel from northern and southern areas of our district. However, commuters particularly from the southern areas of Rosedale, Brookville and Springfield Gardens have an especially long and circuitous route to the Jamaica Hub and eventually to Manhattan. MTA/LIRR has recently opened an upgraded Rosedale station and Laurelton recently underwent an improvement program. Unfortunately, the City Department of Transportation has expropriated much of the property where railroad commuters parked and it has or is being sold off. LIRR's monthly cost to Manhattan far exceeds the cost of bus and subway and many commuters do not work in the Penn Station area. These disincentives mean many commuters rely on buses.

Over the past several years, however, bus service in southeast Queens has deteriorated and created a significant market for commuter vans, often called "dollar vans," although the price has escalated some. These vans are filling an unfortunate void that government could and should fill. While there are many advantages to van commuters, the overall environment is not well served. Buses are much more fuel efficient. Dozens of vans contribute to congestion and pollution. Vans are now attracting a larger market share, which, of course, create the vicious cycle of removing bus passengers and reducing bus schedules. Over the years the Board has received numerous community complaints of loitering by vans and drivers, littering and public urination since there are no appropriate facilities for drivers between rush hour periods. We need to make bus transportation cleaner, faster, more convenient and more competitive in our area.

Therefore, Community Board 13Q requests the following:

Authorize additional staffing resources to upgrade the performance of pothole crews and to establish more resurfacing programs

Develop traffic channelization that would direct commercial traffic away from residential streets.

Increase in asphalt for street maintenance

Additional resurfacing programs.

Increase in manpower to upgrade the performance of pothole crews.

Improve procedures governing traffic light installations relative to major capital projects to remove reported excessive installation delays.

Replace faded street signs and stop signs throughout the district.

A study of all schools that are not currently protected with speed humps to determine if one is appropriate.

Increase enforcement of rules around schools (see also Police).

Permit Community Board Transportation Committees to investigate and submit priority recommendations for daylighting parking signage in their jurisdiction.

Create incentives for residents to use the LIRR in Laurelton and Rosedale, such as increasing parking capacity and reduce cost, price incentives for regular commuters, increased express service to Manhattan, including eventually to Grand Central Terminal.

Increase bus routes, reduce bus headways and improve bus comfort and speed to attract van passengers and reduce negative effects on air quality and congestion.

### **Department of Design and Construction**

For many years we have experienced ongoing infrastructure improvement. We find that there is still a lack of adequate communication and consultation among agencies, utilities, outside consultants, etc. before and during the construction process to permit the improvement to go forward as expeditiously as possible. For example, when the project boundaries are determined, and dollars approved for scope and schematics, each street should be checked for map/title/dedication status and the necessary process initiated so that when construction does take place streets are not unnecessarily eliminated.

Currently, as part of a capital project most contractors may work on more than one job. However, very often the gap in work can be many weeks and the resulting traffic backing up becomes frustrating and may lead to accidents. Incentive/disincentive clauses must become standard to all projects to ensure timely completion.

We find that the smaller business operations on commercial streets are not getting the customer and delivery access they should be getting during construction.

Experience has shown that where sections of an area designated for capital improvement have problems in drainage or grade, which create design difficulties, those streets are left for last and delayed year after year.

The independent engineer hired to monitor the contractor in the field often seems to be more responsive to the contractor than to the community and too much time elapses before the engineer, agency and contractor discuss and resolve the problem. This often results in hardship for homeowners or merchants.

Contracts in older residential areas, which are not well lit, do not include enough nighttime precautions to permit drivers to see barricades, depressions, etc. resulting in accidents.

Over time we find that each completed highway reconstruction project generates more owner complaints than prior projects produced.

Therefore, Community Board 13Q requests the following:

Standardize incentives/disincentives must be agreed to, to discourage contractors from leaving on project to conduct work elsewhere.

Project scheduling and design must consider access for businesses.

Establish Agency policy to address the problem sections first and then proceed with the remainder of the project.

Mandate all DDC or DEP contracts in excess of \$10 million to hire a community consultant to help coordinate and communicate with the community.

Require temporary lighting during construction in low light areas to help motorists identify construction road hazards.

Integrate a quality of work clause in each contract so that quality control on the site requires that infractions would prompt immediate work stoppage and correction.

### **Department of Park and Recreation**

Many capital dollars have been expended in our district in recent years for reconstruction of parks. However, if there is not a person assigned to each completed facility, then it seems to us that these dollars are being wasted.

As parks capital projects are completed the need increases for maintenance personnel and equipment. Parks has jurisdiction over vast areas of public land in our district and need more permanently assigned parks workers - at least 12 full time and a minimum of eight seasonal workers. Many parks have been spruced up but not enough maintenance staff are assigned.

The Parks and Recreation Department Forestry Division has responsibility for the tens of thousands of trees in our district. Trees are the source of the most conditions called into 311 for this board. Damaged or dead trees alone account for 2,675 calls, or about 17% of all 311 calls for the district. Pruning requests account for another 1,089 calls.

Our many parks and playgrounds require attention from both the community and the recreational division of the parks department. We must have additional recreational persons who help to oversee and plan programs in the parks. We do have some local Friends of The Parks, who have been recruited over the years but, it is very discouraging to them to see vandalism from time to time because, we do not have the staff to prevent it. We need park houses and the professional staff to assist the local Friends.

Winter use of local parks is something that should be encouraged. One cooperative development, Glen Oaks Village, has suggested that their oval, which is heavily used in the summer, would make a great venue for a temporary ice skating rink in the winter. They estimate a temporary rink

with a six inch, non-refrigerated pool would be minimal in cost. The oval is completely fenced and can be locked off when the rink is not adequately frozen. Public areas in other parts of the district may be conducive also to removable ice rinks. They would be good, family fun and an opportunity for exercise during the winter.

Idlewild Park is one of the most active major development projects in our district's parks. Funding for the park includes horticulture and restoration of shoreline and paths in this wetland area. A major initiative is a children' science learning center that will operate year-'round and in particular in the summer and city resources are needed to help staff and provide materials and facilities for the science center. Also in the area is a very sensitive strip of land on Rockaway Boulevard adjacent to Kennedy Airport. The city's Economic Development Corporation is actively marketing the entire strip for commercial development, and several plots are already committed to sale. It is critical that remaining portions of this area be turned over to Parks for protection and some recreation.

The Parks and Recreation Committee of Community Board 13Q tours every park in the district every year, working closely with DPR District Parks Manager to identify and prioritize needed repairs. An example of this process is the reconstruction during 2008 of the park house at Bellerose Playground. It was closed and deteriorating for many years and was scheduled for demolition. The community objected and now with minimal investment the park house is open with restrooms and a now a recreation agent is on duty daily to work with kids. Similar reconstruction has been requested for other parks, such as repairs to wading pools, sprinklers and other recreational equipment at Delfin Green Park in Cambria Heights

We have a large percentage of the borough's trees, many of which are quite old. Large trees need of maintenance for both aesthetic and safety reasons. Trees leaning on private property or blocking stop signs are serious conditions, as are dead shafts and stumps. It is imperative that Queens Forestry be expanded to provide services to address these problems. We must have a tree pruning contract that deals with these very old and large trees but, the contract should be on a yearly basis in each community board not every 10 years. The mayor's PlaNYC2030, in fact, calls for pruning of every tree every seven years. This would substantially reduce storm damage, fallen trees and property damage in lesser storms.

Additionally, services need to be coordinated between D.O.T. and Parks when a traffic signal is installed many signals are being installed in areas where existing trees block visibility. Ignoring the hazards that line our streets is compromising public safety.

Last year the Cambria Heights Community Garden became our first and only community garden and a decorative and secure fence was installed by the Brooklyn Queens Land Trust, under whose jurisdiction the garden operates along with Cambria Heights Civic Association Beautification Committee.

Therefore, Community Board 13Q requests the following:

Additional funding for personnel, equipment and contracts that include maintenance and operation of parks.

Increase funding for dead tree and stump removal contracts on a one-call basis.

Increase funding for tree pruning and maintenance contracts.

Additional funding for Parks Enforcement for the reduction of crimes in CB13Q parks in conjunction with NYPD.

Continue Parks tours with Community Board 13 Parks Committee and repair facilities identified, such as Delfin Greene Park in Cambria Heights.

Financial and continued operational support for the Idlewild Park Master Plan to develop walkways, shoreline restoration, recreational access to Jamaica Bay and creation of a permanent science learning center.

Acceptance of remaining unused space along Rockaway Boulevard adjacent to Kennedy Airport.

Funding to irrigate the Cambria Heights Community Garden with a permanent sprinkler system and install walkways and benches in the garden.

Lawrence McClean, District Manager

Richard C. Hellenbrecht, Chair