



# COMMUNITY BOARD ELEVEN

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March 20, 2019

Honorable Bill de Blasio  
Mayor  
City Hall  
New York, New York 10019

Re: Community Board 11 Statement on the Fiscal Year 2020 Preliminary Budget

Dear Mayor de Blasio:

In October 2018, our board submitted capital and expense budget priorities for consideration in the Fiscal Year 2020 budget. While agency responses certainly are not fully on board with our desired responses, we are thankful for the consideration of many of our requests and for the opportunity to comment on your preliminary budget for FY20.

As you know the community board remains the most direct and comprehensive partner of community members in the budgeting process; and as such agencies need to proactively and routinely engage with us to better understand the needs of our district and more precisely respond to our budget requests. It is our expectation that your administration will be a true partner with our board in the effort to bring needed resources to address the needs of our community and we look forward to working with the administration in fiscal prioritization.

That said, the majority of agency feedback remains vague or lacks the necessary specific responses to our capital and expense requests which enable a productive understanding of the agencies' positions. It remains our goal that process improvements will create better dialogue, so that your commitments continue to more closely align with the priorities of our community.

## **AGENCY-SPECIFIC RESPONSES**

### **Department of Housing Preservation & Development**

This administration has stated that affordable housing for all New Yorkers is a pillar of the mayoral agenda. With the approved rezoning, we remain extremely concerned that decreased funding to HPD will cause future conflict with our Points of Agreement and overall memorialized positions on affordable housing programs.

As noted by HPD's additional comment, the City has greater influence on public sites to steer development towards certain affordability levels. To this end, on the four public sites identified in the

Points of Agreement for the East Harlem rezoning, CB11 calls for 100% affordable housing, which includes deep affordability at levels accessible for current East Harlem residents. CB11 is working on proposals for the four public sites. Beyond the displacement, the impact to CB11's homeless problem could potentially increase as well.

There appears to be a disconnect between our requests, actual agency activity, and the responses with the future of the budget requests. The Mayor's Office should continue its commitment of affordable housing. HPD should elaborate on these issues in its response, and provide its current plans for new and existing affordable housing in our district.

Community Board 11 thanks the City for the significantly increased funding for the provision of attorneys for low-income tenants in Housing Court. However, the City must continue funding group representation of tenants at least at current levels provided to legal services providers under the Tenant Rights Coalition contract; group representation offers unique advantages that representation of individual tenants in eviction proceedings does not offer, like offensive litigation against landlords shirking their obligations, collective action that helps to balance the scales of power and/or encourage individuals to speak up who might otherwise feel intimidated to do so on their own, etc.

Tracking code:

311202002C - We seek clarification from the agency as to how much resources will be dedicated to this request and what is the timetable. The committee also seeks clarification as to whether the community preference threshold will be met.

311202001E – We request specifics as to how much resources are being dedicated to increased inspections and code enforcement and what the timetable is for the application of those resources.

311202002E – We thank the agency for hiring additional inspectors to monitor building complaints and would like to know the total number of additional inspectors hired.

311202004E – We seek clarification as to what and how much resources will be used to accommodate this request and what is the timetable for the application of those resources.

311202009E - We thank the agency for establishment of its asthma education outreach program.

### **Housing Authority**

NYCHA developments are in dire need of repair after decades of disinvestment. With the concentration of NYCHA Developments in CD11, items such as bringing online warehoused properties, boiler repair/replacement, refuse maintenance and security mechanisms should be of the highest priority. Addressing many of these concerns through a coordinated approach will facilitate a more progressive approach to solving multiple overlapping issues for the district. Many of the requests require appropriations. With the reduction in funding from HUD, the City stands to lose one of the greatest resources of affordable housing. Many of the issues, which are the genesis of our requests require more than simple capital improvements.

Possessing the highest concentration of NYCHA Developments, CB11 maintains that it is imperative for funds from the City be channeled to these developments. The continued negligence of funds or depletion thereof, will create blight upon these hardworking and deserving constituents. Additionally,

coordination with the State should be an ongoing process to bridge the gap in funding neglected by the Federal Government.

311201903C – Renovate or upgrade public housing developments

311201913C – Other public housing upgrades or renovations requests

311201901E – Other affordable housing programs requests

### **Human Resources Administration**

Tracking code:

311202037E - We thank the agency for the robust increase in funding for legal services and seek clarification as to how long the respective programs are funded for.

### **Department of Buildings**

Tracking codes:

311202042E – We thank the agency for the hiring of additional liaisons.

311202046E - We thank the agency for the hiring of a tenant advocate liaison.

### **Landmarks Preservation Commission**

Tracking code:

311202045E: We wish to thank the agency for their movement and engagement.

### **Department for the Aging**

We continue to encourage DFTA to work toward equitable funding for senior centers, including on cost reimbursement contracts. We support the DFTA in its advocacy for increased home care services with the goal of reducing wait times. CB11 also encourages the expanded availability of outreach and marketing of translation and multilingual services, as a significant portion of the East Harlem senior community is comprised of immigrants and persons with first languages other than English. We request that the City and DFTA lobby for state and federal funds. Without those funds, the projection demonstrates a clear neglect of new programs as well as existing ones for our district and throughout the city.

CD11 encourages DFTA to create partnerships with community-based organizations (CBOs) and provide incentives for the creation of programming to meet the needs of the high concentration populations of seniors in our district and city.

### **Department of Education**

We applaud Chancellor Richard Carranza's efforts to continuously find ways to improve quality of education in our schools. However, we continue to ask for you to please take special interest to improving the existing infrastructure of our school facilities and technology needs. In order for the

students of CB11 to remain competitive with the whole of New York City, our students require equitable distribution of resources. We will work with your office and the Department of Education to elevate these priorities as the district grows. Ultimately, your office remains integral in uplifting these requests.

During subsequent years, more allocation of funding should be devoted for the increasing population of CD11. Rezoning will bring a significant population increase, which the current school district cannot absorb. Funds for existing school resources including but not limited to physical location expansion opportunities, technology resource acquisition and teacher hiring should be planned for in the future to prevent reactive scenarios.

CD11 asks that DOE to coordinate with its partners, like the School Construction Authority, to ensure that central funding is provided so that all school buildings are compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Standards for Accessible Design. We believe that all schools in the district must be accessible to all students, regardless of background and circumstance.

### **Department of Transportation**

We thank the DOT for the increased investment in pedestrian safety improvements and alternative modes of transportation in our neighborhood. We will be in contact with the agency to determine if all items approved are actively funded and what timeline may exist. The lack of street lighting continues to be a safety issue for CD11. In addition, we will continue to pursue those requests that overlap several agencies to ensure efficient and adequate response to fulfillment, as with the request made by DOT that NYC Parks prune trees that obstruct street lighting.

*Tracking codes: 3112020033E, 3112020022E (Parks)*

### **Metropolitan Transportation Authority**

We continue call upon the MTA to secure funding for the timely completion of Phase II of the Second Avenue Subway project. We further call upon the MTA to increase funding to the Student MetroCard such that it will allow five swipes per day to allow for increased educational and extracurricular opportunities and to promote further college readiness, as well as extending hours of use from 8:30pm to 10:00pm. Additionally, we call upon the MTA to complete further upgrades to the subway stations and bus stops as other Community Districts of Manhattan have received. The Mayor's Office should find additional measure to engage the State with all MTA related requests.

*Tracking codes: 311202031E, 311202006E*

### **Department of Health & Mental Hygiene**

We want to again thank DoHMH for increased attention to the rodent issue facing portions of East Harlem. However, we call upon the DoHMH to expand enforcement and vector control for rats and other pests as East Harlem continues to be plagued. It is imperative that funding be provided to expand the Rat Reservoir Program in East Harlem to reduce the rat population. The catchment area for the Rat Reservoir program should be expanded to include more areas in East Harlem, especially busy commercial corridors.

Additionally, the program should target new construction sites as construction activity often drives rat populations into the streets and surrounding buildings. Abatement should be increased on commercial

corridors, in green spaces and near construction sites. Outreach about the Rat Academy should be increased to encourage superintendents, building staff, property managers, homeowners and businesses to participate, especially in the spring and summer.

We further support the funding of providing HIV and STI education for residents, including seniors, as there is a higher than city-wide average incidence of mortality due to STIs. East Harlem residents are more than three times as likely to die from HIV/AIDS as the average NYC resident. Sex education services should be provided, especially among vulnerable populations, and access to HIV preventative drugs should be easy and affordable to all. As declared in previous fiscal year requests, CD11's population remains at a higher risk than any other CDs in NYC.

CB11 lauds the passage of the Asthma-Free Housing Act and looks forward to HPD's imposition of harsher violations in accordance with this law. Furthermore, CB11 looks forward to future collaboration with HPD and the Health Department to host a series of workshops on asthma triggers and mitigation, as set forth in HPD's additional comment to this request. We implore the Mayor's Office to place focus on this issue as the Rezoning goes into effect during the coming years.

There is a growing problem with the disposal of needles in CD11 that is becoming a health hazard and also affecting quality of life. We ask that the administration consider fully funding safe needle exchange and drop off site to address this growing concern in our community.

*Tracking codes: 311202012, 311202007E, 311202016E, 311202020E, 311202025E, 311202026E, 311202038E, 311202039E, 311202041E*

### **New York Public Library**

We draw the attention of the Mayor's office and NYPL to the Aguilar Library and the 125<sup>th</sup> Street Library. Libraries remain a vital resource for all communities and especially ours. Libraries remain a lifeline for the community by providing free access to not just books, but online educational tools, periodicals, job searches and more. Ensuring allocation of funds will maintain the necessary supplements for the community to thrive.

With the 125<sup>th</sup> Street location being closed for the next two years; the Aguilar Library will be placed under extreme demand for these limited resources. CB11 continues its advocacy for equal access to resources for the constituency. The agency responds that they agree with many of the requests but that funding cannot be determined at this time. We implore the Mayor's Office that funding for our libraries remain sufficient for our remaining branch to provide full service hours, full trained staff and updated facilities. We will continue to request all elected officials to continue finding sufficient funds to ensure these essential institutions remain relevant and effective.

Beyond just the expense requests, keeping the physical locations in good working order is a paramount. Although we applaud the partial request fulfillment for Aguilar Library with the installation of a new HVAC system, additional structural work is necessary to prevent the building envelope from falling into disrepair. This request includes replacing and upgrading windows that will prevent large amount of humidity from seeping into the superstructure and general area and thus cause degradation to NYPL's and the City's resources. This preventative step will be more cost effective in the long term.

CB11 applauds and thanks the NYPL for restoring six-day opening hours and supports any future expansion of services and hours. We further support NYPL's call upon the City to allocate additional capital funding for technology improvements at the 125th Street and Aguilar Branch Libraries. We

appreciate the willingness to support these efforts. We continue to request that these basic city resources allocated to equally dense communities are appropriated for CD11.

In most instances, NYPL agrees and support our requests. We request that the Mayor's Office and the Budget requests be taken under serious consideration for full appropriations.

*Tracking codes: 311201916C, 311201908C, 311201903E, 311201934E, 311201952E, 311201959E, 311201967E*

### **Department of Small Business Services**

CB11 appreciates the recommendations offered by the Department of Small Business Services. We thank the agency for those items, which were funded, such as 311201917E, 311201927E.

Regrettably, the current Rezoning requires a more careful and considered approach to advisement and implementation of all requests going forward with subsequent fiscals years. We draw attention to the need of training programs for the constituency, redevelopment of the commercial/retail corridors and expansion of brand awareness with all promotion as a few markers to address.

Working in conjunction with the multipronged approach, the Mayor's Office should exercise due compassionate compliance with City regulations whilst enforcing proper implementation of new City laws. As a multi-lingual population resides and/or operates within CB11, it remains crucial that SBS should continue educating our small business operators. CB11 appreciates the compassion when enforcing our small business owners and adopting rules that facilitate continued operations.

On a final note, please be advised that Bill 1447C (now Local Law 196 of 2017) should work in conjunction with the district's needs and our Rezoning. CB11 requires knowledge of amount allocated by The City for developing and funding a construction safety-training program for day laborers, local hires, and employees of M/WBEs and other small businesses. Expected development will cause concern for safety with all employees constructing our new buildings.

*Tracking codes: 311201931E, 311201937E, 311201942E, 311201943E, 311201964E*

### **Economic Development Corporation**

Community Board 11 appreciates the consideration for requests 311201935E, 311201956E and 311201966E. With the Rezoning approved last year, Community Board 11 maintains that it is necessary to invest in community resources overseen by this agency. With the incoming growth, The City should conduct a study that examines the feasibility of ferry service from the East 107th Street Pier, or other nearby locations, to Randall's Island and other stops along the East/Harlem River. With the rollout of the NYC Ferry in 2017, we can expect an increase in the demand to grow exponentially.

Furthermore, EDC, in collaboration with SBS, should create and package incentives to attract growth industries to locate in East Harlem, with emphasis on attracting STEM related businesses to open up additional career opportunities for local residents. We appreciate that EDC is pleased to receive this comment and hear of community support for life science initiatives. We are aware that The City recently announced the LifeSci initiative, which is expected to create nearly 16,000 new jobs in New York City in life sciences innovation and R&D. Read more at the following link. However, given the projected impact

of Rezoning, this project should be launched as soon as possible. The CB is committed to working toward this goal.

Finally, the Esplanade/Piers should be revitalized from 125th Street where it is being utilized for construction and extended to the dilapidated piers at 116th/117th Street so that other travel resources such as the Water Taxi may be added. The repair of the dilapidated piers within the boundaries of Community Board 11 along the East River can be utilized as designated ticket and landing locations to extend the current route of NYC Ferry by Hornblower connecting points along the East River and also easing transportation strains. Community Board 11 will be following to ensure that this becomes a primary to initiative to support the growth and success of our community.

*Tracking codes 311201935E, 311201956E, 311201966E*

### **Department of Cultural Affairs**

There is a need for an arts/cultural service organization to enhance, educate and expand public interest in the arts and culture of East Harlem. DCLA and/or the Upper Manhattan Empowerment Zone should provide seed funding to create such an arts/cultural service organization. Once established, and representative of a cross-section of the East Harlem community, this organization should work to develop a comprehensive arts and cultural strategic master plan for the community.

*Tracking code 311201939E*

### **Department of Sanitation**

We continue to focus several of our capital and expense budget priorities on the state of sanitation facilities located within Community District 11.

Currently, separate antiquated garages serving CD11 and CD10 are located within CD11. Our board objected to the proposal to establish a new temporary District 11 garage on East 127th Street and we maintain our objection to the inequity of having a garage that services another community district located within CD11. Our concerns are exacerbated by the fact that the current M11 and M10 garages are located in antiquated building that are unfit to house a sanitation garage and as a result dozens of sanitation vehicles are parked on the street and under the MetroNorth viaduct.

As part of the East Harlem Rezoning Points of Agreement your administration has committed to site and build a new consolidated modern garage to serve both CD11 and CD10 but to date no site determination or funding allocation has been made to bring this project to realization. We implore you to prioritize this project beginning with the FY20 budget.

*Tracking codes 311202006C and 311201910C.*

### **Department of Parks & Recreation**

While Community Board 11 recognizes that the preliminary budget will almost always be substantially lower than the previous fiscal year because it does not include any "one-shot" funding, it would be detrimental to our Community District's needs if the Department of Parks and Recreation appropriation is not increased in line with other agencies.

Although CB11 applauds the undertaking of a resiliency study on the East River/Harlem River waterfront, funding should be increased to enable fund matching from the State level. Currently, the allocations fall significantly short to meet the necessary threshold.

We also emphasize the immediate need to reconstruct the East River Esplanade. Portions of the Esplanade are, in fact, routinely crumbling into the river creating immediate and imminent safety hazards to persons using the park. We call upon the Department of Parks & Recreation, the Department of Transportation, the NYCEDC, the Office of Sustainability, and any other relevant agencies to address this matter immediately. We also encourage the agency to lobby federal agencies and elected officials to secure funds to reconstruct the East River Esplanade in East Harlem. In a time of increasing threats to Manhattan from extreme weather events and potential sea level rise, it is even more important that this area be secured for resiliency and for the immediate use of our community.

Our long-standing budget priorities – increase in PEP/Rangers, DPR maintenance and programming staff, East River Esplanade/Harlem River Greenway infrastructure, and Pier 107 rehabilitation, and comfort stations in our heavily used parks – remain all highly important needs as indicated in our previous Statements of District Needs, the East Harlem Neighborhood Plan and New York City resiliency initiatives. We recommend a comprehensive plan for funding these priorities starting with this budget cycle.

Comfort Stations remain a paramount request for CB11. Further, a comfort station at Thomas Jefferson Park is necessary for those appreciating the park. Funding for this Capital improvement will ensure not only continued enjoyment for the residents of the district but play a needed part in maintaining a sanitary environment. The Greenway Link project in its fully realized form was to include a fully functioning comfort station. Although it belongs as part of the Points of Agreement for the Rezoning, the accord included these and other aspects. Please ensure that this remains a component of the Greenway Link.

We also support the Parks Department and our government agency partners in their consideration of the urgent need to renovate P.S. 155 playground, Thomas Jefferson Park playground, Mae Grant Park, and Sunshine Playground and to move forward on allocating funding to these much-needed capital projects. Our schools, neighborhood residents and non-profit partners heavily use all of these sites for programming and general recreation. We are happy to advocate for these capital projects alongside your efforts, in addition to our stated budget priorities.

The following projects within our budget priorities have been identified as the most viable for funding in the FY '20 budget:

- 311201812C – Reconstruct or upgrade a park or amenity (i.e. playground, outdoor athletic field)
- 311201914C – Reconstruct or upgrade a park or amenity (i.e. playground, outdoor athletic field)
- 311201920C – Provide a new, or new expansion to, a building in a park
- 311201822C – Provide a new, or new expansion to, a building in a park
- 311201838/842/852/867E – DPR Staffing (District-wide)
- 311201849E – Street Tree Maintenance (District-wide)

### **Community Boards**

We request that you join the Council in supporting a baseline increase to the annual budget of community boards. A baseline increase would allow boards to hire additional professional staff as well



as to invest in necessary technology to better perform our duties as staff and board members. It would allow us to purchase and maintain a constituent management system that would enhance communication with constituents, track service requests, and identify and analyze issue trends to better inform board recommendations and advocacy; as well as a records database to more easily catalogue and retrieve project records and board resolutions while sustaining the institutional knowledge of board staff and members.

Additional funds would also allow us the opportunity to provide regular professional trainings for our members to give them the tools to better navigate the municipal budget, service delivery and land use processes that are fundamental to the work of community boards.

### **Public Hearing**

Community Board 11 held a Public Hearing on the Preliminary Budget on March 19, 2018 at 6:30 pm at the DREAM Charter School located at 1991 Second Avenue, New York, NY, 10029 and received testimony which is summarized here:

Mahfuzur Rahman, Vice President of the Taft Houses Residents Association, expressed his gratitude for the significant allocation of capital budget funds which have resulted in new a boiler and building exterior work, as well as expense funds which have been allocated to increase necessary staffing. Mr. Rahman asked that the City continue to work with both the state and federal government to address the New York City Housing Authority's ongoing debt crisis.

### **CONCLUSION**

CB11 appreciates the opportunity to comment on the FY 2020 Preliminary Budget. Although this letter does not address every comment, it expresses the bulk of Community Board 11 concerns. We recommend that your office and the city agencies review and respond to our additional comments for the most comprehensive absorption. Upon doing so, we look forward to seeing the Executive Budget and to continuing to partner with this administration to ensure that our requests will be incorporated as the budget makes its way through the process.

Sincerely,



Nilsa Orama  
Chair  
Community Board 11

cc: Hon. Diana Ayala, New York City Council  
Hon. Bill Perkins, New York City Council  
Hon. Ben Kallos, New York City Council  
Hon. Keith Powers, New York City Council  
Hon. Gale A. Brewer, Manhattan Borough President  
Jay L. Gottlieb, New York City Office of Management & Budget  
Anthony Notaro, Jr, Chair, Community Board 1

Terri Cude, Chair, Community Board 2  
Alysha Lewis-Coleman, Chair, Community Board 3  
Burt Lazarin, Chair, Community Board 4  
Vikki Barbero, Chair, Community Board 5  
Molly Hollister, Chair, Community Board 6  
Roberta Semer, Chair, Community Board 7  
Alida Camp, Chair, Community Board 8  
Padmore John, Chair, Community Board 9  
Cicely Harris, Chair, Community Board 10  
Richard R. Lewis, Chair, Community Board 12