



The City of New York  
 Community Board No. 3  
 Bedford Stuyvesant Restoration Plaza  
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**DISTRICT NEEDS STATEMENT  
 FISCAL YEAR 2016**

**INTRODUCTION**

Community District 3 is responsible for amplifying the essential needs of our residents in conjunction with our elected officials and City agencies in Bedford Stuyvesant. We are proud of the work we have done to preserve and promote our rich cultural heritage, fine architecture, service-oriented community, and dynamic networks of family-owned businesses, places of worship, schools, and community groups. We have made great progress in making Community District 3 an enviable destination for families to grow their roots, for non-profit organizations to flourish, and for entrepreneurs to invest in our community.

In recent years, however, economic and social changes have intensified long-standing problems and presented new challenges in our community. While we attract new residents and businesses, for instance, we continue to experience deep disparities in our access to jobs, healthcare, and educational opportunities. As we prepare for Fiscal Year 2016, we hereby outline our quality-of-life goals and look forward to working closely with the De Blasio administration to improve our district.

Our primary objectives address the following pressing issues:

**Community Board 3 District Needs**

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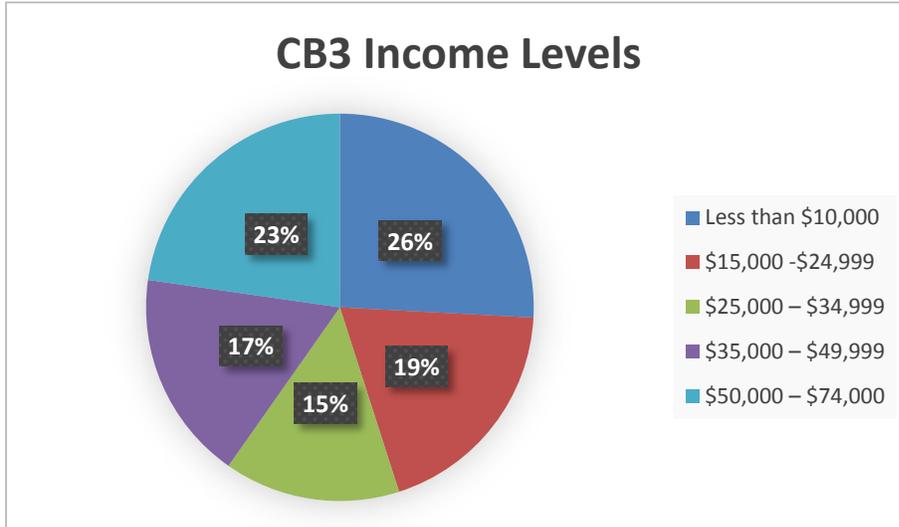
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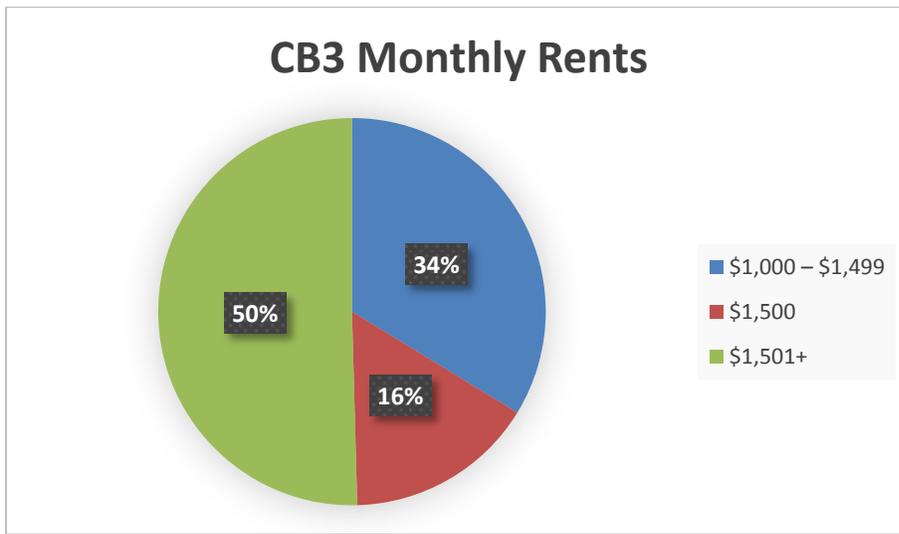
## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Jobs and the creation of jobs is the answer to the economy of the neighborhood. Underemployment is as great a problem as joblessness. People should earn a wage that is comparable with the cost of living.

**The majority of CB3 residents make less than \$50,000.**



**Nearly 80% of CB3 residents are renters, and most are paying 35% or more of their monthly wages in rent alone.**



With the rising prices of food and rent, people in our community are struggling to attain a decent quality of life. In addition to high underemployment, Community District 3 also faces high unemployment, and 33.7% of households have only one parent. For all these reasons, it is imperative that this community district with the assistance of the City of New York's Mayoral initiatives work towards rectifying these economic concerns.

**Light manufacturing should return to our district.**

Bedford Stuyvesant has completed the rezoning of its northern portion of the district. We were careful not to change the zoning of our industrialized area because it is our desire to see light manufacturing return to this vicinity. As the community grows and becomes more diverse, the prospect of industry becoming re-energized is greater.

In 2012, the Pfizer Plant was purchased by Acumen Capital Partners, LLC, which is one of the last bastions of land that can really impact the future economic development and employment opportunities in the northern section of Bedford Stuyvesant. This company has a proven track record of redeveloping former single tenant manufacturing facilities in New York City into much-needed vibrant, job-creating light industrial and commercial buildings. We continue to advocate for manufacturing in Bedford Stuyvesant. Funding must be provided to support the renovation of properties, as well as initiatives established to encourage new businesses that will create jobs and propel the revitalization of manufacturing.

Just as there are prospects in the northern section of Community District 3 with the Pfizer site, there are also similar scenarios in the southern part of the district. There is a parcel of land on Atlantic Avenue [Block 1557, Lot #s 3, 4, 23, 26, 28 & 31-37], which totals 25,616 square feet. This parcel is not particularly large; however, if utilized appropriately, this parcel can provide much-needed commercial opportunities. Some preliminary conversations with community members, architects, and planners have proposed projects such as an artist or food incubator or something else fitting that can enhance the economic development of this underserved area of our district. It is crucial to our district that this parcel of land be developed. This will create employment opportunities, increase revenue for the community, as well as for the City of New York.

## **PARKS, ARTS, AND CULTURE**

As a community we continue to advocate for the betterment of our parks, community gardens and playgrounds in Bedford Stuyvesant. Parks have always assisted our community in child development, community engagement through family events, physical activities, and a resource for our educators and their students.

### **There are several assets in our district that require capital funding:**

- Improvements of Charlie’s Place Playground ball field and hand ball court;
- Improvements of comfort stations at Saratoga Park and Taffee Playground;
- Renovation of the kitchen at Von King Culture Center;
- Renovation of Kosciusko Pool into a year round facility, for which a feasibility study has been completed; and
- A feasibility study on St. Andrew Park/Playground.

For a community so rich in artistic talent and culture, Bedford Stuyvesant continues to lack the funding and space necessary to showcase our history. We have to develop space that will mold and train the future artists of Bedford Stuyvesant. Von King Cultural Center can serve as a site for the “Bedford Stuyvesant Cultural District.” With an indoor theatre that is currently under renovation, and an outdoor amphitheater; this cultural center should be the training ground for future actors and musical artists.

### **Imagine Sumner Armory as the “Bedford Stuyvesant Cultural District.”**

The armory in the past served as a center for cultural and artistic events. Within this large facility we envision the African Diaspora Cultural Center. The facility at this time is under the control of DHS and currently services 200 men. We presently are in conversations with DHS and EDC regarding funding for a feasibility study on the Sumner Armory. Currently our existing art and cultural institutions are teetering on the edge because of a lack of capital.

### **We are requesting funding and support for the following institutions, organizations, and events:**

- The Central Brooklyn Jazz Festival
- The Fulton Art Fair
- The Bedford Stuyvesant Artist Association (BESAA)
- The Billie Holiday Theater
- The Bed Stuy Alive Fall Event

## **HOUSING AND LAND USE**

**We would like the Office of the Deputy Mayor for Economic Development and Rebuilding to direct a study to assess the need and impact of active manufacturing in northern sections of Bedford Stuyvesant.**

Clear opportunities for either the attraction of industrial manufacturing and/or the protection of areas for manufacturing should be identified. Additionally the study should include an assessment for the attraction of a green industry cluster appropriate and contextual to the Bedford Stuyvesant neighborhood.

The development of several parcels of land in the south eastern quadrant of Bedford Stuyvesant, particularly on Fulton Street, is crucial to the district and we know that there is ongoing discussion regarding those pieces. It is the understanding of Community District 3 that the parcels on Fulton Street under the purview of HPD are Block 1548, Lot #s 26-30 totaling 10,000 square feet; block 1549, lot # 407 totaling 8000 square feet; and block 1549, Lot #s 19-34 totaling 26,000 square feet. We view this as a marvelous opportunity for economic development, employment, and affordable housing. The demand for housing and the unemployment rate in Bedford Stuyvesant certainly warrants this.

With a Needs Assessment in place that has community input, these parcels can be maximized to their fullest potential. With the Mayor's push for affordable housing, we can utilize these parcels of land as affordable housing with commercial/public space below. It would be in line with the zoning along the rest of Fulton Street which is R7D, and keep the street as a major commercial strip in Bedford Stuyvesant throughout its entirety. A multi-use building with perhaps a mid-sized supermarket or bank on the ground level would be perfect. We must not forget that Bedford Stuyvesant is part of the pilot program for economic development and greening. Commercial revitalization along Fulton Street will be a tremendous boost to this under-served area of Central Brooklyn. It will also connect the eastern portion of Fulton Street with the Bed-Stuy Gateway BID leading to a viable commercial corridor for the entire length of Bedford Stuyvesant.

**Again, we emphasize that the Department of Buildings (DOB) must have an adequate numbers of inspectors to enforce their stated guidelines.**

Complaints continue to come in and when we involve DOB, their replies are nebulous. DOB must be staffed to enforce their codes. A contractor/developer that has applied for permits should be held accountable to what has been attested to in their permit application. On occasion, that is not happening. Each instance of such infractions violates the quality of life and can at times be hazardous to the public safety. Once permits have been issued, there should be periodic inspections while the work is going on to ensure that the contractors are doing what they applied for. If more inspectors are needed, then we should push to get the funding for them. Laws, rules, and guidelines were created for the safety and well-being of all concerned. It is time to make people comply. Community District 3 is continuing to push for legislative action to give DOB more enforcement power that will help safeguard the City against unscrupulous developers and contractors who circumvent the prescribed methods and procedures that have been designed for the safety and care of all.

**Our major need continues to be technical assistance from agencies such as City Planning, HPD, and elected officials to help us make a comprehensive assessment of:**

- The status of the urban renewal plans;
- The coordinated implementation of urban renewal plans ;
- Effectiveness of urban renewal plans; and
- The status of vacant land under the control of several city agencies

Such a study will require time, staff, and commitment from agency staff, members of our Community Board, and other stakeholders. Although the study will be labor intensive, it is a project that is long overdue.

**Housing development must address the needs of Community District 3 residents with disabilities and their families.**

The need for more “accessible” affordable housing is a given. However, utilization of “universal design” practices which go beyond the concept of “barrier free” living are necessary to make living spaces accessible, safe, and practical for all residents. This will always remain crucial to Community Board 3.

## LANDMARKS

**The Bedford Stuyvesant Community Board 3 Landmarks Committee supports all of the Communities who seek to continue the fight for preservation of the historic housing stock within the area.**

This preservation effort, motivated by the educational outreach from local community advocacy groups, elected officials, New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC), The New York Landmarks Conservancy, and the Historic Districts Council support preserving the charming and pristine blocks with predominant historical, architectural facades. We hope that these beautiful, unique residential properties, characterized by their Queen Anne, Neo-Grec, Romanesque Revival, Renaissance Revival Styles and Beau-Arts developed mostly during the 1880's through the 1920's will continue to be preserved and protected under the current laws of the New York Landmarks Preservation Commission.

There are an estimated 6600 additional buildings evaluated since the 1970's by the Landmarks Preservation Commission to be considered for designation. LPC has designated only 3 historic districts, which totals 1400 buildings so far in the Bedford Stuyvesant Community.

**The Stuyvesant Heights Expansion Historic District (2013)** joins with the two existing historic districts, **Stuyvesant Heights Historic District (1975)** and **Alice and Agate Court Historic District (2009)**. These landmark districts consist of architecturally diverse row houses, two family and three-family residences, multiple dwellings and significant institutional structures, such as Our Lady of Victory Roman Catholic Church, Bethany Baptist Church, Bridge Street AWME church, Corner Stone Baptist Church, Concord Baptist Church, Mount Lebanon Baptist Church and St. Phillip's Episcopal Church. We are proud to recognize the Akwaaba Mansion (1860), a top rated Bed & Breakfast in the country, and 375 Stuyvesant Avenue Mansion, also known as Otto Seidenberger House, frequently used for filming by HBO's Boardwalk Empire.

We know the value of designating these historic districts because preservation practices empower communities, celebrates our history, drives economic growth, and sustains development efforts. Preservation enhances our streetscapes, nurtures tourism, encourages investment, and employs local labor. As stated by the Historic Districts Council, "It is a popular, populist's movement driven by regular New Yorkers who value their homes and their city." The Historic Districts Council works with community groups throughout the five boroughs on their efforts to save, preserve, and enhance the special character of New York's historic neighborhoods. In fact, Community District 3 was honored and recognized at the Grassroots Preservation Awards, "Six to Celebrate," by the Historic Districts Council (2012).

In the spring of 2012, Landmarks Preservation Commission calendared the Bedford Historic District and during the same time, the Real Estate Board of New York pursued a serious lobbying effort to transform and weaken the Landmarks Law through a series of bills which would transform how the Landmarks Preservation Commission designated and regulated historic properties. Through it all, the Landmarks Preservation Commission, the Community Board 3 Landmarks Committee, the New York Landmarks Conservancy, the Historic Districts Council, and our elected officials mobilized the support needed to designate Bedford Stuyvesant Height Expansion in early 2013. The REBNY effort was defeated but is still a real threat to preservation laws and historic buildings that needs to be preserved and protected.

**It is imperative to this community that calendaring and future designation for the Proposed Stuyvesant East Historic District, Proposed Stuyvesant West and the Proposed Stuyvesant North Historic District takes place.**

These areas are of major concern because of the influx of real estate developers who set up offices in these historic districts to prey on the elderly and gain access to these beautiful and historic properties in the neighborhoods. Developers are altering the concept of home ownership. In this process our community loses the legacy of its African American and Caribbean roots, and generational pride of owning these individual row houses. When these historic properties are sold to investors, we lose the community network that previously existed, we lose the affordable rental capabilities for needy families, and we lose our income base that gives stability and enrichment to the neighborhoods.

Major concerns in our ability to designate the remaining districts noted above are the change in government at City Hall, and the continuous backlash from the pro-real-estate, pro-development, lobbying associations against landmarks in New York City and Bedford Stuyvesant, in particular. These Political Action Committees are set to undermine the efforts of the Landmarks Preservation Commission. Under the Bloomberg administration the number of historic districts in New York City doubled. Our current City Council Member, Robert Cornegy Jr., is supportive of our efforts. Former City Councilmember Albert Vann and former Borough President, Marty Markowitz, played a major role in backing our preservation efforts.

We are hopeful that this new administration will use balanced judgment and consideration to allow further designation, which is desperately needed in our community. We are pleased that the current Mayor has chosen another commissioner to oversee the Landmarks Preservation Commission who has an insight into the hard work and efforts of being a preservationist. It appears that the new Chairperson strikes a balance with the understanding of preservation and new development in this great city. We would like to continue to encourage the City Council to monitor and take action to impede the process of the overzealous, opportunistic developers who seek their own path without any direction or guidance from governing agencies.

**The Bedford Stuyvesant Community requests the following:**

1. **Funding for the Enforcement Department to increase staffing** to investigate and remedy complaints filed in a timely manner.
2. **Funding for staffing and resources** to improve the process for reviewing all the requests for Evaluation, to continue to implement the Fast-Track application, and to permit service programs to allow homeowners to repair their homes.
3. **Increase funding in the area for research** on building documentation, with pictures, accessing building records, and installing new and improved technology to store data.
4. **Add funding for senior programs to educate them** about the value of their historic properties and protect them from being lured to sell their homes for less than the actual value which leaves them in a state of displacement.
5. **Reform fees and fines schedule.** We would like to fast-track building permits without compromising the process, decrease the cost for fines to homeowners when work is being done without permits, and impose a steep sanction for contractors who fail to file for permits to DOB and LPC when working on historic properties.

6. **Increase in staffing to further designate historic districts in the Bedford Stuyvesant Community.** We must designate the Proposed Bedford Historic Districts, Stuyvesant East Historic Districts, Stuyvesant North Historic District, and Stuyvesant East Historic District which represent the many buildings left unprotected by the slow process of designation by LPC.

## **EDUCATION**

There is a sense of urgency to address the academic needs of our grades K – 12 youth to ensure they meet the common core standards stipulated by the Department of Education. Less than 45% of third graders in CD 3 are testing at or above grade level on the English Language Arts in 2010-11; approximately, 50% of third graders tested at or above in Math. In Community District 3, graduation rates, dropout rates, and college readiness of our youth are alarming. According to the Center for the Study of Brooklyn, there was only a 46.3% graduation rate (2010/11), 13.7% dropout rate; and a 14.3% college readiness rate. Within Community School District 16, only 2% of the students who graduated in 2011-2012 were college ready. The graduation rate for high school seniors in CSD 16 was only 44%.

### **We are concerned with the high rate of early-leavers in our middle schools and high schools.**

This is the time to call for the development of a comprehensive plan to address these issues within our community. There is a need for the DOE to review the current suspension policy to determine if this is disproportionately applied to our children and contributes to the cycle of failure that many students are experiencing. There is a need for more comprehensive and effective programs that include, but not limited to, alternative education and training programs, and/or schools that employ best practices for middle school and high school students. Additionally, academic and arts enrichment, leadership and workforce development programs provided in and out school are needed at all community district schools.

High retention rates have students who are 15 and 16 years old still in middle schools. The Department of Education needs to develop a comprehensive plan to address the needs of this population of students so that they may have an opportunity to successfully complete high school. There is a need for alternative schools for over-aged and under-credit students with the necessary support services. College readiness programs need to be implemented in every middle and high school. Our children need to “college ready” as they enter freshman year of college. It is unacceptable to have students complete their academic requirements and fail to meet the minimum standards/expectations during their first year of college.

### **More School Safety agents are needed in our public schools.**

The current criteria used by the Department of Education’s School Safety Division to determine the number of school safety officers is not adequate, and fails to address the myriad of safety concerns facing our schools. In many schools there is only one school safety officer assigned to a school that may have more than one school and multiple exits. Creating a preventative safety approach in the school is imperative. In addition, there needs to be a coordinated task force that includes the neighboring police precincts, community based organizations, school administrators and other stakeholders to create “safe corridors” around our public schools. With an admitted increase of violence surrounding some of schools, our children need to feel safe, especially during critical times – morning drop off, recess, dismissal (including after school), and special events. Our police officers need to present and work collaboratively with the schools to meet the needs and concerns of those community schools.

We are also calling for more training of School Safety agents and School Safety Teams, particularly in working with special needs children. School safety policies and protocols must be reviewed, evaluated and enforced.

### **There must be an increase in the District’s responsiveness to issues and inclusion of parents.**

It is time for innovative models that draw parents into the decision-making process. There must be more attention paid to diverse cultures, and history in order to develop initiatives that will make a difference. The Department of Education must provide technical support to Parent Associations and Community Education Councils. This also needs to be extended to the parents of charter school students in our Community School Districts. Parental empowerment is the backbone of our children’s academic success.

### **Community District 3 needs quality after-school programming.**

It is imperative that quality after school programming is offered and number of slots maximized for young people in elementary and middle school, in both public and charter schools. The additional time to provide academic, arts enrichment and sports fitness are needed during extended hours to ensure that our young people are well rounded and attain more support to meet academic standards. Community based organizations and school administrators need to work in partnership in leveraging resources to meet the needs and challenges of youth and their families that goes beyond the scope of the school day.

### **We support Universal Pre-Kindergarten (UPK) and Early Childhood Education.**

This fall, the New York City Department of Education will offer free pre-kindergarten to all eligible four-year-olds throughout the five boroughs. Studies on early childhood education show that benefits include not only substantial cognitive and behavioral development throughout childhood, but also positive long-term outcomes through adolescence and adulthood.<sup>1</sup>

For Community Board 3, universal pre-kindergarten (UPK) is particularly critical in improving the lives of all of our families. In 2012, 45.7% of Community Board 3 residents received government income support, such as Temporary Support for Needy Families (TANF).<sup>2</sup> The median household income is less than \$40,000, and the unemployment rate is about 13%, higher than the overall current unemployment rate of New York City<sup>3</sup>.

### **Universal pre-kindergarten will enhance our community as a whole by:**

- Elevating academic achievement, especially among our lower-income children; and
- Giving parents with young children the time to pursue gainful career opportunities and provide for their families.

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<sup>1</sup> Barnett, W.S. Preschool education and its lasting effects: Research and policy implications. Education and Public Interest Center & Education Policy Research Unit, Boulder, CO. 2008.

<sup>2</sup> NYC Department of City Planning. Brooklyn Community District 3. 2010. <http://www.nyc.gov/html/dcp/pdf/lucds/bk3profile.pdf>.

<sup>3</sup> State of the City’s Housing & Neighborhoods: Bedford Stuyvesant BK – 03. Furman Center for Real Estate and Urban Policy. 2011. [http://furmancenter.org/files/sotc/BK\\_03\\_11.pdf](http://furmancenter.org/files/sotc/BK_03_11.pdf)

**Community Board 3 is concerned that the number of local seats available may not meet the demand in our community.**

According to the Office of the Mayor, New York City is prepared to provide free pre-kindergarten to 53,604 children in September 2014, and to accommodate an additional 20,000 children for the 2015 - 2016 school year.<sup>4</sup> However, as of the 2010 United States Census, over 11,000 children in Brooklyn District 3 are under five years old<sup>5</sup>. While both public and private daycare facilities can currently serve over 2,000 children throughout the district, increased enrollment of four year-olds may reduce space for other children. In addition, the Department of Education did not allow providers enough time - only a total of two weeks - to obtain up-to-date information and prepare their letters of intent and applications.

**In light of these concerns on UPK, Community Board 3 seeks to closely partner with the Mayor's Office, city agencies, private and public schools, community-based early childhood learning centers, and local families to:**

- Monitor implementation;
- Identify possible areas of improvement, including, but not limited to:
  - Expanding and upgrading full-day capacity,
  - Developing high-quality instruction,
  - Training early childhood teachers and specialists,
  - Supporting families with special needs,
  - Using reliable data tools to measure and analyze progress; and
- Facilitate constructive information sharing among community stakeholders.

**Community Board 3 seeks programs and services for teens and older youth.**

In Community Board 3, programs and services for the older youth between the ages of 16 – 24 years old are minimal. For young people entering adulthood, there needs to more concerted efforts to support and/or develop resources and opportunities for young people in need of employment, health/physical care, mental health, social and personal development, safety, education, housing, and mentorship. According to the Job First NYC report, *Barriers to Entry*, 32.1% of young adults between the ages of 16 – 24 years old in our community or out of work and out of school youth. Over 20% of the young people are classified as “disconnected” youth which includes those youth who face tremendous barriers such as homelessness, court-involved, teen parent, or in/aged out of foster care. In addition, our young teen and adult males are commonly victims or perpetrators of violence, and lack positive male role models to shepherd them through the challenges of becoming boys to men.

Too many of our young people are falling through the cracks. We need to act now to address their needs, by creating a comprehensive agenda that builds targeted programs and services. **Our recommendations are as follows:**

- Young people need leadership opportunities, and to be engaged in the community affairs and policy that directly impact youth. They should be encouraged and courted to provide input and

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<sup>4</sup> Office of the Mayor. Ready to Launch: New York City's Implementation Plan for Free, High-Quality, Full-Day Universal Pre-Kindergarten. January 2014.

<sup>5</sup> NYC Department of City Planning. Brooklyn Community District 3. 2010. <http://www.nyc.gov/html/dcp/pdf/lucds/bk3profile.pdf>.

solutions on gaps in programs and services for older teens and disconnected youth. With the support of our community leaders, schools, and community based organizations, a comprehensive long term plan should be constructed to best serve the needs identified by our young people.

- The Department of Youth and Community Development, local banking institutions through the Community Reinvestment Act, and other philanthropic organization provide technical assistance and funding opportunities to quality small and middle-sized community based organizations that provide programs and services to youth.
- One Stop/Safe Havens for teens and young adults that are open evenings and weekends that provide programs such as recreation, social, legal, medical and counseling. A program similar to The Door in Manhattan is needed, especially in the high needs areas of Community Board 3.
- Workforce development, internship and training programs for young adults are desperately needed to meet the needs of unemployed teens and young adults. More opportunities for Job Fairs and outreach to local employers to encourage employing youth are desperately needed. The local BIDS, educational institutions and CBOs need to work collaboratively to train, mentor and support our youth as they begin to enter the workforce.

## HEALTHCARE

The needs and goals of Bedford Stuyvesant are unique in comparison to other communities. The issue for us is the disparities in the overall health of the residents of Central Brooklyn. We would like to ensure that every resident has access to quality healthcare. Quality healthcare will help prevent the spread of sexually transmitted diseases (i.e. HIV/AIDS) and address other serious medical issues that require immediate professional attention. For example, cancer continues to be one of the top health issues in Bedford Stuyvesant; prevention and detection are tantamount. Obesity runs rampant in our community and has devastating complications such as heart disease, diabetes, and hypertension. We are advocating for mental health facilities and clinics to treat depression and other chronic mental illnesses. The geographical location should not have any bearing on the healthcare of the citizens in a city as capable and diverse as New York.

### **We support offering incentives to local businesses which promote healthier habits.**

We believe this type of initiative would be more impactful in our fight to create a healthier lifestyle. Thus, through substantial exposure and common practices from our fellow citizens not only will we be healthier as a people but also more knowledgeable about new healthcare opportunities.

### **It is crucial that the residents of New York City have access to good medical care.**

In our community, the rates of persons without access to quality care are higher than the rest of Brooklyn and New York City at large. Much of our high death rates are due to people lacking a personal doctor for the management of treatable illnesses. In this community, people utilize the emergency room for sickness as opposed to the intended emergency treatment. Health issues such as heart disease, high blood pressure, diabetes, depression, prenatal care, and HIV can be managed with appropriate medical check-ups with a personal doctor for regular treatment.

It seems that the more things change the more they remain the same. We are still the epicenter of health challenges. The premature death rate in Bedford Stuyvesant is 933 per 100,000 people in Brooklyn versus 754 per 100,000 in Central Brooklyn; and 718 per 100,000 in New York City. The primary causes of premature death are cancer (17%); heart disease (16%); HIV/AIDS (14%); and homicide which appear to rise as we speak.

Obesity continues to be a major health problem in Community District 3. It is a major contributor to diseases such as type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure, and heart disease. Additionally, corpulence also raises the risk of becoming asthmatic. Seven out of eleven Brooklyn neighborhoods have 20% or more obese adults. The numbers are even more astounding when you consider those that are overweight but not yet obese. In Brooklyn, 12% of the adults have diabetes, compared to 9% in New York City overall.

**Unfortunately, we must again, repeat the call for more funding in these areas:**

- HIV/AIDS prevention and treatment;
- Expanded emergency room services;
- Innovative preventive programs that address the high rates of diabetes, obesity and asthma;
- Increased resources for training EMT personnel;
- Expanded emergency mental health programs at Woodhull and interfaith Hospitals;
- More accessible locations for flu vaccinations.

## SENIORS

Several of our senior centers have been closed, which is the **only** life-line some of our elderly outside of their homes. Seniors are being displaced because they can no longer afford to age in place. We need to have guaranteed steps to keep the people that helped build this community right here. They are unable to afford the rents or are unable to get into the senior housing in their very own neighborhood. Some of our residents cannot procure housing because they have too much income while others do not have enough. Some of our aged neighbors are ill and/or disabled and need some sort of assisted living facility within the confines of Bedford Stuyvesant. It is a travesty to have to move the seniors out of the neighborhood they have lived in their entire adult life, where they raised their children and grandchildren. Not only are they struggling with placement, but also with being preyed upon by unscrupulous entities trying to take away their property and holdings.

- We need funding to create a facility sponsored by HUD and DFTA that will allow our seniors to age in place safely. Perhaps an incentive can be put in place for a developer to create the building and then DFTA can be its sponsoring agent.
- There is an increasing percentage of senior citizens living in poverty and we need to concretize supportive services targeted specifically for them. These would include Medicaid, SSI, Food Stamps, home delivered meals and the ever crucial housing subsidies.
- Information is the key to better informed decisions. Definitive, strategic, well- thought -out plans should be instituted to ensure that our older Americans receive pertinent information. This does not have to only fall on the municipalities but with appropriate training the responsibility can be shared with community-based, faith-based, religious institutions, block associations and other community entities to advocate on behalf of the elderly. Keep the advocates abreast of new and beneficial legislation that will impact the quality of life for our seniors.
- The Senior Citizen Rent Increase Exemption Unit must continue to be in place for our older citizens. The price of rent has sky-rocketed and those seniors that do not own their homes are at an impasse as to how to afford to continue living in their rental property. Income eligibility needs to be re-vamped, so more elderly are qualified to age in place without fear of increases that will force them to have to seek shelter elsewhere.
- Protective services need to be provided in order to safeguard seniors against crime and abuse. There should be training for all municipalities to recognize when the elderly have been victimized, sometimes even by their families.
- The city should assist with fuel and utility costs with programs such as HEAP and Weatherization.
- Another crucial matter when considering the elderly is making sure that our public, private and recreational spaces are senior friendly. They should be able to continue to go out and enjoy this city without worry that they cannot use the stairs, (i.e., subways), getting in public spaces and places like the theatres, restaurants, houses of worship and the like.

**We are asking that our local elected officials continue to support DFTA with discretionary funding.**

This funding is heavily relied upon for space and transportation costs at senior centers. In addition, rather than cut funding, we are looking for additional funding for senior centers in fiscal year 2015. The funding that is still in place has shifted to different organizations. Therefore, DFTA should be more diligent in ensuring that the senior citizens of this community are not disenfranchised.

## **SOCIAL SERVICES**

Community District 3 has worked diligently and continues to work to make sure that the homeless people that are placed in this community are treated fairly in their housing quest. There are many transitional facilities cropping up all over Bedford Stuyvesant in our residential community. Some of the homeless are being placed in unsafe conditions. We would like to work with the Commission on Human Rights once again, along with the Department of Homeless Services and our elected officials to see that these dangerous practices are curtailed.

At the urging of the community districts of Brooklyn, the Department of Homeless Services and the City Council have taken a closer look at the present practices and deemed there is a need for change. A pilot program is now in effect that instructs providers to refrain from making referrals to buildings that have registered complaints regarding occupancy violations, but have not been inspected by a City agency because the inspector was unable to access the premises - no access, no referrals. The issue of non-access is crucial. Perhaps the new practice of multi-agency representatives doing the inspections has helped. We continuously ask that more inspectors are hired. At this time, it is obvious that we are still looking for guidelines that have teeth in order to ensure compliance to Buildings and HPD codes.

We continue to ask that strict attention be paid to the concentration of facilities that are placed in one geographic area. Bedford Stuyvesant is largely a residential community, and if we continue to make every vacant house a facility, they should be established as to permanent housing rather than transitional. When persons are placed in an assisted housing environment, make it possible for them to have the dignity of knowing it is permanent and they will be able to stay. This way, the existing residents and the newly placed residents will all have ownership and we can continue to be a close knit residential community. Community District 3 is working toward building up this area, not allowing it to fall into a total state of disrepair.

## **ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION**

### **The water main and sewer system inspection schedule is presently inadequate.**

There should be an upgrade that will accommodate the increased density in the community. In heavy downpours/rainfalls or during extreme snow conditions, our storm drains cannot handle the water flow. The streets and sidewalks are flooding over and in some instances water is cascading into homes causing damage that is sometime irreparable to the residences. The storm drains wash down debris from the street that does not get cleaned via the Mechanical Broom, (i.e., Nostrand Avenue and Fulton Street) causing even more backup the very next time there is a deluge. Corners are rendered impassable for hours on end, waiting for the water to recede. There should be a schedule in place for cleaning out the storm drains, rather than waiting for someone to call 311 to say there is a problem. In the winter months after a significant snowfall, many corners become veritable pedestrian hazards. As the snow melts, there is no place for the water to subsequently go, it freezes over and there is an inadequate, slippery passage for persons attempting to cross the streets.

### **There are still major concerns about property being developed on land that has possible prior contamination.**

In 2010 there was a problem on Skillman Street regarding two such properties. When National Grid brought this to our attention, there were 22 other sites throughout the City that had similar problems. Then in 2012 a resident on Jewel McKoy Lane, between Troy and Schenectady Avenues (Cross streets are Herkimer Street and Atlantic Avenue), came to us with suspicions of possible contamination on the block. There must be better attention on parcels that are being developed.

Bedford Stuyvesant is asking that funding be put in place to have the environmental studies completed prior to allowing developers to build residences that may be upon potential hazards. Further, there must be diligent noise regulation enforcement by both DEP and the local Police Department; and air quality control continues to be important within our community. As the asthma rates continue to be high across the board, there really needs to be an increase in staffing levels for all agencies concerned to enforce their stated regulations.

## **SANITATION**

### **A new sanitation garage is the most shovel ready project the City should fund.**

Community District 3 is still without our own Sanitation Garage. We have been making this request since 1980. The designated site on Nostrand Avenue for our BK3 sanitation garage was acquired. There were multiple suits filed to prevent us from being able to utilize that site. We were successful in each of those litigations. Our demand is for OMB, DOS, the Mayor's Office and the City Council to put the money back in the DSNY construction budget!

In this district, there are other concerns that we deem crucial. Illegal dumping, which runs rampant is now endemic. Sanitation does not have enough police to monitor and enforce infractions that are being committed. The DSNY police force must be increased so we can eliminate these problems. Illegal posting also contributes to the unsightliness of our streets. Enforcement is out there, but there is not enough being done to stem this tide, nor enforce appropriate fines to serve as a deterrent. Residents are forced to see postings on fences, light poles, even traffic sign rails, walls and any other surface they can be attached to. This is a serious quality of life issue.

Despite the fact that we have a lot cleaning division, there are many lots not under the purview of HPD. Those privately owned lots need to be cleaned and fenced. There should be some criteria that hold owners accountable for the maintenance of their property. If DSNY has to assume that responsibility, then the owners should have to accept the financial liability.

Private carting must be taken seriously. We have merchants that have no permits, which contribute to our commercial dumping issues. There should be an informational campaign to educate the merchants, in multiple languages and then a major enforcement blitz to show the seriousness of this particular situation. Dumping brings a proliferation of health issues with it including but are not limited to rodents and other vermin.

We are aware that the signage division is no longer in existence however the need is even greater than before for signage. There needs to be creation of a new a signage division that serves multiple municipal agencies making it more cost efficient. Indeed we need to have manufactured/printed signs regarding canine waste, littering, and no posting.

Sanitation staffing should not be diminished but upgraded. Lot cleaning has had to take on more responsibility. They now have to cover some of the dumping issues as well as lots and this causes a time delay in both, when that was not evident prior to the cuts in staff. The storm drains are filthy. This was maintained by having the corners manually swept. Now debris washes down into the drain and causes flooding, permeating the air with foul smelling odors. Additionally, all of the mechanical brooms must use adequate amounts of water for their entire route.

## **TRANSPORTATION**

As with DEP, the Nostrand Avenue HWK1129 project, (the reconstruction of Nostrand Avenue from Flushing to Atlantic Avenues) has been in the budget of Community District 3 since 1989. Nostrand Avenue is a major thoroughfare that runs from the northern most end of our district straight through in a southerly direction. At last, the construction has begun.

We have a number of roadbeds that are in hazardous/deplorable conditions. Broadway, which borders Community District 4, Bushwick, is so bad that cars have to actually travel in the opposite lane to avoid vehicular damage or an accident. Atlantic Avenue, which borders Community District 8, Crown Heights, also has a hazardous roadbed. This is not limited to those two roadways however; there are depressions and potholes in many of our streets. There seems to be no thought for street excavations that inadequately close the streets after they have completed their work. The restoration compliance guidelines should require that work done on City streets been restored to their original state.

In addition, Halsey Street reconstruction from Tompkins to Broadway was initially supposed to be completed and it was not. The request was in for the 2004 budget requests. We would like to see that work done.

We would like to see bus shelters and or benches at all of our bus stops for the elderly and disabled especially. The bus stop areas need to be kept clean and snow-free. Some bus stops have debris lying around and weeds growing up out of the pits that the bus stop sign is in. There must be better maintenance at our bus stops and transportation hubs.

Another continuing problem with our roadways is that there is no consistent enforcement for big rigs that do not respect the truck routes but continually use the residential streets. These streets are not constructed to handle such heavy vehicles and they ruin the roadbed, not to mention the vibrations from these heavy vehicles also compromise the foundation of our historical building stock. Over time, this creates structural damage issues for the property owners.

## **NEW YORK CITY TRANSIT AUTHORITY**

New York City Transit Authority (NYCTA) is showcased as the premier form of transportation in New York City. With all of the new acquisitions to the NYCTA, we would like to inquire about the introduction of 911 intercoms and request placement of ETA monitors for our subway stations within the district (A,C,G,J,M, and Z). Having a more efficient and secure subway system for our constituents is very important.

The subway system needs to have fully functional security cameras placed in all of our district stations to help interdict and reduce criminal activity, (i.e. fare beating, electronics theft and assault). Many of our stations are unmanned due to the removal of Token Booths and the reduction in needed Transit personnel, monitored cameras are a much required safety measure.

Plans for NYC Select Bus Service along the Nostrand-Bedford corridors should include an impact study measuring effects on the local commercial strips and the identification of areas for dedicated parking along commercial nodes/intersections.

We would like more regular cleaning and maintenance of our bus shelters/stops and subway stations, in order to cut down on pathogens, rodents and the propensity to litter, not to mention to prevent future bio-hazards events from occurring. NYCTA Mobile Wash Units must power clean/wash at least twice a month, the Franklin Avenue Shuttle, the Nostrand Avenue Station and the Utica Avenue Station (A/C line). Funding should be put in place for the Franklin Avenue Shuttle to maintain the façade. There is peeling paint and rusting, which is an eyesore to the public. There are weeds growing up at the bus stops, they along with shelters are not shoveled during the winter months forcing riders to have to stand in the street to await the bus. Transportation hubs like Franklin Avenue with the A, C line, the Shuttle and two bus lines (B48 and B49) should be monitored for cleanliness in the station at the bus stops and in and around the perimeter of the facility. The same holds true regarding the Nostrand Avenue and Utica Avenue subway stations.

## **PUBLIC SAFETY**

This Board works in close partnership with the 79<sup>th</sup> and 81<sup>st</sup> Precincts and Precinct Councils to bring about meaningful change in police-community relations. It is recommended that creative avenues be developed to open meaningful dialogue between residents and businesses and NYPD personnel. Since there is a new law enforcement administration, it is recommended that a joint task force be convened to develop a pilot program that would result in projects that are designed to close the wide gap of mistrust that still exists. Such a task force must reach beyond the usual groups to include young African American men, at-risk youth and their families, and community organizations that serve those populations. There are local groups that have been working with young and older men, with one of the goals being to promote a more positive stance with law enforcement personnel. Volunteer organizations such as 500 Men Making A Difference have been on the ground, and have taken the lead in this effort. Funding support for such grass-roots groups is a necessity. Funding should be allocated for the additional time needed to reach and retrain local precinct personnel. The community affairs officers in both precincts have been outstanding examples of how to interface with residents, even in the most contentious situations. Two such officers per precinct are not enough. The squad should be at least doubled, and other Brooklyn North Command personnel should be much more visible in this community.

**The community policing approach must be reinstated, backed up by specialized training at the Police Academy for those officers who are assigned to communities of color.**

Time and money must be put into the development of innovative approaches, and certainly, the precinct councils could be the starting point for such an effort. Ostensibly, there are a number of programs under the auspices of the Community Affairs Bureau/Division, but resources should be allocated for comprehensive implementation at the neighborhood level. By extension, the precinct councils should be one of the key drivers in such an effort. In addition, the clergy councils appear to be dislocated from almost all safety initiatives. Technical assistance from NYPD headquarters staff would go a long way toward making them more relevant and responsive to our grave safety issues.

**Creative grassroots partnerships can sustain positive change.**

Over the past two years, this Community Board, in partnership with elected officials and other organizations, has hosted three highly successful block watcher training workshops. We were pleased to be one of the first communities to participate in the roll-out of the revamped program. The Bed-Stuy Works Alliance of Block and Resident Associations has been the catalyst that brought together close to three hundred people over the past twenty four months who have now been trained. (The Alliance is a joint project of Community Board 3, Bridge Street Development Corporation, and the Bedford Stuyvesant Youth, Education, and Safety Task Force. Both precincts sit on the Alliance's Steering Committee, and regularly attend meetings of the full group.) In order to maintain the interest in this effective grassroots effort, there should be follow up and support activities available at various times during the year.

**We must stop gun trafficking.**

There are 17 NYCHA developments within Community District 3. Some have long histories of crime and violence. The more traditional elements include gang/crew warfare and the sale of drugs. In recent years, the steady, uninterrupted flow of illegal guns has taken these factors to another level, and has led

to the horrors of children shot in playgrounds and drive-by shootings while children are in school. Unfortunately, the NYCHA developments have been the nexus for the majority of the gun and gang violence. Both precincts have done admirable work in attempting to curtail the ever-increasing violence, but it is obvious that they cannot do it alone. Special assistance is needed from every level of government to stop, or at least, slow down the influx of guns, and to disband the gangs and other smaller crews that have become just as deadly. The special units that are assigned to the borough command must be more proactive in their operations. The need for assistance in this area is immediate, as we enter another summer that has the potential for heightened criminal behavior.

**Funding must be put in place to reopen community centers in the NYCHA developments.**

A pilot Jobs Plus program operated by the Bedford Stuyvesant Restoration Corporation at the Marcy, Louis Armstrong and Lafayette Gardens Houses is a model that should be considered for replication. Any groups involved in such an endeavor must be willing to do the nitty-gritty outreach that is necessary to engage people, and to provide vital resource information in a number of different ways. While the focus on the internet as a delivery mechanism is the latest technology, it cannot be the only means. Agencies that ultimately receive funding must be evaluated on their success in recruitment, holding power, and their effectiveness as change agents.

The J-RIP initiative is another proactive initiative that should be included in the arsenal of strategies for NYCHA residents. The Juvenile Robbery Intervention Program was started in 2007, in Brownsville, and may have languished for some years. As outlined below, there is certainly potential to break into the downward spiral experienced by young people and their families.

“The JRIP program was started after police analyzed a spike in robberies and learned that many of the incidents were youth preying on other youth city-wide, many of them repeat offenders. It concentrates efforts on identifying juvenile offenders where they live and structuring a program around home visits and parental involvement to break the cycle and reduce the recidivism rate of these young people.”

*Excerpted from the NYPD website*

In addition to the reopening of the NYCHA community centers, money must be allocated for the development of a Bedford Stuyvesant Justice Center, modeled on the highly successful Red Hook model. The program would be the perfect supplement to any new community policing initiatives. Since each neighborhood has its unique twist on criminal activities, the development of a Justice Center for Bedford Stuyvesant would be a major step toward permanent change in the landscape.

Workforce preparation for at-risk youth and adults, and those who have been arrested is essential. The ATTAIN labs operated by SUNY are underutilized, and could be used for the training of this target group....at little or no cost, since the labs are up and going.

Due to the situations outlined above, each precinct and PSA should be given additional personnel and sector cars. On any given night, there could be several violent incidents occurring around the same time, and the sector cars are the key to immediate responses. In previous needs statements we have requested additional Skywatch equipment and additional cameras. Unfortunately, nothing happens until there is a highly-publicized incident such as the murder and injury of two little children. Budget allocations with prevention in mind must be the watchword.

## **FIRE AND EMERGENCY MEDICAL RESPONSE**

Fire safety is another major priority of Community Board 3. Our FDNY personnel operate at the highest levels, and we are proud to have them in Bedford Stuyvesant. It is vital that the fire houses be maintained in the best possible condition. However, that is not the case, and **funding should be allocated to improve the following conditions:**

### **Battalion 37- Engine 222, Ralph Ave and DeKalb Avenue**

1. Mold needs to be removed from walls on second floor. This could be a health issue.
2. Windows in fire house need to be replaced. The building was constructed in 1972, and the windows have not been replaced in 42 years.
3. Parking area in the rear of the building is sinking.

### **Engine 214- Ladder 111, Hancock Street and Lewis Avenue**

1. The ground in the backyard is sinking.
2. The roof on a section of the building leaks.
3. Clear markings must be made on the street so that neighbors do not park too close to the firehouse.
4. The kitchen appliances are in disrepair, and should be replaced.

### **There is a growing need for a Bedford Stuyvesant Emergency Medical Service Station (EMS) in the District.**

With so many newcomers to the neighborhood, the strain on centuries-old buildings that are being converted to apartments can only lead to an increased threat of fires. A study of the impact of these changes with respect to fire safety would provide a road map for the placement of additional resources. However, it is clear that we must have more inspectors and enforcement officers in the near term in order to monitor the frenzy of building and conversions that are taking place. While there is recognition on the part of FDNY that the need is there, just as the one in Williamsburg was constructed in response to “growing populations in Williamsburg and Greenpoint,” the same situation exists here in Community District 3, as hundreds of families are now living in new housing in the northern section of the neighborhood, and new buildings are going up at a frantic pace in other parts of the community. Finally, there must be continued support for the Bedford Stuyvesant Ambulance Corps, which does an outstanding job of responding to medical emergencies.

## **EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS**

**Preparedness is an arena that requires an intense study in our community.**

The City has taken steps in the event of an emergency with evacuation routes, centers for cooling and other types of emergency, but a true emergency will affect not just a portion of the community but more than likely all of it.

What will we do if a disaster strikes? How will the people of Community District 3 be mobilized? Is there a list of health care providers that can be readily called upon? Let us not forget the ever present danger of terrorism both local and foreign.

These questions and more will need to be answered succinctly. There must be a way to harness the needs in this genre. Is it possible for designated groups to begin to mobilize sections of each quadrant of the district? CERT teams need to become a priority. Can OEM manage without designated district assistance?

Community District 3 implores the City of New York to be proactive and not reactive when it relates to the state of preparedness of the residents of Bedford Stuyvesant as well as, New York at-large.

## **CONCLUSION**

Community District 3 is prepared and eager to work with the City and our elected officials to elevate the quality of life in our community. We understand it is our role to represent all residents of our district to the best of our abilities, and we are determined to make sure our concerns are heard at City Hall. Nonetheless, we remain optimistic about the new Mayoral Administration's responsiveness to our needs, and we look forward to solving all of these pressing issues together in Fiscal Year 2016 and beyond.

Respectfully submitted,

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Chairperson

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