



**BROOKLYN COMMUNITY BOARD 14**  
**FLATBUSH–MIDWOOD COMMUNITY DISTRICT**  
810 East 16<sup>th</sup> Street  
Brooklyn, New York 11230

**COMMENTS ON THE FISCAL YEAR 2023  
PRELIMINARY BUDGET STATEMENT**

March 2022

In accordance with Sections 212, 214(b) and 238 of the New York City Charter, the comments below on the Fiscal Year 2023 Preliminary Budget Statement and Register of Budget Requests pertain to Community Board 14's Statement of Community District Needs and related budget priorities.

The following statement represents a good deal of time and hard work and is the culmination of a series of budget meetings, public hearings, assessment of service delivery data and input from community members within Community District 14. These comments are submitted following a public hearing on March 14, 2022.

Generally speaking, the Board is disappointed with agency responses, which are vague, unhelpful, and too often inaccurate. The Department of City Planning and the Office of Management and Budget should work directly with Community Boards across the city to improve this process and demand a quality outcome from all agencies.

**Office of Management and Budget: Community Boards: (Expense 1)**

The response from the Office of Management and Budget to our request for an increase in the baseline budget, is to tell us what we already have. This lack of response from the agency that facilitates the Community Boards' role in the budget process is unfortunate. Last year we faced a nearly 19% cut. Baseline funds were restored but \$42,500 in additional expense funds from city council were not reallocated.

In years past, Community Boards were held harmless from citywide budget reductions because we already operate at the slimmest margins and because Community Boards have not expanded in nearly 30 years. We are the only agency with no personnel or significant baseline budget expansion during the past administration. In 2015 there were 156 Community Board full time staff, citywide. In 2019, there were 168. The population has grown, our responsibilities have increased, but our staff and our budget have not.

We are on the front lines of the continuing impacts of the Covid crises: the economic devastation it has caused our communities, and the impacts on city services we must help manage. The city has the advantage of 50 community members on each board throughout the city, who serve voluntarily. We work closely with councilmembers and other elected officials. We partner with all city agencies ensuring they know of issues in the community and that the community is aware of agency initiatives, rules, programs and services. We work with civic associations,

community-based organizations, houses of worship, merchants, and residents from all walks of life. We are the first point of contact for all of your constituents in the City of New York. New mandates and responsibilities from accounting tasks to managing and broadcasting remote meetings are required but not supported or funded. A baseline budget increase is needed to enable us to continue to serve our high level of service to our respective communities.

**New York City Police Department** (Expense 14, Capital 1, 11)

OMB, DCAS and NYPD have all cleared their respective hurdles for a site search for a new 70th Police Precinct House to begin. Please assure that funding mechanism will be in place to move this top capital priority forward. This is an issue that has been pending in the community for over three decades. There will always be cyclical budget disruptions, so there must be a plan that can withstand these cycles – one that finally brings an adequate, well situated, state-of-the art precinct house to fruition. As for the current site, further study for repairs should not be necessary given that repairs are work-order driven.

CB14 also made a request concerning school crossing guards. We are concerned that NYPD isn't filling last year's headcount when the request is to expand current headcount.

**Department of Environmental Protection** (Expense 2, 6)

It is encouraging that DEP has included funding in the 10-year plan to address CD14's chronic flooding locations. However, this information conflicts with previous responses and we are seeking clarification as to locations, projects, funding estimates and timing. The department has also indicated that a robust catch basin cleaning cycle will be accommodated within existing resources. We think an even more robust schedule is needed.

**Department of Parks and Recreation** (Expense 4, Capital 2,3)

Flatbush and Midwood boast 11,319 street trees, according to DPR's census. The cessation of regular tree pruning this year will surely become a public safety issue, and the ratio of regular maintenance to emergency pruning will surely shift given the lag in the pruning cycle. The Department must be funded so that if a contractor cannot perform required work, there is an in-house back up plan. This is both a budget and a policy matter that must be addressed and fully funded. The Mayor has introduced a new million trees plan, which requires assurance that once a million trees are planted, they will also be maintained. Recent city history confirms that cost in claims far outpaces budget savings when the pruning cycle is defunded. Increase the forestry budget to make up for lost time and to shorten the regular tree pruning cycle before someone else is injured, or worse.

The addition of green space and maintenance of the few parks and playgrounds in this park-poor community is a need that has been underscored by the pandemic. Issues of health and environmental justice are related to access to green space. CB14 continues to advocate for agency funding. The suggestion that we rely on an ever-changing tide of elected officials whose terms don't last as long as DPR takes to complete capital projects is not sound. We strongly urge the rehabilitation of Umma Park and are pleased to see that some funding has been identified. The Hot Spot Tot Lot is also in need of rehabilitation.

DPR continues to instruct this Board to ask elected officials to fund both capital and expense needs. From street tree pruning maintenance, emergency response, playground maintenance and upgrades, it is clear that DPR is not adequately funded. The daily maintenance of DPR assets should not be considered a special project to be funded through member items. DPR has also had to rely on other agencies. DSNY has done the bulk of tree clean-up work following storms and has cleared snow on DPR grounds. What is the agency doing to advocate for adequate funding for baseline needs? Asking elected officials to fill in deficits is not a sustainable approach.

**Department of Transportation (Capital 4, 5, 6, 11)**

When can we expect trench restoration to begin and additional funds to be identified? The agency response is that the need is funded in the 10-year plan, however, upon further inquiry, this is the same \$60 million that was originally allocated five years ago, none of which is intended for CD14.

Please review the agency response to CB14's request for bridge repair, which is that the request is denied. However, DOT's Bridges Unit presented an update on component work on bridges in the district, including the Beverly Road bridge, which is at least partially budgeted.

**DOT: Newkirk Plaza (Capital 5)**

Community Board 14 has advocated for Newkirk Plaza to become a public plaza through the DOT, the MTA NYCT and this year, also the EDC budgets. Each response is that the plaza is not within the purview of that entity. When serving as Borough President, Mayor Eric Adams took great interest in rationalizing oversight of this space. We will turn to the Mayor's office for assistance given the lack of agency support.

**Department of Sanitation (Expense 3, 24, 25 /Capital CS)**

Throughout the city District Managers frequently comment that DSNY is one of the most responsive agencies with which we interact. This is certainly true in BK14! However, budget cuts leveled at day-to-day services still present many challenges as evident on commercial and residential streets alike. The total elimination of manual litter patrol (MLP) has left our 54 dead ends with no procedure in place for cleaning. CB 14 had actually requested budget for additional MLP tools such as weed whackers and bolt cutters for this unit, which had been functioning at a high level with great results. Now, complaints about dirty streets, illegal drop offs under roadways and dead ends, litter in the commercial districts have increased. Nevertheless, BK 14 is always responsive to day to day needs and have filled in to assist other departments with storm clean up. They have also stepped up to assist our community with food pantries, food distributions and community clean ups. They should be as well-resourced as they are appreciated.

**Human Resource Administration (DSS/DH) (Expense 13,15)**

We are pleased that DHS has expanded and enhanced street outreach teams over the past few years. Anecdotally, there is an increase in the number of street homeless in our community. There seems to be an increasing number of encampments and so much continued resistance to accepting services. Further efforts to include social workers, mental health, experts and substance use counselors in teams are supported by this Board.

There is a need for expanded rental assistance and permanent housing vouchers. The agency's response to CB14's budget request this year is the same general, patented non-response as we have received in past years.

To reiterate last year's comment: We support the agency's important work in our community and will refer responses to OMB to consider a different approach to budget consultations so that our hard work bringing local community concerns to HRA's attention is reciprocated with a meaningful, informative response next year.

**Department of Youth and Community Development (Expense 10)**

We appreciate DYCD's pivot in the face of health and safety concerns during the pandemic. Thank you for your focused and informative response to CB14's budget priority. We are beyond pleased by the news of budget increases for DYCD programs. We are excited to announced that CB14 will hold an in-person youth conference in May! We look forward to continuing to partner with DYCD in order to serve youth in our community.

**Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (Expense 8, 18)**

We are gratified that DOHMH will review resources to ensure they are adequate to meet the mental health and hygiene needs present in our community. We hope these services will complement street outreach services as we have experienced an increase in reports of substance use in public spaces and ongoing refusal to accept services offered by street outreach teams.

The already high number of rodent complaints continues to escalate. The DOHMH response that existing resources will address an exponentially increasing concern is not adequate. Could DOHMH do more with increased funding?

**Housing, Preservation and Development (Expense 12)**

Four of the top five 311 requests in CD 14 are for HPD services. We rank 12th citywide in the number (per 1000 units) of serious housing code violations. The affordable housing deficit is increasing, while the current stock is dilapidating. There should be an additional, meaningful investment in ensuring that the percentage of rental units considered adequate in our District exceeds the unacceptable current rate of 40%. We appreciate HPD's presentations at recent CB14 meetings and look forward to continuing to work with the agency on behalf of our residents.

**Department of Education (Capital 7, 12)**

CB 14 has been identified as a district in need for over a decade. Please provide an update on site search efforts over the past 3 years. Is funding needed to continue a site search? Has the Covid 19 pandemic changed the need for physical space budgeting? It is disheartening that SCA will not recommend funding sanitation storage plans in existing or new schools. Schools should be able to do better with waste.

**Fire Department City of New York (Capital 9, Expense 20)**

Please provide details on firehouse upgrade projects within CD 14. CB14 continues to support the expansion of EMS and FDNY personnel.

**Brooklyn Public Library (Expense 20)**

BPL has developed such a broad array of services to support our community in myriad ways. BPL continues to pivot and expand services as circumstances allow. CB14 stands ready to support BPL on any specific initiatives as they develop.

**Flatbush Enslaved Africans Burial Ground**

A need that has presented itself after budget priorities were submitted is funding for the enslaved Africans burial ground at the intersection of Church and Bedford Avenues. This was originally envisioned as a potential site for the development of affordable housing, but that plan was abandoned in deference to community input and to the sacred history of the grounds. However, to date, a plan to develop an appropriate memorial has not even been assigned to a City agency. Funding to support an appropriate agency process, to engage the public and to ultimately develop a historical memorial is a newly identified CB14 priority.

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We strongly urge the administration to take the necessary steps to ensure the equitable and proper allocation of funds, and to ensure that all agencies comply with the spirit as well as the letter of the New York City Charter by consulting with Community Boards on budgetary matters.

The above represents Brooklyn Community Board 14's comments and concerns with respect to the Fiscal Year 23 Preliminary Budget Statement. If there are any questions or should there be a need for further clarification, please call the board's district office at 718-859-6357.

Respectfully submitted,



Shawn Campbell  
District Manager