



BROOKLYN COMMUNITY BOARD 14
FLATBUSH–MIDWOOD COMMUNITY DISTRICT
810 East 16th Street
Brooklyn, New York 11230

**COMMENTS ON THE FISCAL YEAR 2024
PRELIMINARY BUDGET STATEMENT**

March 2023

In accordance with Sections 212, 214(b) and 238 of the New York City Charter, the comments below on the Fiscal Year 2024 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 effort 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 13, 2023.

Generally speaking, the Board is once again disappointed with agency responses, which are vague, unhelpful, and too often inaccurate. Any efforts by the Department of City Planning and the Office of Management and Budget to improve this process and demand meaningful responses from city agencies have been futile.

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.

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. From 2001 to 2021 the headcount at many of our sister agencies increased—DOB by 138%, DYCD by 131%, Parks by 104%, DOT by 29%. At the same time Community Boards' headcount decreased by 11%. Yet, our responsibilities increased. We have been assigned additional responsibilities—accounting with FMS and Passport, District Managers are now agency privacy officers, there have been no less than eight zoning text amendments proposed in the past five years, service delivery requests are up, and our meetings are held in various combinations of remote, in person and hybrid, requiring new technical skills.

City Council provided two allocations of \$42,500 in 2017 and 2018 but these were not baseline funds and could not be used to hire staff or make long term plans. As the most local city agency, we give voice to the individuals who make up our communities. City agencies have expressed a desire to reach the most local levels and communities, and the value of this role should be reflected in our baseline budget.

Department of Parks and Recreation (Capital 1, 8; Expense 5)

We note that funding to memorialize the Flatbush African Burial Ground is in the current commitment plan and look forward to assisting with a robust community input process to realize a local, descendent community informed historic site. 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. The Department of Parks and Recreation is now responsible for current maintenance, ongoing community engagement and designing and memorializing this space. Funding to support a robust process, to engage the public and to ultimately develop and maintain a historical memorial is a top priority.

Flatbush and Midwood boast 11,319 street trees, according to DPR's census. The agency response to our request for a more robust pruning cycle is that a larger expense budget would be required. Yes. That's what we are requesting. Tree pruning funding should be increased. 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 recent lags in the cycle and to shorten the regular tree pruning cycle to avoid property damage, injury or worse.

While we are excited that Umma Park has been fully funded by an allocation from Councilmember Rita Joseph, the continued reliance of park capital projects on elected officials, whose terms don't last as long as DPR takes to complete capital projects, is not sound. We strongly urge the city to reconsider how capital projects are funded in the Parks system. 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 is currently collecting DPR baskets. 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 2, 4, 5; Expense 2)

The response to our Newkirk Plaza priority is that we contact the Borough Commissioner. We have been in conversation with the Borough Commissioner for decades. DOT is not tasking the right people with budget responses since this is a request that DOT Commissioner Rodriguez's office is highly aware of. Funding has been provided for programming and maintenance, but these temporary measures are not guaranteed in the future. Public space should and must be under the auspices of a city agency. We would like a knowledgeable, meaningful, and useful answer to this decades-old request during this budget cycle.

When can we expect trench restoration to begin and additional funds to be identified? Last year we were instructed to ask elected officials for allocations. The agency has also responded that the need is funded in the 10-year plan. However, this is the same \$60 million that was originally allocated six years ago, none of which is intended for CD14 and it's uncertain if any repairs have been addressed anywhere. This year's response pertains to personnel. Perhaps someone

accidentally clicked on the wrong answer in the drop-down menu. A more knowledgeable, meaningful and useful response is requested. Our streets are continuing to yield to gravity.

DOT's Bridges Unit presented an update on component work on bridges in the district, including the Beverley Road bridge, which is at least partially budgeted. We have been told that the Newkirk Avenue bridge cannot be part of a component contract because of the purview issues with Newkirk Plaza. We have submitted specific locations in our District Needs Statement. The response that our request needs to be for contiguous locations does not make sense, if you know what a bridge is.

New York City Police Department (Capital 3, 13, 14; Expense 16)

OMB, DCAS and NYPD have all cleared their respective hurdles for a site search for a new 70th Police Precinct House to begin. The Precinct House is in the Citywide Statement of Needs. Yet the agency response is that "resources are unavailable at this time." Which is it? Please assure that a funding mechanism will be in place to move this top capital priority forward and that relevant units within NYPD are updated. 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, scaffolding has been up for years, the precinct house recently didn't have heat, the CO alarm went off, walls are torn apart for ongoing repairs and the basement continues to flood.

We look forward to an update on NYPD's, the Mayor's office and OMB's work to identify additional towing facilities.

CB14 also made a request for additional school crossing guards. We are concerned that NYPD isn't even filling current spots and the request is to expand current headcount. Increased funding to pay a more attractive salary and to allow for substitute guards, so that intersections are covered even when the agent is sick or on leave, requires additional funding that must be allocated.

Department of Environmental Protection (Capital 7; Expense 9, 24)

Last year DEP included funding in the 10-year plan to address CD14's chronic flooding locations. This information conflicted with previous responses and this year's response conflicts with that! CB14 has provided chronic locations. Please respond with 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 Sanitation (Expense 3, 12, 20)

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. DSNY has created its own uphill battle by eliminating cleaning while initiating containerization and new set-out times. Nevertheless, BK 14 is always responsive to day-to-day needs and continues to assist other departments such as DOT and DPR on a regular basis. It appears there is no longer a Leventhal agreement. BK14 has 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.

The start and stop compost policy has frustrated our community. Given that residents in pilot communities must sign up to continue to participate, it seems that DSNY can allow neighboring districts to sign up to participate and draw cross-district routes accordingly. Given the low weights on composting trucks, it's hard to understand why this has not been implemented.

We appreciate that DSNY will evaluate dog waste policy and understand that reasonable enforcement is difficult to achieve.

At least the garage finally has climate control. We are pleased to be able to take this nagging request off our list.

Human Resources Administration (DSS/DHS) (Expense 4, 13)

At Borough Budget Consultations, HRA emphasizes the extent to which their budget is federal and does not provide Community Boards with guidance as to support for budget priorities. The agency responses that HRA provides are similarly unengaged. However, we are pleased that DHS has expanded street outreach teams over the past few years. Yes, we are aware that the Homebase program exists. We hope that funding will continue to expand to keep up with the many challenges we must meet to address the complicated challenges of unsheltered homelessness.

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 Consumer and Worker Protection (Expense 6)

DCWP is the licensing and main enforcement agency for the sale of tobacco and e-cigarettes. The pace of inspections is slow, enforcement mechanisms are inadequate and interagency coordination is woeful. CB14 is just now beginning to assess how many stores are unlicensed. There are currently only 38 DCWP agents citywide. Reports of sales to minors, the sale of flavored vapes and the proliferation of cannabis products before a single license has been granted by the State demonstrates that the policies are far behind the realities in this worrisome market.

Department of Buildings (Expense 18)

CB14 has requested additional resources for building inspections and training programs. Please explain how *additional* resources will be accommodated within *existing* resources.

Department of Youth and Community Development (Expense 14)

We are pleased by the news of budget increases for DYCD programs. We are excited to announce that CB14 will hold our 16th annual youth conference in April! We look forward to continuing to partner with DYCD in order to serve youth in our community.

Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (Expense 7, 10, 22, 25)

The response that DOHMH will address health disparities, infectious disease control and cultural competency with existing resources is careless. The Brooklyn Borough President has allocated millions of dollars to address a DOHMH crisis in maternal health care disparities. There have been several land-use plans and zoning text amendments to connect the built environment and open space to health outcomes. We don't think that DOHMH is as disconnected from these concerns as the disconnected answers in this budget exercise suggests. Please provide actual feedback.

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 8)

Four of the top five 311 requests in CD14 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 have identified at least 26 buildings within our district that are included in the Public Advocate's annual Worst Landlord Watchlist, including 2 buildings that rank within the 10 worst buildings in Brooklyn. HPD should withdraw the response that this request will be accommodated within existing resources and should be advocating for additional resources in order to make a dent in unacceptable conditions.

Department of Education (Capital 10)

CB14 has been identified as a district in need for over a decade. Please provide the number of seats that DOE has identified as a need in CD14. 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 is behind completing capital projects. PS217 is still scaffolded with limited access to outdoor space. PS134 does not have a playground at all!

Fire Department City of New York (Capital 11, Expense 19)

FDNY's detailed response is helpful and appreciated. Please provide details on any firehouse upgrade projects or preliminary needs identified and pending budgeting and scheduling within CD14. CB14 continues to support the expansion of EMS and FDNY personnel.

Brooklyn Public Library (Capital 12, Expense 21)

We are pleased that capital funding for several branch improvements has been identified and the library is advocating for additional components. 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 and we appreciate their informative and meaningful response to the budget requests.

Administration of Children’s Services (Expense 11)

ACS comes to budget consultations prepared to discuss programs as they relate to budget priorities and those are valuable discussions. It’s unfortunate that a different team seems to provide the agency response to community board budget requests. It’s not helpful.

Small Business Services (Expense 23)

We would appreciate a clearer explanation of how SBS funds the agency’s initiatives.

Department for the Aging (Expense 15, 17)

DFTA notes that our requests are dependent on state and federal funds but this is a city budget process. Perhaps there should be more clarity in the budget process so that DCP does not list items in the drop-down menu that are not funded at the city level.

New York City Transit (Capital 6, 9)

NYCT does not participate in budget consultations and has never provided a meaningful response in this process. We have several outdated stations in disrepair; a lack of accessibility and continue to struggle with improving Newkirk Plaza. NYCT has come before our board to propose bus lanes and bus redesign. With so many needs and so many plans afoot we urge Transit to either partner with community boards in this process or identify another State Authority-designed process to engage with local communities on budget priorities. Until then, this practice is meaningless.

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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 2024 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