

THE CITY OF NEW YORK
COMMUNITY BOARD FOUR
DISTRICT MANAGER'S REPORT February 2009
Submitted by: José Rodriguez, District Manager

The following overview was presented by the Mayor's Office of Management and Budget as part of the Mayor's Preliminary Budget for Fiscal Year 2009.

The Mayor outlined a plan to close a \$4 billion deficit for FY 2010 through nearly \$1 billion in new agency gap closing actions, keeping controllable expenses virtually flat as well as revenue enhancements, including possible sales tax increases and long-term cost containment measures such as pension reform and efforts to reign in employee health care costs.

The national and local economies have deteriorated since the adopted budget last June.

What began as a national housing crisis has become a global financial crisis which has damaged the City's local finance sector and led to significant job losses on Wall Street and beyond.

The City's tax revenues have fallen dramatically. The Administration is now forecasting that the City's tax revenue will fall to an annual rate \$3.3 billion lower in FY 2009 than FY 2008, and will fall further to an annual rate \$1.7 billion lower in FY2010 than FY2009. This means a total \$5 billion less in tax revenue in FY2010.

Before the City's action, New York City faced a projected budget gap of \$6.4 billion. The City's November Plan addressed \$2.4 billion of this gap and their current plan now closes the remaining \$4 billion budget gap.

The City has identified cost-saving measures; The City has been able to keep our controllable expenses virtually flat between FY 2009 and FY2010.

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The City also addressed its non-controllable expenses which have continued to increase with especially large increases in pension, health benefit, and debt service cost.

The City's current plan for balance relies on spending reductions and other actions, as follows:

1. An additional \$955 million of Agency Gap Closing Actions.
2. Reliance on \$1billion of help from partners in organized labor and the State.
3. Including \$1billion in aid from the Federal Government.
4. Including over \$900 million of possible sales tax revenue increases.

According to the Mayor and OMB the City has a balanced budget FY 2009 and a balanced Preliminary Budget for FY2010.

As most of you all know the Stimulus Package signed by President Obama would provide funding towards Medicaid reimbursement, public housing capital improvements, upgrade school facilities and funding for roads and bridges. It is our hope that during this economic downturn our quality of life will remain strong and all efforts to stimulate our economy will usher in a new spirit and strength for the residents of Community Board Four

Listed below are some of the meetings, events and announcements held over the Month.

January 27, 2009 Meeting with Project Envison South Bronx Coalition Meeting

The Coalition meeting's agenda was to review their community research updates and review coalition building action agenda. The Coalition is still in the process of setting up meetings with potential community leader contacts and indentifying new contacts and set up focus groups to mobilize communities in preventing sexual violence.

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January 27, 2009 I attended Community Board Six District Service Cabinet at CES 211 1919 Prospect Avenue. In order to improve and gain a better perspective on my duties I felt it best to attend other DSC meetings. A practice I will follow through in the coming months.

January 28, 2009 The Gateway Coalition Meeting

The following agenda items were discuss:

CONSTRUCTION STATUS AND BUSINESS OUTREACH Because the Core and Shell is completed on much of the facility, their attention is on the "fit-out" contractor opportunities and the retail jobs, once the tenants take possession of their respective spaces.

TENANT MEETINGS Tenant meetings with Gamestop, Payless, Young World, Caridad/Marisco Central and AT&T remain outstanding and will be scheduled for February 2009. There are follow up meetings with Target, Raymour and Flanigan and Bed, Bath and Beyond on February 10, 2009.

BJ'S HEALTH FOOD INITIATIVE BJ's is slated to open in September 2009. The lease calls for accepting "food stamps and WIC" (CBA 2/1/06 p.34) In addition,

the CBA calls for Related (the developer) to pay 1/2 the membership cost for the first 2,000 Bronx families who receive food stamps and are eligible for WIC for the first five years of operation.

The coalition met and discussed the best possible distribution plan given the need and the large amount of participants that can qualify. (approximately 300,000.00 Bronx county families)

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The outstanding question is who will serve as record keeper, BJ's? Will community boards want to conduct their own raffle system and submit the names to the Fast Track Unit; how many spaces per community bd.; etc.

Community boards can conduct annual raffle where two thousand eligible Bronx families will receive the ½ membership card price benefit. Open for discussion.

The Bronx residents will be required to establish that they receive food stamps, are eligible for WIC and are Bronx residents. Document guidelines must be promulgated to ensure clear entitlement. It is proposed BJ's will be the record keeper. (See, CBA p.34 para.(1)).

CHILD CARE INITIATIVE Back in January 2006, part of what made the CBA so attractive to the surrounding community was the prospects of the child care initiative at the new Gateway Center at Bronx Terminal Market. (CBA p.35 para.b(1)). This space shall be set aside for up to 9 months prior to the completion of Phase 1 of construction. The Developer served notice via a letter dated July 31, 2008. Thereafter, to the extent appropriate vacant space is available.

The space has been advertised for over one year and the Gateway Fast Track Unit has aggressively sought bidders. However, because of the barriers outlined

below, coupled with the current economic conditions, public interest has dampened.

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It was their position, that with accessible and affordable child care services to serve low-to-moderate-income families at the new Gateway center, employees can effectively balance the need to work with their parenting obligations. The CBA requires that the Developer provide 3,500 sq. ft. for a day care facility at 35% below market rate (See, CBA p.35 para.b(1)) a search has been conducted to identify any Bronx qualified licensed child care provider interested in leasing the space. Some of the obstacles have been: (1) The prospective tenant will be required to execute a long term lease and fit-out the footage, requiring an

estimated capital investment between \$300,000.00 to \$500,000.00 in construction cost (assuming union involvement); (2) the size of the dedicated space circumscribes the amount of participating children.

Because of NYC and NYS state regulations require allocating 35 square feet per child, the allotted space would service only 45-60 children between the ages of 2-5 years old, depending on the size of the bathrooms and kitchen. Less if the tenant intends to care for infants, as city regulations require more space. Assuming the rent is \$65 dollars per sq. foot, at 3,500 sq. ft. the annual rent is (\$227,500.00 per yr.). If each child is charged \$200 per week, (60x200x52=\$624,000.00) you can determine the income and cost, including insurance, real estate taxes, employees wages, ect. The point is, there is not a big

profit margin. In addition, you should note, NYC ACS vouchers currently only pay \$170.00 per week (if vouchers are available at all – the city recently indicated the cut back of vouchers given the recession) and only 40 percent of the families utilizing the facility can be given vouchers - assuming they satisfy other eligibility requirements.

GATEWAY INTERIOR STREET NAMING Part of the CBA directs that Related Management will rename two of the interior streets located within the Gateway

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mall. One recommendation is – Fallen Heroes Lane – dedicated to Bronx residents who have given their lives in military service to our nation. The idea is to affix a bronze plaque to the building identifying all those Bronx residents who have died in the service of their country.

January 29,2009 Meeting with MTA Representatives regarding the # 11 and 13

After receiving additional letters from homeowners regarding the Bus Stop I proceeded to convene a meeting with MTA representatives Jackie Carter, Assistant Director Govt & Community Relations and Dominique McAfee, Transportation Planner Bus Service Planning Operations Planning. The meeting was held on location where I was able to show Jackie and Dominique two proposed locations for a new bus stop. They surveyed the sites and listen as I explained the concerns and frustrations that the homeowners have expressed. Jackie indicated that they will review all that was discussed and will get back to me.

January 30, 2009 815 Gerard Avenue Fire

On January 30th a 3rd Alarm Fire was called at 815 Gerard Avenue. The following is the interagency report:

815 Gerard AV, Bronx NY 6 story, 78 units, 1 active commercial resident, 3 unoccupied 3rd Alarm Fire Street Closure: Gerard Av, 157th St to 158th St Agencies on scene: OEM, FD, ARC, HPD, Con Ed, HPD, DHS, MTA Private Electric Contractor was on scene Private Plumbing Contractor.

Summary: A 3rd alarm fire in ground floor commercial occupancy caused extensive damage to electrical room. Gas service and electric was shut in the street by Con Ed.

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Full vacate orders were issued: Apartment's 2L, 2M, 3L, 3M, 119 157th street(commercial) 4 vacated units will need long term relocation needs

Incident Objectives:

Restoration of utilities for resident re-occupancy: Electric: Con Ed worked with a private contractor to restore power to common areas first, then to each apartment that is not vacated.

Water Service: was restored that evening.

Gas/ Heat: A private contractor was on scene to restore service to gas/oil boiler. Gas will remain shut down to all residential units until all service testing is completed.

The American Red Cross was on hand gauging whether to open a receiving reception location. MTA remained on scene with buses as a warming center during restoration of utilities.

Estimated time for full restoration of utilities: Was on Saturday at about 8am.

At one point OEM was about to implement “Worst Case Scenario” if the heat could not have been restored that evening HPD would issue a vacate due to no heat or light in common areas of building.

January 30, 2009 Meeting with JHS 145 Principal Robert Hannibal and Frank McMorrow of Parks to discuss some of the issues that the school has been having with the usage of the park adjacent to the school. Mr. Hannibal summoned the other principals on the campus and we worked out an agreement as to how the school and parks will work to coordinate an agreement on the usage and maintenance of the Park.

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February 9, 2009 Meeting with Nancy Biberman President of Women's Housing & Economic Development Corporation, WHEDCo. My purpose was to formally introduce myself and to find out more about WHEDCo. WHEDCo works with families in the Bronx who struggle with the multiple challenges presented by poverty, and who, like all of us, aspire to a healthy, financially stable future. WHEDCo offers interconnected, innovative, and high quality solutions – including the building of healthy, affordable housing.

February 11, 2009 Combined Bronx Borough Service Cabinet Borough Board.

The Following items were discussed at the Combined Borough Board meeting:

- Citywide Community Air Survey, Presented by Thomas Matte, Director of Environmental Research, Bureau of Environmental Surveillance and Policy, DHMH

- Recent Changes in the Department of Buildings, Presented by Acting Bronx Commissioner Thomas Fariello
- Envision Initiative, Presented by Meghan O'Connor, MPH, LMSW, Director of Programs, NYC Alliance Against Sexual Assault

February 18, 2009 Meeting regarding the READ Foundation

I met with Greg Castro and Jaselis Mejia of READ, Reading Excellence and Discovery Foundation on how the Community Board could be helpful in assisting the organization to identify schools and community groups who may be interested in partnering up with READ to identify potential youth mentors.

Read is a nonprofit organization which recruits and employs teens to teach reading skills to children in elementary schools throughout New York City. READ tutors are trained to use a highly structured, researched, researched-based reading curriculum, the Reading for All Learners Program. Tutors are most often local middle and high school students from within the same school. They must maintain solid academic records and act as positive role models for their younger peers. One on one tutoring takes place in a supervised setting as part of READ's After School, in School and Summer Reading Programs. READ prepares teens for the future by providing formal training, community service opportunities and paid jobs.