

# MANHATTAN COMMUNITY BOARD FIVE

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Vikki Barbero, Chair

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March 9, 2011

Honorable Michael Bloomberg  
Mayor  
City Hall  
New York, New York 10019

## **Re: Community Board Five Statement on the 2013 Preliminary Budget**

Dear Mayor Bloomberg:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on your fiscal year 2013 Preliminary Budget.

Community Board Five is aware of the current financial atmosphere that is impacting our city. We know that funding is based on projected revenue and respect the judicious decisions made to keep our city on a solid economic footing. We remain an advocate for the ongoing effort to claim revenue due from both Albany and Washington. Community Board Five hopes you will recognize the long-term value in funding programs and projects within our heavily utilized and diverse district.

According to NYC & Co., Community Board Five attracts the majority of New York City's nearly 50.2 million annual visitors, spending \$32 billion dollars and generating \$18 billion in wages. Almost 80% of New York City visitors enter our District. Our home is the gateway to all those who arrive through Penn Station, Grand Central, and the Port Authority bus terminal. Midtown is an important business hub contributing major tax revenues to the city budget. Likewise, we are a leader in the arts, and this reputation is essential to our future.

Along with all of the world-class opportunities to live, play, shop, or work in Midtown comes some serious issues. Our popularity, urban density and symbolic value make our Midtown district vulnerable to crisis, both accidental and malicious. Because of our density we are plagued with extreme congestion, which creates health and safety issues for pedestrians, drivers and residents.

Community Board Five has become one of the four fastest growing residential neighborhoods in Manhattan. While it is a blessing to be both popular and diverse, as our demographics evolve we must change to meet demand. We must maintain programs for our residents, particularly the elderly, homeless, and school-age children – all of whom need basic services.

We believe that the District's success is critical to all New York City and that our budget priorities are suited to ensure that the needs of all within the community are addressed. This is why CB5 believes that

the businesses in this city, our state government, and our federal government, all of whom benefit from the existence of New York City, must meet their fiscal responsibilities in keeping this city secure, clean, and economically and socially vibrant.

Specifically, CB5 has the following comments on the submitted Agency Comments:

### **Department of Education/School Construction Authority**

The City has recognized that the “Community is located within an area of capacity need.” Given the significant residential growth in Manhattan Community District 5, it is essential that our district’s children have new elementary and middle school seats. While funding for the Foundling School is a start, we need increased resources allotted to school development.

### **Police Department**

Safety is a priority for our City, especially in our Board with its large number of high-profile tourist destinations. We wish to reiterate our belief that funding for modernization of the police precincts must be made a priority in order for them to work more efficiently. We are pleased to hear that the NYPD has funded more security cameras and that some will be installed in our District.

We again request that staffing levels of the police and support forces be increased, specifically with regard to the Cabaret Task Force, whose oversight and enforcement is crucial to our Board. There need to be resources allocated for stricter enforcement of illegal vendors.

Additional resources should be committed to police and traffic officers and traffic enforcement.

### **Fire Department**

We are pleased that funding for firehouse renovations is recommended in the 2013 budget, as this has been a long-term capital request. Upgrades for all technology-related support are required, including but not limited to: the repeater system for high-rise communications, a laptop-command-board program and improved communication. Funding for additional CPR equipment and training programs is needed. Funding for fire prevention and education program should be established to promote the use of smoke and carbon monoxide detectors. We fully support the funding for emergency power backup generators for firehouses. All of the above have been recommended in the budget and we believe the Department should continue to seek city and private funds for these initiatives. We agree with increased enforcement efforts in conjunction with the Environmental Control Board.

A second Hazmat Unit and a mobile command center are needed. We are disappointed that the funding for both has been denied in the budget.

### **Department of Cultural Affairs**

Cultural institutions – many of which exist within CB5 – are vital to sustaining and supporting life and tourism in our City, supplying an economic engine that encourages business and supports ancillary services in every neighborhood. We are pleased to see that funding for Group Programs and a number of smaller institutions has been approved. We ask that the City continue to support mid-sized and smaller organizations, which are at increased risk in the current economic climate.

## **Libraries**

We greatly appreciate the funding for the six-day library schedule.

Still, while we appreciate budget pressures, we are dismayed at the lack of commitment to our libraries. In this current economic downturn, libraries have an even greater importance to our community as they have a greater usage, particularly as a resource center for the unemployed. The NYPL supports all of our requests yet funding continues to remain elusive. Along with the NYPL, we continue to support securing funds through public and private means to maintain the services offered by our libraries, particularly in this economic climate when these institutions are used by seniors, students and job seekers more than ever. We support the funding for the long-term capital and technology plan as these are essential to maintaining quality libraries.

The Donnell library was temporarily closed in 2008. We still request that all the substitute locations that have been identified to house the various collections open in a timely manner and provide the same total square footage and access as they did when Donnell was open.

## **Department of Parks and Recreation**

CB5 houses several of the City's major destination parks. Given the high utilization and increasingly frequent special events, a long term strategy is required immediately to address the needs of the physical plant, employees, and maintenance resources in order to maintain these vibrant resources. An additional exterminator and a full-time night crew are desirable. We continue to request additional gardeners. All of this has been recommended for funding by the Department.

## **Department of Homeless Services**

CB5 is disappointed by the budget cuts for homeless services—namely rental assistance, housing placement, prevention, aftercare and outreach programs. We are specifically frustrated by the proposed cuts to the Advantage Rental Assistance program, which would leave numerous families without assistance. We are currently experiencing an increase in the homeless population with our District. CB5 recognizes that the Mayor and city officials are highlighting issues related to homelessness and looks forward to seeing plans developed. Nevertheless, we still request full funding for shelter assistance for the City's homeless population. The City must make an investment in residential facilities for the homeless and single-family units for adults.

## **Department of Youth and Community Development**

CB5 is disappointed by the budget cuts proposed for the Runaway and Homeless Youth Program. Programs for runaway teenagers are important, particularly in our District.

## **Department of Housing and Preservation Development**

We encourage the Mayor to continue a long-term plan for desperately needed affordable housing and restore proposed cuts to development programs. We advocate full funding for code and property maintenance enforcement, anti-abandonment, loan programs, and narcotics control.

## **Department of Transportation**

Traffic and pedestrian circulation remain among the most significant quality of life issues facing our District. Additional staff is necessary in the enforcement and engineering areas, and an appropriate long-term strategy for technology is also required. The Agency feels this should be funded in the 2013 budget. We are disappointed by the lack of specific funding proposed for our infrastructure repairs and maintenance in the 2013 budget, and we strongly believe that significantly more funds need to be allocated for these projects. Funding for current mass transit projects within our District also needs to be continued. Along these lines, it is imperative that a comprehensive surface transportation plan be prepared, especially in light of major changes in right-of-way configurations either planned or underway in our District. We support the funding for Select Bus Service along 34<sup>th</sup> Street and the expansion of the program to other routes. We also support other projects aimed at reducing vehicular traffic congestion and improving overall safety and efficiency standards.

### **Department of Buildings**

CB5 acknowledges past funding for computer initiatives and we encourage continuing support. We greatly appreciate the support for greater enforcement and inspections. We need additional safety inspectors for those grandfathered buildings that do not require a public assembly permit.

### **Department of Environmental Protection**

We are glad that funding has been provided to help protect the reservoirs providing the City's supply of drinking water, and that staff inspectors be maintained at the current level. We support the restrictions on hydraulic fracturing in order to keep drinking water safe.

Again, we are requesting funds to train inspectors in the use of newer models of noise detectors and increase staffing for noise inspection.

### **Department of Health and Mental Hygiene**

We seek the restoration of funds for early intervention, primary care services and prevention of HIV/AIDS.

The rodent population is growing. Increased funding is required for inspectors and general rodent control. We advocate implementing the Bronx Rodent Indexing project.

### **Department of Sanitation**

We continue our request for an additional basket truck, street sweeper, daily pick-ups and a packer truck. Sanitation enforcement should be maintained.

### **Department of Aging**

CB5 continues to request increased funding for meal delivery. We also request that senior centers in our district remain open with their current hours. Developing innovative programs for seniors is encouraged.

### **Department of Consumer Affairs**

Funding for code inspectors to enforce laws related to sidewalk cafes, cabarets and street vendors is essential to the quality of life in CB5.

## **Landmark Preservation Commission**

Funds are needed to increase staffing and thereby increase the pace of Landmark designation as well as increasing enforcement.

## **Community Boards**

Community Boards' budgets have not increased in almost 20 years. New York's Community Boards serve a vital role in improving the quality of life in our city. In addition, Community Boards have a charter-mandated role in many areas of city government, including local land use and planning decisions. An appropriate and unthreatened level of funding is required for these agencies to fulfill their obligations.

## **Conclusion**

CB5 appreciates the opportunity to comment on the preliminary budget. We look forward to seeing the Executive budget and we are hopeful that, as you continue to partner with us, our requests will be incorporated into your budget.

Sincerely,



Vikki Barbero  
Chair  
Committee

Doreen Seligson  
Acting Chair, CB#5 City Services and Budget

cc: Hon. Scott Stringer  
Hon. Speaker Christine Quinn  
Hon. Thomas Duane  
Hon. Liz Krueger  
Hon. Richard Gottfried  
Hon. Deborah Glick  
Hon. Jonathan Bing  
Hon. Rosie Mendez  
Hon. Dan Garodnick  
Hon. Gale Brewer  
Hon. Mark Page, Director, Office of Management and Budget