

Brooklyn Community Board 14 Budget Priorities for FY 2024

The Department of City Planning's District Needs Statement platform requires that community boards to prioritize their budget needs. What makes a request a priority? We can identify priorities by how long they have been pending on CB14's budget priority list, such as a new precinct house, which has been on the list for over 30 years. We can prioritize according to where CD14 ranks citywide, such as greenspace, where we rank last. We can prioritize by the number of service delivery requests we receive in the office, which would include unsheltered homeless individuals, tree pruning, sanitation and traffic and transportation requests. We can also prioritize by the consequences when the need isn't met – flooded basements every single time it rains more than an inch an hour or the lack of DSNY manual litter patrol, or limited access to healthy food or affordable shelter.

Our district is diverse and has a diversity of needs. Some of those needs are more urgent for some members of the community than others. Top priorities for our aging residents are different than top priorities for our families with young children. Homeowners have different priorities than renters and all residents have different priorities than local merchants.

Taking all of this into consideration, CB14 board members and members of the public have identified priority needs in the district. When a request stands out, we will underscore the urgency but in no way wish for any items on this list to compete with others.

CAPITAL

1. DPR Provide a new or expanded park or amenity, i.e., playground, outdoor athletic field (1)

The Flatbush African Burial Ground will be constructed as a memorial through the Department of Parks and Recreation. Funding has been identified for what seems to be preliminary work. CB14 highly prioritizes funding that is adequate to fully realize a vision of this important, sacred and historic site that is informed by ongoing community engagement. This is a top priority for our community.

CD 14 ranks last in the city in terms of the number of residents who live more than a quarter of a mile away from a park. The public health ramifications were demonstrated by the Covid 19 pandemic. A CB14 Planning Fellow identified potential locations in the district. However, DPR has an inadequate capital budget for new projects, and Community Boards are always told to request funds from city councilmembers. Funding policies should be reviewed, and Parks should have objective agency over its own capital needs.

2. DOT Upgrade or create new plazas (1)

We urge DOT to include Newkirk Plaza into the Plaza Program. The infrastructure exists. An organization is willing to partner, and the Plaza should be under the auspices of a city agency given that it is public property. The Covid 19 pandemic underscored the need for public outdoor space. This is one of the social determinants of public health and would serve as an economic development boost to businesses on the Plaza. This request has been made by various public officials in numerous offices since at least 1977. CB14 has been awarded a planning fellow through the auspices of the Fund for the City of New York who will archive the history of the plaza and the decades of efforts to convince the city to rationalize the space. We look forward to sharing that report.

3. NYPD Renovate or upgrade existing precinct houses (1)

The history of efforts to relocate this aging facility goes back three decades. In 2006, DCAS began property acquisition at 1326 Ocean Avenue and NYPD set aside \$30 million for the property, and OMB stated its commitment to identify additional funding. Construction was set to begin in 2013. It did not and the site was lost to a market rate housing development. A scoping study to assess the feasibility of building a new precinct house on site acknowledges the locational challenges that the current site presents. Relocating the precinct house remains a priority. A site search is ongoing but in the last three years, only three sites have been explored. In the meantime, the current precinct house floods and leaks and does not have adequate lockers, storage, or parking, nor it is handicap accessible. Stepping up efforts and seriously prioritizing this project is well overdue. The MOS who serve in the community and the members of that community deserve better from the NYPD. This is our top NYPD capital budget request.

4. DOT Trench Restoration (2)

Three years ago, DOT identified \$60 million for trench repair but none of it was allocated to CD14, despite worsening conditions. There must be an increase in the expense budget for road and street infrastructure repair. Six locations have been submitted to DOT. 564 East 29th Street; 1781 Ocean Avenue/SE corner of Avenue M; 715 Ocean Parkway Service Road; Waldorf Court between East 17 and Dead End; Hillel Place and Kenilworth Place intersection; 464-476 East 16th Street. A seventh location has occurred on East 16th Street between Avenue H and the dead end. The CB14 office is on this block so we will be sure to keep an eye on it.

5. DEP Inspect water main on specific street segment and repair or replace as needed (1)

There are several locations in the district that chronically flood in rainstorms. These locations have all been brought to DEP's attention and we are awaiting determination as to cause. We ask the DEP respond to the requests pending and advise as to what the respective issues are so that we can identify what budget line these requests fall into. The bottom line is that DEP must provide solutions to these locations because property, businesses and public areas should not have to withstand damaged caused by chronic flooding. Several claims have been filed with the City of New York.

6. DOT Rehabilitate bridges (3)

DOT must take responsibility for the maintenance of pedestrian islands, dead ends, and sidewalk walls on road bridges. The Newkirk Avenue bridge, the Beverley Road bridge and the Caton Road bridge all require rehabilitation.

7. NYCTA Repair or upgrade subway stations or other transit infrastructure (1)

Church Avenue is the most heavily utilized station in the district and is in disrepair. Improving subway stations was the top transportation need in a CB14 survey. This line has had the most requests for security cameras.

8. DPR Reconstruct or upgrade a park or amenity (2)

Umma Park is in need of updating and funding has finally been provided after over a decade of having identified this as a high priority. Now the Hot Spot Tot Lot on Campus Road is the only DPR asset that

has not had a capital upgrade in over a decade. Kolbert was only partially upgraded. DPR should have greater control of capital purse strings to maintain parks and playgrounds in communities according to conditions and time between upgrades.

9. BPL Create a new or renovate or upgrade an existing public library (1)

The following capital improvements are needed at our local libraries: Cortelyou Branch – exterior; Flatbush Branch – safety and security enhancements and abatement; Midwood Branch – safety and security enhancements, boiler, HVAC, roof.

10. NYCTA Improve accessibility of transit infrastructure, by providing elevators, escalators (2)

The 18th Avenue Stop on the Culver Line is on the block where Adapt Community Network serves, and the Joseph Belsky House has 88 residential units for people who use wheelchairs. Yet, the station is not accessible. This stop was recently upgraded. It's shameful that accessibility was not one of the upgrades.

11. SCA Provide a new or expand an existing elementary school (1)

In 2019, PS 139 was at 121% of utilization; PS 127 at 125%; PS 249 at 128%; PS 193 at 111%; PS 315 was at 118% and the PS 152 Annex at 146%. Since annexes are built to address overcrowding, an overcrowded annex boldly underscores the need for additional elementary school seats in the northern end of the district. The elementary schools listed above are all north of Avenue L. A new post pandemic needs assessment should be provided by SCA regarding schools and current capacity needs in order to properly assess this priority.

12. NYPD Renovate or upgrade existing precinct houses (2)

While NYPD continues the search for an appropriate location for a new precinct house, the current precinct house floods and leaks and does not have adequate lockers, storage, parking, nor it is handicap accessible.

13. FDNY Rehabilitate or renovate existing fire houses or EMS stations (1)

Fund station house renovations and upgrades at Engine 255/Ladder 157; Engine 281/Ladder 147 and Engine 250 firehouses. Including the addition of a station house generator at one of these fire stations. There are no firehouses in CD 14 with a generator.

14. NYPD Tow Vehicles and Lots (3)

NYPD has expressed a need for additional large tow vehicles and tow lots to which vehicles can be delivered. It's increasingly embarrassing to tell members of the public that illegally parked and abandoned vehicles cannot be towed because NYPD won't invest in the necessary resources.

15. DSNY (1)

Provide new or upgrade existing sanitation garages or other sanitation infrastructure. We are gratified that the condemned heating and cooling systems installed on the BK14 roof has been upgraded so that the garage has heat in the winter and adequate cooling in the summer. There is a need for collection trucks this year and we hope to see an increase in the capital budget.

EXPENSE

1. OMB Provide more community board staff

CB 14 staff address hundreds of service delivery requests annually. We organize an annual youth conference and nonprofit roundtable. Increasing responsibilities have been assigned and hiring staff and specialists, such as planners, policy analysts, IT assistance, would help to introduce more initiatives and develop longer range projects. Ultimately, we could better complement a complaint driven role with more proactive, grass roots plans. Technology and consultant needs, as we shift out of virtual-only meetings has been and will continue to be a significant expense. Rules as well and the Board's wish to expand language access is hampered by city support and budgetary constraints. As the most local city agency, we give voice to the individuals who make up our communities. Every city agency has had a budget expansion over the last decade. Community Boards have not had one in over 20 years. The recent health and resulting budget crisis make it harder for city agencies to reach the most local levels and communities are all the more frustrated. We are their liaison and our role more important than ever.

2. DOT Pedestrian Plaza at Newkirk (1)

New York City must recognize ownership of the Plaza. The clearest solution we see is for Newkirk Plaza to become a formal participant in the DOT's Pedestrian Plaza Program. The City's inability to determine jurisdiction over Newkirk Plaza has left several chronic issues unresolved, including a serious rodent infestation, sanitation maintenance concerns, disrepair of the brick plaza surface, and growing street homelessness challenges. The New York City Police Department, the Department of Sanitation, the Department of Buildings, and the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, have all been called upon to deal with myriad issues on the Plaza. Many community stakeholders, including business owners, civic and community-based organizations, and local government entities, continue to struggle to meet these challenges with little support and no permanent resolution in sight.

In the recent past, DOT provided FDC with minimal, finite funding to support limited sanitation services, painted the corrugated wall (which is their responsibility anyway) and offered but did not follow through on adding the Plaza to the SAPO system. None of these steps resolved the longstanding concerns.

Once added to the program, the plaza would be transformed into a vibrant, social public space, as per DOT's Plaza Program stated mission. The lack of clarity around governance of this public space is a detriment to the ability for businesses and community groups to provide additional programming for the community that could also serve as an economic development catalyst for an area that has a higher-than-average poverty rate than Brooklyn and New York City as a whole.

3. DSNY Other cleaning requests – MLP (1)

There are 1200 road segments in CD 14 and 54 dead ends, and dozens of overpasses and road bridges. Cleaning is a persistent need. The evisceration of MLP, which is the only operation that cleans CD14's 54 dead ends streets, and DSNY's refusal to reinstitute electronics collection and organics is a myopic response in a city striving to recover its health and economy. The cost of this restoration could be offset

by returning all collection services to daytime and reducing night differential pay. While night collection used to be scheduled only during snowplow, the continuation of night collection over the summer generated complaints, especially from residents who live on dead ends.

4. DHS Expand Street outreach (1)

Reports on homeless encampments and regarding individuals who appear to be unsheltered have increased over the past year. Breaking Ground is the current contractor and provides excellent service. Given the increase in calls to the Community Board, the Police and 311, an increase in outreach services is warranted. These teams must be equipped with professionals who can assist those who are not technically homeless but are on the street due to substance use.

5. DPR Forestry services, including street tree maintenance (1)

Flatbush and Midwood boast 10,327 street trees, including 121 different species according to DPR's census. Argyle Road is considered the "leafiest" in Brooklyn. A more robust pruning cycle is still necessary. Requests for emergency pruning and fallen branches have not subsided in the district. Limbs, branches, and entire trees are not addressed for weeks and more. DPR must either reform their contracting system or have more capacity in-house for when contractors fall behind or must be cancelled.

Community Board 14 supports NY4P's recommendation to assure that 1% of the City's budget be allocated to the maintenance of playgrounds and parks in our communities. Because CD14 has so few parks and has the highest percentage of residents who live further than a quarter mile from a park, it is all the more important that those parks are cleaned, maintained and secured by DPR staff.

6. DCWP Enforcement (1)

DCWP is the licensing and main enforcement agency for the sale of tobacco and e-cigarettes. The pace of inspections is slow, and the enforcement mechanisms seem inadequate. CB14 is just now beginning to assess how many stores sell these items without a license. Observations of sales to minors and sales of flavored vapes are prevalent. It seems that NYPD is back to assisting with these investigations but that could make the lines unclear. If DCWP continues to be the lead agency on this, a significant investment must be made in adding and training inspectors. There is similar concern about DCWP's enforcement of illegal vending which appears to be at an all-time high in the district. This creates undue pressure on brick-and-mortar businesses and attracts crime since street vending is a cash business.

7. DOHMH Create or promote programs to destigmatize mental health needs and encourage treatment (1)

Nearly one in 25 New Yorkers has experienced mental illness. About 280,000 have major disorders such as schizophrenia. Forty percent of those in city shelters and 53% of those in city jails experience mental illness. From March to December of 2020, more than 17,000 calls were made for mental health assistance. This was 85 times more than the same period in 2019.

The city must continue to expand mobile crises teams, and intensive mobile teams. HOMESTAT outreach to unsheltered homeless individuals experiencing mental illness is also a priority. A Support and Connection Center should be provided in Brooklyn.

8. HPD Expand programs for housing inspections to correct code violations (1)

Over the first 10 months of 2022, 17,811 calls to 311 have been for HPD issues. This is only outnumbered by 311 calls to NYPD (18,000). Compare this to calls for DOB (1662); DOT (2449) or DOHMH (1589). For every 1000 units of rental housing, there are 632 serious housing code violations; up from 506 in 2010. CB 14 ranks 12th in the city in the number of housing code violations per 1000 residents, and only 40% of rental units are considered adequate. Maintaining housing that exists now helps to stem this crisis. Adequate housing is pivotal to health outcomes, and an urgent need in recovering from the ongoing public health crises. The number of inspectors and greater capacity for swifter action is urgent.

9. DEP Inspect water main on specific street segment and repair or replace as needed (1)

There are several locations in the district that flood chronically in rainstorms. These locations have all been brought to DEP's attention. We ask the DEP respond to the requests pending and advise as to what the respective issues are so that we can identify what budget line these requests fall into. The bottom line is that DEP must provide solutions to these locations because property, businesses and public areas should not have to withstand chronic flooding. Several claims have been filed with the City of New York. In the past five years the city has paid over \$2.6 million dollars in claims. The cost of a backflow prevention valve is about \$300. This means that nearly 9000 homes and businesses could have been provided such a valve and spared the loss and damage to property. Legislation is pending that would direct DEP to offset the costs of installation of backflow prevention valves and CB14 supports this wise investment that will pay itself back in reduced claims.

10. DOHMH Other programs to address public health issues requests (2)

Public health programs that address health disparities with an urgent focus on maternal health are of the highest priorities. Ongoing infection disease concerns, barriers to vaccines whether they be knowledge and understanding based, cultural practices based, language access, etc. must be thoughtfully addressed. Access to quality housing, healthy food choices and outdoor space all contribute systemically to health outcomes and thus cannot be considered singularly, let alone in competition with one another.

11. ACS Other foster care and child welfare requests (1)

When asked by survey to rank public safety priorities, 85% of respondents ranked support for cure violence groups, number one. ACS's Division of Youth and Family Justice and the efforts to support violence disrupters programs and organizations is a high priority from a youth service and a public safety perspective. There are several programs that ACS has introduced or grown in recent years. The YNCO's at the 70th precinct are aware of some and following up on the introduction to newer programs. As for foster care and casework, the agency has made positive strides in reducing caseloads and fostered youth is at an all-time low. This effort must be continued, but there is a concern that demand for casework increased slightly as schools and programs opened and children came into contact with mandated reporters. The stress placed on households and access to support is a combination for continued concern.

12. HRA Provide, expand, or enhance rental assistance programs (1)

Community District 14 ranks 11th of 59 in the percentage of severely rent burdened household - 35% up from 30% the year before. The district ranks 8th in the percent of renter households that are severely overcrowded. Nearly 35% of renters in the district pay over 50% of their household income on monthly rent. Affordability of rentals (at 80% of AMI) decreased from 2010-2017, from 71.3% to only 49%. These are pressures that lend themselves to homelessness and continued expansion of prevention programs is warranted.

13. DSNY Organics and Electronics Collection (2)

Many residents in our District are eager to participate in curbside collection. Since there is only organics on demand, it makes no sense that it be limited only to Districts where it was originally piloted. Currently CB6 and CB7 organics trucks are only collecting one ton per truck! We urge DSNY to draw routes that extend over community district borders similar to how school collection routes are drawn. Electronics collection must be restored. Elderly residents, and households without cars cannot be expected to somehow bring electronics – big and small – all the way up to 459 North Henry Street in Greenpoint, Brooklyn or pay stores to take items from them. We often see these items in illegal drop offs.

14. DYCD Provide, expand, or enhance the Youth Employment Programs (1)

According to our Youth Conference attendees survey, the biggest draw for the 600 youth who attended out annual conference was jobs. The impact of Covid 19 on the SYEP program and DYCD's shift to only remote opportunities will have a residual impact in the upcoming years. Given the very small percentage of applicants who are placed in summer jobs, it is imperative that DYCD jobs programs be expanded and dependably funded. Additional focus on building capacity at the CBO level to expand programming into underserved communities that were more highly impacted by Covid 19 is imperative.

15. DFTA Increase staffing for homebound adult programs (1)

Case management, home care, legal services, and transportation services are generally intertwined. There is no way to prioritize the needs of one senior citizen over those of another and it would be folly to provide transportation over home care for a senior who is need of both. The funding of these services must be designed with the approach that support services are inextricable.

16. NYPD Assign additional crossing guards (1)

This is an increasing request and a decreasing provision. New schools have opened, new developments are in the pipeline. The Community Board defers to the Police Precinct to assign additional crossing guards to new locations, should they become available.

17. DFTA Funding for a new senior center program (1)

Engage in reimagining an RFP for additional senior centers. The poverty rate in CD14 is lower overall than it was 10 years ago, but not for seniors. The various needs that are related to older adults with limited resources, amplify the need for services and for centers. DFTA was amazingly deft in pivoting to providing remote service to a vulnerable population and developing new volunteer programs. This shift to ensure the continuity of service should be fully funded, including the provision of casework.

18. DOB Assign additional building inspectors (including expanding training programs) (1)

DOB is operating with a 25% deficit in human resources. Many of these unfulfilled positions are inspectors. With the continued growing rate of new construction in the district, this is an urgent priority. Too many complaints are closed out due to lack of access while unpermitted work continues to the point of completion. Better timing of inspections, additional attempts and more detailed follow ups would assist in the ability to enforce myriad violations.

19. FDNY Provide more firefighters or EMS workers (1)

Fund adequate new firefighter, Marshall, EMS and inspector hires. Given the pace of development and the density that is adding to our community, it is imperative that we ensure that staffing remain optimal. The number of violations brought forth in court has dropped by 98%. The number of firefighters fully trained for all inspections should be at 100%. Whatever budgetary needs there are to make that happen, should be met.

20. DSNY Increase enforcement (3)

Canine waste, illegal drop offs and dumping at commercial baskets, dead-ends, tree pits, etc. are increasing complaints. Residents bring garbage to corner baskets, construction and other commercial debris are often found under elevated train tracks. Often the sanitation workers, supervisors and police know who the offenders are but the rules for enforcement require a stake out. Funding to increase enforcement's capacity to stake out chronic locations, day and night, could make an enormous difference in the public health, safety and appearance of our District.

21. BPL Extend library hours or expand and enhance library programs (1)

The Community Board supports the continuation and expansion of programs that are so valuable in connecting our community members to literacy and culture. From small children, to teens, adults and older adults, the breadth of library programming is impressive and invaluable. We are grateful that branch managers and program directors are so active with the board and always willing to share and update us regarding new programs and services.

22. DOHMH Animal and pest control requests including reducing rat and mosquito populations (3)

Rodent complaints have risen throughout the city. While DOHMH continues to increase the number of inspections performed annually, these efforts are outpaced by conditions contributing to rodent infestations. DOT's Open Streets for restaurants policy, DOB's abatement rules for construction sites, should be better coordinated with DSNY to address illegal dumping and school collections, and with the public at large to educate people on the downside of feeding feral cats and birds are warranted.

23. DEP Other (2)

Fund DEP to continue the development, in tandem with institutions of higher learning and DOHMH, for wastewater testing for evidence of virus in order to respond to public health threats.

24. SBS Other commercial district revitalization requests (1)

Supporting venues that generate social capital and drive economic development is key to post pandemic recovery. Kings Theater was an EDC project that is owned and managed by a private entity and is a for

profit enterprise. The city then enacted several policy decisions in the area that undermined the original multi-million-dollar investment in the theater as an economic driver. Greater support to the theater and spillover businesses and a better balance with other community services are needed to support economic development.