

THE MANHATTAN BOROUGH BOARD BUDGET PRIORITIES REPORT
FOR FISCAL YEAR 2015
MARCH 24, 2014



GALE A. BREWER
MANHATTAN BOROUGH PRESIDENT

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Manhattan Fiscal Year 2015 Budget Priorities Report

Each year, Section 241 of the New York City Charter mandates that each Borough President submit a comprehensive statement on the budget priorities of the borough to the Mayor, City Council, and Director of Management and Budget. The Charter also requires that public notice be given to solicit input and recommendations from the public on the budget needs of the Borough. In order to comply with this requirement, an online budget priorities survey was made available from March 6, 2014 – March 18, 2014, and a public hearing was held on March 20, 2014. This report reflects the priorities of residents of Manhattan and the Manhattan Borough Board.

Manhattan Borough Board Online Budget Priorities Survey

Borough President Gale Brewer, in an effort to solicit input on budget priorities from as many people as possible, hosted an online budget priorities survey from March 6, 2014 – March 18, 2014. 425 responses were recorded, from all twelve Community Board Districts and nearly every Zip Code in Manhattan. Links to the survey were posted on social media, and sent via email. Nearly 600 Community Board applicants received the survey after participating in a mock budget prioritization exercise during the Community Board application process.

While these responses should not be considered a comprehensive summary of the entire borough of Manhattan, the relatively large sample size provides a good summary of local budget priorities. Respondents were given the opportunity to answer anonymously, but were asked to list their Community Board District and Home Zip Code to allow for better tracking of priorities across the borough. Of the respondents who listed a Community Board, the breakdown from each Board was as follows: 51 responses from CB1; 31 responses from CB2, 31 from CB3; 25 from CB4; 15 from CB5; 33 from CB6; 95 from CB7; 26 from CB8; 30 from CB9; 38 from CB10; 18 from CB11; and 21 from CB12.

Respondents were asked to rate a number of budget priorities in terms of their overall importance to the respondent on a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 indicating the highest level of importance. In priority order, the following programs were identified as most important (with percentage of respondents rating a 4 or 5 in parentheses):

- K-High School Education (75%)
- Affordable Housing (70%)
- Public Transportation (69%)
- Youth Services (67%)
- Public Infrastructure (64%)
- Parks (62%)
- Human / Social Services (62%)
- Public Health (59%)
- Higher Education (58%)

- Senior Services (58%)
- Pre-K Education (56%)
- Economic / Business Development (54%)
- Homeless Services (54%)
- Technology Infrastructure (47%)
- Cultural Affairs (47%)

171 respondents also identified “Other” as a priority. Some other identified priorities included: Access-A-Ride; environmental issues (resiliency, sustainability, alternative energy, urban agriculture, solid waste management); emergency preparedness; LGBT support services; and sanitation.

The next portion of the survey asked respondents to indicate their support for several budget-related statements. The statements and responses are as follows:

Universal Pre-K education should be a citywide budget priority: 78% of respondents agreed with the statement, with 14% disagreeing, and 9% expressing no opinion.

Developers should be mandated to build on-site affordable housing in exchange for tax breaks or zoning changes (Mandatory Inclusionary Zoning): 86% of respondents agreed, with 65% strongly agreeing. 9% disagreed, with 4% expressing no opinion.

Maintaining socioeconomic diversity in Manhattan neighborhoods should be a government priority: 72% agreed, with 10% disagreeing, and 8% expressing no opinion.

More city funding should be directed toward improving technology infrastructure: 79% agreed, 7% disagreed, and 13% expressed no opinion.

Respondents were also given the opportunity to make general comments in the survey on budget priorities. Some sample excerpts were:

- “I’m an architect who primarily works on schools, and I don’t understand why it routinely costs THREE times more to renovate a public school classroom than one at a private school. Something is profoundly wrong with SCA/DOE!”
- “I hope public transportation and infrastructure include bikes: the many new lanes and Citibike program are great and should keep expanding!”
- “... There should be some kind of relief / tax breaks for small independent businesses who now are being devoured by faceless chains and franchises.”
- “As a parent, investment in school infrastructure is extremely important to me.”
- “When thinking about the Cultural Affairs department, please do not neglect to consider all the jobs those arts organizations provide.”
- “The budget should reflect a commitment to maintaining diversity in Manhattan... We must not become a borough of the 1%.”

- “I believe in Universal Pre-K but do not necessarily agree that it should be done via additional taxation. NYC is one of the most heavily taxed and expensive cities in the country.”
- “In my opinion, economic development (including employment promotion, affordable housing, education) is the highest priority for NYC. My next grave concern is the city's aging infrastructure - which if addressed could provide a stimulus for jobs and economic growth.”

Overall Budget Summary: The End of the Budget Dance

The Fiscal Year 2015 Preliminary Budget, released on February 12, 2014, totals \$73.7 billion. Of this, approximately \$54 billion is made up of City funds from local taxes, fines, fees, and other revenue. Although the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) is projecting a small surplus at the end of the current Fiscal Year, the NYC Independent Budget Office (IBO) is projecting a \$2 billion surplus, \$244 million more than OMB's projections. IBO has also projected a surplus of \$1.2 billion in FY15, while OMB has projected no surplus. NYC Comptroller Scott Stringer has also projected additional tax revenue for FY14 and FY15 totaling \$860M for the two fiscal years. These potential surpluses will be important as the City deals with several potential risks to its balanced budget, most notably the fact that all of our collective bargaining agreements are currently expired, leaving our municipal employees without a contract.

The City has about 300,000 municipal employees covered under 150 different collective bargaining agreements. The Bloomberg Administration last settled contracts in 2008-2009, but even that round of bargaining was halted before deals were struck with our Teachers and Nurses. Arbitration is ongoing to settle those contracts, with a decision coming soon. IBO has estimated that the cost of settling the last round of negotiations for all unions, with 4 annual 2% raises would be \$7.1 billion, with an additional \$2.8 billion cost annually if 2% increases are added to base pay. Settling these labor contracts must be a goal of the new Administration, but the potential for extensive retroactive pay leaves much uncertainty in the budget picture. Negotiations are ongoing, but we urge a timely and fair compromise to allow for more prudent fiscal planning in the future.

Of additional concern is the fact that, as our country and city continue to recover from the devastating impact of the Great Recession, far too many New Yorkers are stuck in a persistent cycle of poverty. According to a Fiscal Policy Institute report, the poverty rate in NYC rose from 18.2% - 21.2% from 2008-2012, as an additional 243,000 New Yorkers dropped below the poverty line. The number of New Yorkers qualifying for food stamps has increased by 734,000, a 66% increase since the beginning of the recession. Unemployment continues to hover around 8%, and more and more New Yorkers are either leaving the labor force or taking low-wage jobs that make it near impossible to support themselves or their families. This is the unfortunate reality we must deal with as we confront the proposed Fiscal Year 2015 budget process.

Although we face significant challenges as a city, there are also several positives which should be highlighted. Recognizing the rampant inequality in New York, Mayor de Blasio has ended the “budget dance” with the City Council after approximately 15 years of proposed cuts to vital services such as human services, fire houses, and libraries. The vast majority of these important programs have been restored to at or near their FY14 levels, which provides for a more rational baseline as we examine specific agency budgets. However, there are some programs and policies that bear further scrutiny, particularly as they relate to Manhattan.

One multi-agency priority which must be strongly considered in this year’s budget process is New York City’s aging physical infrastructure. As the recent tragedy in East Harlem demonstrated, failing gas lines and other infrastructure problems have the potential to cause serious harm or even death to New Yorkers. According to a recent report by the Center for an Urban Future, the cost of bringing the city’s infrastructure to a state of good repair would be \$47 billion over five years. This is a serious undertaking, but one that needs to be budgeted for now.

The remainder of this report will be dedicated to a discussion of other program priorities for the Borough of Manhattan. We will start with one of the Borough President’s top priorities, Community Boards.

Community Boards

Community Boards are New York City’s neighborhood City Halls, and they are our most local planning and constituent service entities. Community Boards work directly with city agencies to address quality of life and other local service issues, serve as liaisons to elected officials, review land use proposals, and provide important on the ground information about trends and concerns impacting neighborhoods.

One of the primary roles played by Borough Presidents is the Community Board appointment process, and Manhattan Borough President Gale A. Brewer is in the midst of the first appointment process in her tenure. Continuing the strong tradition of her predecessor, Hon. Scott Stringer, Borough President Brewer has revamped recruitment efforts to recruit a diverse cross-section of the borough to apply. She has also implemented a new review process, bringing all 597 new and re-applicants in to her office for group simulations and exercises. Written applications are also being reviewed by independent screeners. As part of her strong commitment to government transparency and open data, Borough President Brewer is also analyzing data on existing Board members, including attendance records, and participation in leadership activities in order to better assess applicants.

Borough President Brewer is also working to improve the technological capacity of the Boards to analyze land use applications and neighborhood data available on the New York City Open Data portal, created pursuant to the Law she passed as a Council Member. She has brought local technologists and civic hackers to Borough Board meetings, in an effort to get open data tools

into the hands of the community. However, implementation of these efforts, along with proposed transparency projects such as webcasting Board meetings, require a capital and staff investment.

Mayor de Blasio and OMB should be praised for the decision to baseline Community Board budgets, continuing a significant commitment made at the end of the prior Administration. However, Boards are still understaffed, and are being asked to do more and more each year. We ask that Boards be provided with additional funding to improve their technological capacity, improve their websites, and provide important local data visualizations to their constituents.

Youth Services

As evidence of the Mayor's commitment to youth services and afterschool programs, the FY15 Preliminary Budget includes a restoration of \$51 million for the Out of School Time (OST) initiative, as well as a plan to provide \$190 million in new funding for after school programs as part of the Universal Middle School Afterschool Program. The Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD) has also enhanced its program for OST, by increasing the price paid per slot from \$2,100 to \$3,000, and raising program hours to 540 per year. Some OST providers are still concerned about the ability to subsidize the full cost of programs, but any increase in funding should be viewed as a success. \$5 million in additional funding has also been allocated for adult literacy services in FY15, an increase to \$12 million that was originally made in the November Plan. However, adult literacy participation is still severely below its FY2010 levels due to reduced funding, so more must be done to support these vital services.

Beacon and Cornerstone Community Centers are also incredibly important hubs of educational opportunity for young people. We applaud the enhanced investment in Beacons and Cornerstone Programs by the Administration. However, the Preliminary Mayor's Management Report (PMMR) indicates that Beacon enrollment continues to exceed targets, demonstrating that the need for these programs is substantial, and warrants further investment.

The FY15 Preliminary Budget also includes a projected \$38 million for the Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP), which served over 35,000 young people in the summer of 2013. However, this level of funding is dependent on additional funding from State and Federal sources. Further, because of the increase in the State minimum wage, there is a real threat that the number of young people served will be reduced if funding is not increased. We must increase the number of young people served by this important program, that provides much-needed job training and work experience. Studies have shown that participation in these programs has positive life-long workforce participation effects. It is also important to note that the vast majority of dollars paid to SYEP participants will be recirculated into the local economy, as our young people spend their earnings at local businesses.

Affordable Housing

In Manhattan, the dearth of affordable housing is one of the greatest challenges faced by residents. Of the approximately 400 people who responded to our virtual budget survey, 291 respondents considered affordable housing to be a top priority. Unfortunately, the New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) and Housing Preservation and Development (HPD) are both dealing with severe budget constraints, partially as a result of reduced federal funding. The de Blasio Administration should be praised for relieving NYCHA of a \$52.5 million police protection bill for the remainder of FY14. However, it is our understanding that this bill has not been taken off the books for the out years. NYCHA should not have to pay extra for the same police service all New Yorkers enjoy, and this fee should be eliminated from all future budgets. NYCHA has made strides toward solving its extreme repair backlog, but additional funding should be allocated so that public housing residents do not have to wait years for leaky roofs and other problems to be fixed.

HPD is also dealing with serious budget problems, as evidenced by drastic cuts to the Federal Section 8 Program. In 2013, HPD began implementation of an ill-advised downsizing program that would require tenants, many elderly, to move into smaller apartments, despite many occupying the same units for decades. Of particular concern is the impact these changes may have on seniors and those with mobility issues or home health aides, who may require additional bedrooms or special housing arrangements. The City should allocated additional resources to HPD to end this downsizing program, in particular the proposal to move tenants from one bedroom apartments to studios.

Additional funding must also be identified to provide better code enforcement in Manhattan, as many landlords target rent controlled or rent stabilized tenants with “demolition by neglect” to evict tenants in favor of market-rate opportunities. Resources must be dedicated to cracking down on these bad actors, which will in turn pay dividends by protecting the City’s affordable housing stock. Other programs such as anti-eviction legal services and HPD loan programs should also be enhanced.

Cultural Affairs

More than any other borough, Manhattan is known as an international hub for cultural affairs, from Broadway to Museum Mile, to the thousands of smaller institutions providing art, music, and drama to residents and tourists alike. While their cultural and entertainment value alone make them worthy of investment, it is important to consider cultural affairs as more than simply a source of entertainment, but also one of the key economic drivers of our City. Cultural institutions provide jobs, educational opportunities, and much more to millions of people each year. Cultural institutions also drive tourism in the City, with an estimated 26 million “cultural tourists” visiting NYC in 2013, according to NYC & Company. These visitors don’t just visit a

museum or take in a show; they also frequent hotels, restaurants, local stores, and use our transportation system.

The Department of Cultural Affairs (DCLA) provides essential support to these important institutions with expense funding for cultural programs, operating expenses for the City-owned Cultural Institutions Group (CIG), and capital funding to cultural groups. The primary source of expense funding for cultural programs is in the Cultural Development Fund, which includes direct support to arts organizations. Manhattan CDF applicants comprised 66% of the total eligible applicant pool in FY14, and the services provided by CDF recipients are a vital part of our borough's cultural vibrancy. These grants are the lifeblood of many small cultural organizations, and enhanced funding for CDF would allow for continued growth in this industry.

NYC's CIGs also receive important operating support from DCLA. These groups have received \$40 million in baseline funding in FY15 and the out-years, which is a welcome development. However, the 34 CIGs have received a reduction of \$4.5 million in the FY15 Preliminary budget due to a \$4 million heat, light, and power adjustment, and the (hopefully temporary) lack of City Council discretionary funding. Funding for CIGs must be not just maintained at FY14 levels, but increased. The CIGs collectively employ nearly 9,000 New Yorkers, the majority of whom are union workers. The economic and cultural impact of the CIGs and the smaller cultural institutions to New York City cannot be overstated.

Finally, it is important that we preserve another essential icon of Manhattan's cultural landscape, our landmark architecture. The New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC) is responsible for granting landmark designation, as well as regulating designated properties. According to a recent REBNY study, 28 percent of Manhattan is now covered by landmark or historic district designation. These designations preserve the unique flavor of our neighborhoods, and LPC must receive sufficient funding to fulfill its important mission.

New York Public Library

The New York Public Library (NYPL), the library system serving Manhattan, is another jewel of the City. According to recent budget testimony, in the last year the NYPL hosted programs for 1.2 million attendees (a 78% increase from FY08), circulated 25.5 million items (a 30% increase), and served thousands of New Yorkers with ESOL classes. Again, the Mayor should be commended for maintaining FY14 funding levels in the Preliminary Budget. This is a vast improvement over past years of proposed draconian cuts. More can and should be done, however, particularly to support programs like TechConnect, a technology training program serving 80,000 people annually. Many New Yorkers rely on libraries for computer access, and long wait-times for computers at the branches are a constant reality throughout Manhattan. The NYPL is in the process of improving its wired and Wi-Fi access, and increased city support for these priorities would go a long way in getting more New Yorkers connected to the internet resources necessary for the digital age. The NYPL is currently running six days a week, but

adding a seventh day of service would be of tremendous benefit to working New Yorkers and students who need access to library resources. Furthermore, NYPL's capital needs are vast, and cannot be solved with Council and Borough President discretionary allocations alone. A targeted investment in technology and brick and mortar infrastructure would pay for itself many times over in terms of improved library access.

Higher Education

The City University of New York (CUNY) serves approximately 270,000 degree-seeking students across the five boroughs, and another 248,000 adult and continuing education students. CUNY is comprised of 24 institutions, including the following colleges and schools in Manhattan: Baruch College, Borough of Manhattan Community College, City College, CUNY Graduate Center, CUNY Graduate Center of Journalism, CUNY School of Professional Studies, Hunter College, John Jay College, Macaulay Honors College, the Stella and Charles Guttman Community College, and the CUNY School of Public Health. CUNY is funded by a combination of State, City, tuition, and other revenue, and though not technically a City agency, relies on City support for community colleges and two-year programs. Overall, CUNY's budget is \$3.08 billion, the majority of which comes from State funding and tuition. There is an overall CUNY budget increase of nearly \$120 million from FY14, primarily from a \$300 per student tuition increase. On the City level, a significant change from years past is the fact that \$2.5 million has been baselined for the Black Male Initiative, which has historically been a Council contribution. This important program supports the education of all under-represented groups in CUNY colleges, not just black males, and should be supported.

As with other aforementioned programs, starting FY15 with baseline funding for CUNY should be commended. However, CUNY continues to struggle with being asked to do more with less public resources. CUNY is seeking additional funding per FTE in the State budget, which would provide a needed level of support. Increased expenditures on staff salaries, energy, and fringe benefits are outpacing public funding, resulting in reduced support for student resources. CUNY's student leaders have called for the creation of City Council Academic Achievement Awards, similar to the now defunct Peter Vallone Scholarships, which would provide important support for NYC high school students graduating with a B average or better. Funding for such a scholarship program should be allocated in this year's budget process. Other innovative programs which should be considered for expansion include the Accelerated Study in Associate Programs (ASAP) initiative. ASAP provides intensive support to students needing remedial training, and program participants saw significantly improved graduation rates compared to similar students outside of the program. CUNY would like to expand this program to serve more, primarily low-income students, but would require additional city resources. The results of this program suggest that increased funding would be a smart investment. Other important programs to consider enhancing include CUNY Start, the Single Stop Initiative, CUNY Prep, and veteran services programming.

Transportation

New York City's investment in both the MTA for public transportation and NYC Department of Transportation (DOT) for street and roadway work, are vitally important in maintaining New York's economy and the quality of life of its residents. 8.5 million riders use MTA bus, subway, and rail lines on a daily basis. Similar to CUNY, the MTA relies on a mixed finance model, consisting of State, City, and fare box revenue. Manhattan bus and subway lines continue to be overcrowded, particularly during morning and evening rush hours, so enhanced service offerings should be considered. The Second Avenue subway construction has the potential to greatly reduce crowding on the Lexington Avenue 4/5/6 lines, and funding to complete Phase 2 of that project should be prioritized.

The Department of Transportation has overseen a comprehensive redesign of city streets and sidewalks over the past decade. Many of these changes have been welcome, but Manhattan and New York City continue to be plagued by injuries and fatalities from collisions between vehicles, bicyclists, and pedestrians. We applaud the Mayor's commitment to Vision Zero, but additional resources must be dedicated to traffic calming measures such as speed humps, red light cameras, neckdowns, bike lanes, pedestrian plazas, and more. Funding must also be identified to provide technological solutions such as local mapping tools to allow Community Boards and other local entities to map and track problematic intersections and locations across New York City.

Our Community Boards are also inundated with requests beyond street redesign, such as more timely pothole fixes, increased investment in pedestrian count-down signals, and the host of capital street improvements pending completion across the borough.

A positive development in recent years has been the City's investment in an Accessible Pedestrian Signal (APS) Program. APS signals provide audible notification to blind and visually impaired individuals about when it is safe to cross an intersection. This program should be expanded, as it provides vital safety information to pedestrians with vision impairments.

Education

The New York City Department of Education (DOE) is the largest public school system in the country, serving over 1 million students at 1,800 schools. Although City funding for the DOE totals nearly \$10 billion in FY15, there continue to be serious issues with class sizes and school facilities throughout the system. Virtually every Community Board District struggles with school buildings at or near capacity. Continued investment must also be made in improving broadband infrastructure and electrical capacity in our school buildings, so that our students can continue to utilize technology for STEM education and other classroom activities using smartboards, laptops, and more.

Another area of concern is the opacity in the budget regarding DOE spending on outside consultants. DOE consultant spending totals approximately \$1 billion annually, and little detail is provided as to where that spending goes, and what outcomes are achieved. More transparency into consulting spending would go a long way toward improving confidence in the education system.

The New York City School Construction Authority (SCA) recently announced a new \$12.8 billion five-year Capital Plan. While this plan represents a significant investment in improving school infrastructure, thousands of important projects were left out of this plan. Of the capacity building projects identified in the five-year Capital Plan, only three are in Manhattan, comprising approximately 2,700 new seats. This is insufficient to meet the true need of Manhattan schools for additional seats. By its own accounting, the five-year Capital Plan will leave the DOE over 17,000 seats short of its identified need citywide. This results in larger class sizes and decreased student performance system-wide. We would also urge that any additional funding for SCA must be paired with a renewed commitment from the Authority to provide more transparent information about how it is spending its money on projects. Far too many SCA projects go over budget, and take months or even years longer than initially estimated. Better oversight must be provided over the spending of these capital dollars, and it starts with transparency at the agency level.

Mayor de Blasio has proposed several exciting new initiatives in the February 2014 Capital Plan, including \$210 million for the Pre-K initiative, and \$490 million for the Class Size Reduction Program. These investments must be prioritized to improve educational outcomes in the City. Other top priorities for the Borough are dedicated funding for school-based Mental Health Clinics, both for capital construction and ongoing program support. In addition, a universal free lunch program would improve educational and nutritional outcomes in our schools. Making this program universal would reduce stigmas associated with seeking a free lunch, and the costs of expanding the program would be mostly offset by the Federal Government. We urge the Council and Mayor to seriously consider this program.

Public Safety

In recent years, New York City has seen noteworthy reductions in crime across the five boroughs. The New York City Police Department (NYPD) deserves tremendous credit for overseeing this change. However, persistent complaints remain surrounding several police practices. The practice of Stop and Frisk has been the subject of City Council legislation, several lawsuits, and substantial press coverage. The practice, which has been found by many studies to disproportionately target young men of color, needs to be reduced to ensure that no stops are made on unconstitutional grounds. The budget impact of reduced lawsuits against the Department could be profound.

Several Community Boards also highlighted the need for increased enforcement of traffic violations across Manhattan. This focus on traffic infractions is in line with the Mayor's Vision Zero Plan, and we hope funding will be identified to ensure officers are on the street to target traffic violators. One potential way to improve compliance with traffic laws, particularly near schools, would be to hire more crossing guards. A small investment in enforcement has the potential to change the culture of motorists, and improve safety across the City.

Homeless Services

The New York City Department of Homeless Services manages and oversees City and private shelters across the five boroughs, as well as providing preventive services. The Coalition for the Homeless recently announced that we have reached a new high in our homeless population, with over 53,000 New Yorkers staying overnight in shelters in January. Mayor de Blasio has recognized the need for increased funding for DHS by allocating an additional \$26.4 million in funding for homeless services to cope with the increased need, as well as provide funding for subsidized employment services. Other welcome restorations include additional funding for runaway and homeless youth beds, as well as community-based mental health providers to serve the homeless population and more.

These are positive steps, but more must be done to provide additional shelter beds for the homeless population, as well as provide better oversight of homeless shelter siting across the five boroughs. The contracting process for shelters also bears further scrutiny, as the City is currently paying far more for shelter beds than would be required to pay for permanent affordable housing subsidies. Some of the funding dedicated to shelter beds should instead be directed to rental subsidies to keep people in their homes, rather than place them in temporary shelters. It is essential that we not simply spend more money to combat homelessness, but that we spend more wisely, targeting programs that demonstrate an ability to provide long-term housing solutions.

Information Technology

In this digital age, more and more New Yorkers rely on computer technology for personal correspondence, research, entertainment, business, and interactions with government. This requires substantial investment in the electric grid, fiber cabling, and wireless internet and cellular bandwidth to provide access to the millions of New Yorkers web surfing, downloading, and emailing at any given time. As the City moves more and more of its services online, it is essential that the Department of Information Technology and Telecommunications (DoITT) receive funding to allow for effective support for city agencies, elected officials, and Community Boards. As government is doing more to utilize technology, such as complying with the City's new Open Data and webcasting laws, DoITT must play a vital role in facilitating the purchase and rollout of this technology. The City should ensure that there are dedicated staff members available, at DoITT or elsewhere in the Administration, to work with agencies and elected officials to develop best practices for the use of data, video uploads, and more.

More funding must also be dedicated to improving wired internet access in city facilities to allow for enhanced data usage required by services such as webcasting, as well as Wi-Fi access within government agencies, and for the public across the City. One potential avenue for enhanced public Wi-Fi access is in the City's public payphone franchise, which is up for renewal this calendar year. Several prototypes have been developed that would transform public payphones into more useful multifaceted interfaces that could include voice calling, wireless internet, personal device charging, and more. The City must not miss this tremendous opportunity to boost the technological infrastructure of our streetscape, while maintaining revenue streams.

Senior Services

The New York City Department for the Aging (DFTA) provides essential services to Manhattan's senior population. As the residents who have likely done the most for our City, it is of the utmost priority that adequate services be provided to ensure that seniors have access to recreation, food options, elder abuse services and more. DFTA provides operating support to senior centers, meal programs, NORCs, elder abuse programs, case management, and more. Significant funding must be devoted to these programs, as well as to infrastructure improvements to make Manhattan and all of New York City more age-friendly. This means accessible transportation options, sidewalks, and entrances to buildings and stores. Community Boards have also highlighted programs such as adult daycare, meal delivery, visiting neighbor services, eviction prevention, and the Senior Citizens Rent Increase Exemption (SCRIE) as essential for prioritization in the budget.

Parks / Open Space

In Manhattan, which is by far the most densely populated borough, open space is a rare luxury. This makes the maintenance of our parks and public open spaces a high priority for recreation and quality of life. The New York City Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR), which is responsible for maintaining a clean and safe parks system, must receive sufficient public funding. While conservancies have a role to play in our parks system, they should supplement parks support, not replace it. We must establish a baseline of care across the system which is maintained by an adequately funded Parks Department. This includes sufficient funding for PEP officers across the borough to ensure all of our parks are safe and secure, as well as maintenance officers to ensure trees are pruned, and pathways are clear.

Parks and green spaces also have a valuable role to play in the resiliency of Manhattan in dealing with the impacts of future natural disasters like Superstorm Sandy. As highlighted in the recent PlaNYC report, *A Stronger, More Resilient New York*, parkland serves as an important line of defense against storm damage. This is especially true for beaches and waterfront parks, which must be protected and made more secure. Parks with resilient barriers and materials fared much better in Sandy than other parks, so a concentrated effort must be made to ensure all waterfront parks are evaluated, and, when necessary, reinforced.