

CITY OF NEW YORK  
**MANHATTAN COMMUNITY BOARD FOUR**

424 West West 33 Street, Suite #580  
New York, NY 10001  
tel: 212-736-4536  
www.nyc.gov/mcb4

**JEFFREY LEFRANCOIS**  
Chair

**JESSE R. BODINE**  
District Manager

February 1, 2023

Hon. Eric Adams  
Mayor  
City Hall  
New York, NY 10007

**Re: Statement on the Preliminary Budget, Fiscal Year 2024 (FY24)**

Dear Mayor Adams,

Manhattan Community Board Four (MCB4) appreciates the opportunity to respond to your \$102.7 billion Preliminary Budget for Fiscal Year 2024. MCB4, at its regularly scheduled meeting on February 1<sup>st</sup>, 2023, voted, by a vote of 40 in favor, 0 opposed, 0 abstaining, and 0 present but not eligible to vote, to recommend the following comments on the Preliminary Budget for fiscal year 2024.

New York City and its economy is still in recovery mode from the devastation of the pandemic. Our district has been uniquely affected by the COVID pandemic and its lingering consequences. But what were recognized as COVID induced conditions, such as street crime, educational needs and trash strewn streets, have now translated into enduring maladies no longer excused as COVID related circumstances. MCB4 is home to Broadway, Penn Station and the Port Authority bus terminal, as well as some of the largest employers in the city and our neighborhoods have been financially debilitated by the lack of tourism and commuter activity, only now trickling back. A major obstacle to neighborhood recovery is that the large increase in robbery, burglary, grand larceny and drug dealing, which catered to a large user population housed here during COVID, has not abated. An acute need for broader services must be addressed. In addition, our district is now a designated drop-off point for incoming asylum seekers adding another layer of financial exigency.

Unfortunately, the proposed budget for the upcoming fiscal year has not adequately addressed our identified, most pressing district needs.<sup>1</sup> Despite including two of the three highest reported crime NYPD precincts in all of New York City and the Mayor's commitment to public safety, none of our public safety requests for our district were funded. Despite the influx of migrant children in our district's schools, no financing for our associated program requests were granted.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://cbmanhattan.cityofnewyork.us/cb4/about/budget/>

Despite the Mayor’s increasing investment in affordable housing, we have seen no movement in any of our NYCHA needs.

The current Preliminary Budget cut 4,300 previously budgeted vacancies across city government. In response, the mayor stated, “Some will argue that vacancy reduction results in agencies not being able to do their jobs. Don't believe them.” Our experience on the ground proves otherwise with lack of staff directly affecting many of our most pressing needs. For example, this is reflected in the denial of funding for programs requiring DOB inspectors and HPD project managers, both of which play a crucial role in building and preserving affordable housing in our district. MCB4 understands the need to be fiscally responsible and prepare healthy reserves in the face of forecasted economic uncertainties but there are critical needs that require immediate resources. Rather than blanket cuts, we believe identifying priority agency functions and investing in particular roles will allow the City to meet community needs responsibly.

Conversely, we would like to note appreciation for the inclusion of funding for some of our social services and Department of Transportation requests (listed in detail below). MCB4 values the shared priority of expanded street outreach and programs for our most vulnerable populations.

Many of the programs we address in the following paragraphs need appropriate funding to accomplish the vision the Mayor has for a safer, healthier, more equitable New York City.

## **Housing**

MCB4 recently released our detailed and comprehensive [Affordable Housing Plan](#)<sup>2</sup> much touted by elected officials and local advocates. In the New York Times article titled [“N.Y.C. Community Boards Usually Oppose New Housing. Not This One.”](#)<sup>3</sup> it noted our plan “...may be a template of how New York City neighborhood leaders, particularly in wealthier neighborhoods that have traditionally resisted housing, can help make a dent in the city’s housing shortage.” We thank the administration for addressing many of our housing and social service-related requests. We share the objective of prioritizing efforts towards a more affordable and equitable city and our Community Board has been at the forefront to make that an actuality.

Moving forward, MCB4 would like to urgently prioritize the plan providing adequate capital subsidies for the HPD development at the NYCHA Harborview Terrace site. Not unusually, our requests for this have been bouncing between agencies only to thwart progress. We expect to have serious discussions in the near future pushing this project forward.

We are grateful for the funding of the following housing requests:

- The development of The Slaughterhouse Site RFP located at 495 11th Ave. providing 100% permanently affordable units.

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<sup>2</sup> <https://cbmanhattan.cityofnewyork.us/cb4/wp-content/uploads/sites/10/2020/01/Affordable-Housing-Plan-Summary-of-Sites-12.15.22.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/12/15/nyregion/manhattan-community-board-housing.html>

- Establishing a families with children shelter providing balance in the district's shelter population.
- Expanding outreach for street homeless and people needing city services.
- An expansion of rental assistance programs/vouchers for permanent housing for homeless individuals and families that are selected through the DHS family preference program for the "Affordable New York" program.

Partial funding is noted for our request for capital subsidy for the Multifamily Preservation Loan Program (MPLP) and the Senior Affordable Rental Apartments (SARA) for the following affordable housing projects: 560 West 52nd Street & 464 West 25th Street - (MPLP) 500 West 52nd Street - (SARA). We look to get further explanation on the extent of the funding.

To secure affordable housing we must vigorously protect our current stock. To those ends, MCB4 requests you re-examine funding for DOB Special District code enforcement and to update the DOB website to flag improper demolition permits. Improper demolition permits in our district has resulted in over one hundred residential units demolished over the last five years.

In order to secure the current affordable housing stock and protect tenant rights, we need additional funding for housing attorneys and tenant organizers. We are disappointed our budget request for Housing Conservation Coordinators, which provide these services, was dismissed. Though HPD does not administer this program, we expect our ask will be directed to the proper agency, DSS, instead of denied out of hand.

### **Public Safety**

Our district was home to the most densely populated temporary shelters during COVID and we are now suffering residual effects in the form of serious public safety concerns. **Over the last year, our district's NYPD precincts have been home to the highest crime statistics in all of New York City.** Our district's retailers are struggling to recover their footing due to reduce customer volumes and chaos on the sidewalk. As the gateway to New York City, our first impression is not a good one. In our public survey of district priorities, public safety was, by far, the most mentioned. We hope you recognize and understand our need and reconsider funding for our public safety asks.

- Reinstate and expand the geographic boundaries of the Midtown South Precinct's 8th Avenue Crime Reduction Program and the Midtown Business District Recovery Initiative. These two NYPD initiatives prioritize NYPD officers conducting foot patrols and engaging with local business owners and community stakeholders. More of the Manhattan Community District 4 (MCD4) area should benefit from officers "on the ground" and these outward facing crime prevention initiatives.
- Fund the acquisition of a NYPD sub-station facility for the 10th Precinct in the Hudson Yards area. Our population has dramatically increased yet our public safety services have decreased. An expansion of the station will provide better coordination and service across the entire district.

- Provide funding to the four police precincts in MCD4 to expand the number of annual community-building events. These events strengthen community-police relations and help build partnerships and can have positive impacts on both the community and the officers.
- Fund and deploy 9 traffic officers to increase enforcement of the following traffic violations: vehicular spill-back, parking in no standing, bus drivers using unauthorized routes, vehicular idling, bicycles riding on sidewalks, wrong way on bike paths and streets, running red lights, illegal use of electric bikes, vehicles blocking bike lanes, and unnecessary honking. We expect that enforcement will be race-neutral and that the midtown court will be used for restorative justice and much needed education. We are pleased that two new posts were created on 9th Avenue (W37th and W38th Streets), however the agents are there only sporadically and the increase in Lincoln tunnel traffic makes the other seven posts more critical than ever.

We are pleased that two new posts for traffic agents were created on 9th Avenue (W37th and W38th Streets), however the agents are there only sporadically and the increase in Lincoln tunnel traffic makes the other seven posts more critical than ever.

## **Sanitation**

MCB4 agrees with the Mayor, we must maintain funding for the primary concern of keeping our streets clean. That is why we are particularly disappointed in the rejection to fund any of our sanitation asks for the upcoming fiscal year.

Our streets and sidewalks are filled with overflowing waste baskets, mountains of garbage bags and a profusion of scattered litter. This is not just a matter of aesthetics but of health and safety, as well. In order for our district to fully recover from the pandemic, we need the tools to do so. We strongly urge you to fully fund the following DSNY requests:

- Restore and expand funding for the Better Bin Pilot Program. There are also areas in our neighborhood in need of additional baskets (e.g. recycling in addition to trash, to prevent overflow).
- Supply MCB4's district with a public, corner basket recycling program.
- Greater enforcement by sanitation police is needed to increase compliance with alternate side parking regulations. Greater enforcement by sanitation enforcement agents is also needed to ensure business owners comply with responsibilities for commercial trash and sidewalk cleanliness.

During your campaign you pledged to transform NYC "into a global leader in sustainability, environmental preservation, green technology, and more -- because the climate crisis requires nothing less than our total commitment to a greener future."<sup>4</sup> Though we were extremely disappointed our request for a fully funded composting program in our district was denied, we are delighted to hear the most recent announcement at The State of the City address of plans for composting by year end 2024.

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<sup>4</sup> <https://twitter.com/ericadamsfornyc/status/1385224617992798218>

Organics account for one-third of the waste stream and universal curbside organics collection is a necessary step toward the greener future you promised. We look forward to the rollout in our district. MCB4 also encourages DSNY to implement a composting education program for residents and building management.

### **Transportation**

MCB4 would like to thank the city for the many life-saving improvements DOT installed in 2023. Including numerous new pedestrian ramps and 30 audible pedestrian signals. We also appreciate the completion of the following:

We also appreciate the resource allocation that will ensure the following:

- The conversion of painted pedestrian islands, extensions and neck downs to permanent concrete structures on 11th Avenue.
- The repaving of the 8th Avenue bike lane.
- The study of a protected bike lane on 10th Avenue from West 13th to West 59th Streets.
- The reconstruction of Ninth Avenue from West 51st to 34th Streets to complete the capital projects for sidewalk widening.
- Near complete installation of 4 sidewalk extensions per the study completed by the Community Board and traffic engineers.

We look forward to bringing a higher priority and gaining funding on the following projects:

- Installation of ADA compliant ramps at intersections - Dyer Ave and West 34th Street - North side of West 42 Street and Dyer Avenue (this request is outstanding since 2009 – Western Rail Yards rezoning)
- Study the creation of bus lane on 9th Avenue from 44th street to 57th street to increase the M11 reliability and consistency of its service.
- Fix 31 dangerous intersections in the district where vehicles conflict with pedestrians and bicycles. MCB4 has sent two letters with the details.
- Study sidewalk capacity and pedestrian demand along the balance of 9th Avenue in Hell's Kitchen from W34th Street to W 51st street to complete the sidewalk extension widening of the corridor. In particular, study space effectively allocated to pedestrians, sidewalk obstructions and pedestrian volumes resulting in a true pedestrian level of service.
- Install a new bike lane on 10th Avenue (13th/ 51st street).
- Fund the relocation of Northbound Dyer Avenue traffic entrance from West 34th and West 35th Streets and close Dyer Avenue Northbound at West 34/36 Streets.
- Adjust signal timing on 9th Avenue to create a Green Wave for cyclists and pedestrians.

In anticipation of a full transfer to electric vehicles, private, commercial and public, the need for separate, rapid multi-vehicle charging areas is urgent. If the city expects to hit its own carbon-

free goals, we need to have the appropriate infrastructure and funding to achieve that objective with a priority on universal availability.

## **Environment**

MCB4 has also requested the financing of the transition to electric shore power at the Manhattan Cruise Ship Terminal. Our district has some of the dirtiest air in all of NYC. When docked, ships run their engines to generate power, emitting thousands of tons of diesel particulates into the air. A ship docked for 24 hours can emit the equivalent of 34,000 idling tractor trailers.<sup>5</sup> Creating a facility for cruise ships to "plug-in" to draw power from the existing power grid will reduce diesel particulate matter and drastically improve the water quality in the Hudson River. The current response to our repeated, yearly request is, "The agency agrees with this request, will accommodate in part." We would like further clarification.

We expect the Mayor's proposal for the hiring of chief decarbonization officers across multiple agencies to elevate and streamline greenhouse gas emission reductions in agency operations will aid in this endeavor.

As noted above, we are encouraged by the Mayor's plan to expand the universal organics collection program city-wide. This has been a repeated, priority request by MCB4 and we look forward to accelerating the rollout in our district.

## **Parks**

We are disappointed in the lack of "green" funding for our city parks. During your campaign you committed to allocating 1% of the annual budget to Parks and we hope the city will execute on the commitment to open, green spaces. MCB4 would also like to note our ask and recognition of the desperate need for public bathrooms and comfort stations.<sup>6</sup> Renovation of our park's comfort stations accomplish both an upgrade of our public parks and the exigency for this public amenity.

We also would like to highlight the need for Parks staff. The Parks Management & Operations workforce is responsible for park maintenance and cleanliness while the Parks Enforcement Patrol (PEP) secure our parks' safe spaces. Increased funding is sorely needed for necessary upkeep and safety.

We request funding for the following:

- Fund the renovation and construction of the bathrooms at the following parks: Dewitt Clinton Park - W 52/54 St. from 11/12 Ave., Matthews-Palmer Park - 445 W 45th St. and Chelsea Park - 450 W 27th St.

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<sup>5</sup> <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/12/26/nyregion/cruise-ship-exhaust-shore-power-nyc.html>

<sup>6</sup> <https://cbmanhattan.cityofnewyork.us/cb4/wp-content/uploads/sites/10/2022/06/09-ACES-Letter-to-Mayor-and-City-Council-re-Intro-258-Study-of-Public-Bathrooms.pdf>

- Upgrade DeWitt Clinton Park, Hell’s Kitchen’s largest park. It provides active and passive park space as well as a significant playground. DeWitt Clinton has gone without renovation in decades and is in need of serious improvements including repaving the playground & courts, new playground equipment, new spray shower and drainage lines and the resurfacing of the heavily used dog run.
- The repair of the sidewalk at Gutenberg Playground located at W 49th St. between 9th and 10 Avenues. The sidewalk is dangerous and needs complete servicing.
- Renovate McCaffrey Playground at W. 43rd St. between 8th & 9th Avenues, including new play equipment, a spray shower, greenery and drainage lines.
- The renovation and construction of Gertrude Kelly Playground at 8th Avenue between 16th & 17th Streets, with updated playground equipment including a new spray shower, fencing and plantings.
- Parks Enforcement Patrol provides a uniformed presence to safeguard Parks’ properties and facilities and enforces Parks rules and regulations. With our district’s uptick of crime and unsafe incidences, our need for PEP staff is acute. The Park Rangers also conduct educational programs in parks throughout our district.
- Playground Associates conduct recreation activities for children and help maintain playgrounds during the spring, summer and fall in the popular Kids in Motion program. We request \$12.5K for 6 months, includes supplies, for the recreation staff to organize Family Fun Days, Outdoor Movie Nights, Tango Dance Programs, Senior Fitness Programs and more. While proving essential for successful parks programming, this program also provides local youth with opportunities for employment in their neighborhoods.

MCB4 would like to thank the city for funding our long-standing request to renovate Penn South Playground. We look forward to working to create a new, disability adaptive park space. We also appreciate the upcoming renovation of Hell’s Kitchen Park. Although this was not a requested MCB4 budget item or priority, we anticipate the improvements.

## **Education**

MCB4 is particularly disappointed by the lack of attention and funding to our district’s Department of Education (DOE) requests. We understand the DOE is in a challenging financial situation due to a significant enrollment decline and the fact that the large infusion of COVID-related federal funding will end in a couple years. However, investing strategically in our schools is critical to the city’s future and most of our district’s critical capital and expense requests were not funded.

Most all of our district’s capital and expense requests were not funded, including educational services to address the great influx of migrant children now enrolled in neighborhood public schools and specifically, bilingual educators. We encourage the DOE to focus on investing in building that talent pipeline as part of a long term response to students whose families do not speak English at home.

We also implore the DOE to invest more in tech infrastructure and ensure that all its school buildings and students have access to reliable high-speed Wi-Fi so there is no digital divide for NYC students attending public schools. Students need to successfully leverage the laptops, tablets, and educational software the DOE has already invested in so substantially. School buildings' internet/Wi-Fi infrastructure is often inadequate to support the use of these devices.

In announcing the FY24 Preliminary Budget, the Mayor highlighted \$47.5 million for “installing new locks and security measures in New York City Department of Education school facilities to make them safer for students and staff”<sup>7</sup> yet not all of our requests for security door alarms or security cameras for our elementary schools were funded. Safety is paramount and students and educators deserve functioning facilities, so we hope that the remaining sites in our district identified by the superintendent and his principals as priority locations in need security and/or facilities improvements can also have their needs addressed, specifically:

- Install security cameras at P.S. 212 Midtown West, 328 W 48th St.
- Install security door alarm system at P.S. 11 at 320 W. 21 St.
- Provide funding for the redesign of the school library at Business of Sports HS, located at 439 W. 49th St. The current library is inadequate to meet the technical requirements that students need for their research.
- Fund the replacement of the water damaged gym floor in Manhattan Bridges HS, located at 535 W. 50th St.
- Fund the elevator replacement at the Bayard Rustin Educational Complex at 351 W. 18th Street.
- Install a chemistry lab at Food and Finance High School at 525 W. 50th Street.
- Provide \$75,000 to complete the P.S.51 rooftop garden at 525 W. 44th Street.
- Fund the P.S.35M library computer and media lab at 317 W. 52nd St.
- Make the P.S. 111 School at 440 W. 53rd St. gymnasium and auditorium ADA accessible.

MCB4 appreciates that the DOE and SCA have invested in upgrading or are planning to upgrade facilities and security at sites in our district and request more detail on the status of these projects:

- The installation of security cameras for PS 33 at 281 9th Ave.; PS 111 at 440 W. 53rd St. and Park West Educational Campus at 525 W 50th St.
- Bathroom renovations at PS 33 at 281 9th Ave. and the Bayard Rustin campus at 351 W 18th St.
- New bleachers at High School for Environmental studies at 444 W 56th St.

## Arts

The presence of performing arts groups develop and give voice to new talent in areas of writing, performing, dance, choreography, and directing. This vitalizes New York City and our community both culturally and commercially, on a block-to-block level. In addition, support

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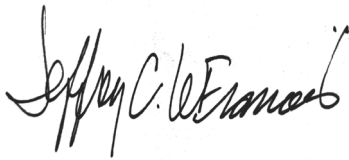
<sup>7</sup> <https://www.nyc.gov/office-of-the-mayor/news/028-23/mayor-adams-releases-preliminary-budget-fiscal-year-2024#/0>



services for theater and other artistic services which provide rental storage space for art, costumes, scenery, lighting, and rehearsal studios have long been located throughout Chelsea and Clinton/Hell's Kitchen. These services are losing viable space due to development and escalating real estate costs. In addition, more than 30% of performance spaces have closed within MCD4 in the past decade. Money generated from these industries provides employment and maintains the artistic life of the city. MCB4 is concerned about the loss of artists' studios in the District and the displacement of working artists. The Department of Cultural Affairs' Small Theater Study, conducted several years back, highlighted the positive economic impact that this segment of the cultural landscape provided. MCB4 urges the Department of Cultural Affairs to continue and to increase funding for our arts and cultural entities.

We recognize the interesting moment our city and country are in, as recovery is complex and fluid. Ensuring New York remains an equitable city that allows all its residents the opportunity to flourish must be prioritized and we believe MCB4 priorities do just that. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Jeffrey LeFrancois  
Chair  
Manhattan Community Board 4



Leslie Boghosian Murphy  
Second Vice Chair  
Chair, CB4 Budget Task Force

CC: Hon. Mark D. Levine, Manhattan Borough President  
Hon. Erik Bottcher, City Council  
Hon. Gale A. Brewer, City Council