



CITY OF NEW YORK
MANHATTAN COMMUNITY BOARD FOUR

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

JESSICA CHAIT
Chair

JESSE R. BODINE
District Manager

February 15th, 2024

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

Re: Statement on the Preliminary Budget, Fiscal Year 2025 (FY25)

Dear Mayor Adams,

Manhattan Community Board Four (MCB4) appreciates the opportunity to respond to your \$109.4 billion Preliminary Budget for Fiscal Year 2025. MCB4, at its regularly scheduled Full Board meeting on February 7th, 2024, voted, by a vote of 33 in favor, 0 opposed, 1 abstaining, and 2 present but not eligible to vote, to recommend the following comments on the Preliminary Budget for fiscal year 2025.

While the past year showed great promise in New York City's gradual recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic with greater foot traffic from workers and tourists returning to Manhattan, it also presented a number of challenges. Namely, 2023 saw a perfect storm of factors that culminated in dramatic projected budget cuts for the coming fiscal year: an ending of COVID funds, lower-than-anticipated revenue projections, and the costs of sheltering the more than 150,000 migrants who have come to the City from the US's southern border since April 2022.

In December 2023, MCB4 [wrote to express our concerns](#)¹ regarding proposed cross-agency cuts to the City's budget. We are heartened to hear that due to the City's revenue projections, City Hall may be able to cancel some of the citywide funding cuts identified in its Program to Eliminate the Gap (PEG) savings program, including cuts to the Department of Sanitation and the New York City Police Department. MCB4 believes strongly that funding our community's most pressing needs, including regular trash pickup, building and maintaining our stock of affordable housing, ensuring law enforcement has adequate resources to address community concerns, and providing

¹ <https://cbmanhattan.cityofnewyork.us/cb4/wp-content/uploads/sites/10/2023/12/16-EXEC-Letter-to-Mayor-re-Recent-Proposed-Budget-Cuts.pdf>

adequate services to welcome migrants to our community— is key to our community’s success.

In January 2024, the Mayor announced that the Preliminary Budget would reverse some cuts made to police, sanitation, education, and youth services. MCB4 appreciates the Mayor’s move to restore funding for an additional police academy class in 2024, maintaining litter baskets, and allowing the Department of Sanitation to keep installing its “better bins” throughout the City. We also are heartened to see City Hall restore funding for the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation Parks Opportunity Program (POP) to help maintain and operate parks throughout our district. Finally, we appreciate restoration of funding to community school programs to provide holistic support to students and their families and restored Summer Youth Employment and Summer Rising program funding to invest in young people and families throughout our community. However, we insist that the Mayor fully fund 3K and Pre K Extended Day in the five elementary schools located in CB4 as there is a long waitlist for both programs. Early learning is critical in ensuring student success in reading readiness especially for the many migrant students attending our schools.

Despite these restorations, there is still much to be desired for our community. MCB4 is home to Broadway, Moynihan Station and the Port Authority Bus Terminal, as well as some of the largest employers in the city and our neighborhoods have been financially re-shaped by the changes in commuter activity and tourism following the pandemic. When visitors, commuters, and migrants come to this City, Manhattan’s Community District 4 provides one of their first impressions of our City. We encourage City Hall to consider the negative impacts that continuing its draconian cuts may have on our community for visitors and residents alike.

The updated Preliminary Budget moves forward with cuts to 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.

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](#)² 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.”](#)³ 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 requests to urgently prioritize the plan providing adequate capital subsidies for the HPD development at the NYCHA Harborview Terrace site. Not unusual, 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.

MCB4 appreciates funding for several of our priority requests, including

- Funding for an increase in City services for people who are street homeless. While NYC's homelessness outreach program has received additional funds in the past, MCB4 requests a 15% increase in funds to the outreach programs at Breaking Ground, Goddard, BRC, and Urban Pathways.
- Increased HPD funding and scope of the Emergency Repair Program (ERP) to ensure landlords do not allow their properties to deteriorate in special districts where demolition by neglect is prevalent.

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 avoid losing units of 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.

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

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

Improper demolition permits in our district have resulted in over one hundred residential units demolished over the last five years.

Finally, in recognition of the current migrant housing crisis and the need to provide services to newcomers to our district, MCB4 encourages the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene to allocate funding to Ryan Chelsea-Clinton Health Center for prenatal health capital needs and the need for translation services generated by this new population.

Public Safety

While we were pleased to see that 2023 saw a drop in violent crime, public safety issues including theft and drug crime must be taken seriously. Our district's retailers are struggling to recover their footing due to reduced customer volumes and quality of life issues. In our public survey of district priorities in 2023, public safety remained a top priority for residents. We hope you recognize and understand our need and reconsider funding for our public safety asks.

MCB4 requests increased funding to 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.

MCB4 further requests a stepped-up enforcement of all vehicles illegally parked or riding on sidewalks or bike lanes, including automobiles, bicycles riding the wrong way and using non-UL certified batteries. Systematic inspections of E-bike shops by FDNY would go a long way to avoid fires in buildings.

MCB4 also requests the City prioritize enforcement against unlicensed cannabis shops, including by providing funding earmarked for cannabis enforcement to City agencies like the New York City Sheriff. Funding for a State/City Cannabis Coordinator would also be welcomed. We also welcome further City-sponsored public education on this topic, including an educational campaign informing residents and visitors that the many local smoke shops that are offering cannabis and cannabis products are illegal.

Sanitation

While MCB4 is pleased to see the restoration of previously cut funding from the Department of Sanitation, we believe that simply maintaining the status quo is insufficient for keeping our streets clean.

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.

We strongly urge you to fully fund the following DSNY requests:

- Restore all cuts to DSNY capital budget to allow for upgrades. In particular, light equipment to clear the snow at bus stops and corners, electric powered collection trucks, dual-bins and salt spreaders.
- Expand funding corner basket pickups in the district. Additional funding is needed to expand programs such as the Precision Cleaning Team that addresses overflowing baskets and responds to service calls via the 311 system.

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 a commitment to a greener future. Though we were extremely disappointed that our request for a fully funded composting program in our district was denied, we look forward to learning more about the City’s plans to address composting by the end of 2024.

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:

- 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.
- Installing A super sidewalk on 9th avenue (51st to 58th Streets).
- The installation of 3 sidewalk extensions.
- The creation of a shared street on W 22nd street (7th and 8th Avenues).

We look forward to capital resource allocation that will ensure the following:

- The reconstruction of Ninth Avenue from West 51st to 34th Streets to complete the capital projects for sidewalk widening.
- The addition of elevators at 23rd street and 6th avenue Subway station to improve ADA service.

We look forward to bringing a higher priority and gaining funding on the following projects that will address severe vehicular and pedestrian congestion in Hell’s kitchen and a continued high level of fatalities:

- 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.

- 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.
- Fix 31 dangerous intersections in the district where vehicles conflict with pedestrians and bicycles. MCB4 has sent two letters with the details.
- Fix dangerous speeding conditions on W 24th street (10/11).
- Repair and replace damaged and dangerous subway grates and broken sidewalks throughout the district.
- Install pedestrian markings on 9th Avenue.
- Install bike corrals at multiple locations along 9th Avenue.
- Study the creation of a bus lane on 9th Avenue from 34th street to 57th street to increase the M11 reliability and consistency of its service.
- Adjust signal timing on 9th Avenue to create a Green Wave for cyclists and pedestrians.
- Relocate 40 congestion pricing gantries from local streets to Port Authority properties.
- Study a new West 41st and 10th Ave station for the # 7 Subway line.

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 trailers⁵ 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 appreciate the City’s Economic Development Corporation speaking with MCB4 about this issue in 2023, and we look forward to updates as the City moves forward with a cleaner cruise terminal in Manhattan.

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 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. 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. While we appreciate the restoration of cuts made to the Parks Opportunity Program, this is not sufficient to ensure the proper maintenance of our communal green spaces. 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 to these workforce groups for necessary upkeep and safety.

We also 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.
- 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 10th 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 to 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, including 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 our 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. When designing this space, MCB4 requests that Parks prioritize lighting with solar energy storage at Penn South Playground. 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 is drying up. 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 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.

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 of security and/or facilities improvements can also have their needs addressed, specifically.

We request capital funding for the following priority needs:

- Bathroom upgrades at the following schools:
 - P.S. 212 Midtown West, 328 W 48th St.
 - N.Y.C LAB MS, 333 W 17th St.
 - N.Y.C. Museum HS, 333, W 17th St.
- Replace locks on all classrooms at N.Y.C. LAB MS, 333 W 17th St.
- ADA access to building, gymnasium & auditorium at PS 111, 440 W. 53rd St.
- Laptops for the following schools:
 - Urban Assembly HS, 439 W. 49th St.
 - High School of Hospitality Management, 525 W. 50th St.
 - Beacon High School, 522 W 44th St.

- Repair outdoor play area bricks causing safety issues at P.S. 51, 525 W. 44th St.
- Install security cameras at the following schools:
 - P.S. 212 Midtown West, 328 W 48th St.
 - P.S. 111, 440 W. 53rd St.
 - P.S. 51, 525 W. 44th St.
 - P.S. 33, 281 9th Ave.
 - P.S. 11, 320 W. 21st St.
 - Park West Educational Campus at 525 W 50th St.

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:

- 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.

In recognition of the mounting challenges to welcoming new migrant students to our community schools and the continued need for early learning, MCB4 urgently requests that the City fund the following priority expense needs:

- Expand funding for bilingual educators and social workers prioritizing Title 1 schools, schools with the highest number of Students in Temporary Housing, and schools admitting students from newly-arrived asylum/migrant families to:
 - P.S. 111, 440 W. 53rd St.
 - P.S. 51, 525 W. 44th St.
 - P.S. 33, 281 9th Ave.
- Increase funding for Cultural After School Adventures (CASA) after school programming at the following schools:
 - P.S. 212, Midtown West, 328 W. 48th St.
 - P.S. 111, 440 W. 53rd St.
 - P.S. 51, 525 W. 44th St.
 - P.S. 33, 281 9th Ave.
- Expand funding for 3K and Pre-K Extended Day Programs at the following schools:
 - P.S. 212 Midtown West, 328 W. 48th St.
 - P.S. 111, 440 W. 53rd St.
 - P.S. 51, 525 W. 44th St.
 - P.S. 33, 281 9th Ave.
 - P.S. 11, 320 W. 21st St.
- Expand funding to DYCD English as a Second Language program in city shelters.

The 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 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, theater and rehearsal spaces, 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 significant moment our city and country are in, as our budgetary challenges are 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,



Jessica Chait
Chair

Manhattan Community Board 4

[Signed 2/15/24]

Roberta Barnett
2nd Vice Chair\Chair Budget Task Force

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