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The City of New York
Community Board 8 Manhattan

February 15, 2023

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

RE: CB8M Letter of Comment on the FY 2024 Preliminary Budget

Dear Mayor Adams:

Community Board 8 Manhattan ("CB8M") continues to be disappointed by the responses to our Preliminary Budget and Community Needs Request, one of the explicit responsibilities of which Community Board input is mandated by our City Charter. We hope that the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), the Department of City Planning and your office understand that our request reflects the ongoing needs of our community as expressed throughout meetings at the most local form of government. While we understand that funds are limited, CB8M believes that the priorities and needs of local Community Districts as reflected by their respective Community Boards should foster more consideration when developing the City's budget.

CAPITAL BUDGET

The Department of Education (Capital Budget Priority #1)

Eleanor Roosevelt High School is a high performing and highly desired school in Community District 8 that is open to applicants from across New York City. The number of qualified applicants from District 2 far exceeds the number of available spots, which last year resulted in the fewest number of District 2 students accepted to this neighborhood school in years. Unlike in some other districts, students living in Community District 8 are not given borough or zone priority in the lottery for their own neighborhood high school, so the lack of capacity at Eleanor Roosevelt has a particularly severe impact on families in our district. Given the high demand for high school seats in Community District 8 Manhattan and School District 2, additional high school seats in this community are desperately needed.

New York City Housing Authority (Capital Budget Priority #2)

NYCHA provides critically needed affordable housing for Upper East Side residents. The number of open work orders at Isaacs Houses and Holmes Towers has increased significantly in recent years. While CB8M commits to reaching out to our local, state and federal representatives for additional funding, the need to support this available source of affordable housing remains a clear responsibility for the City of New York.

The Police Department (Capital Budget Priority #4)

The officers in the 19th Precinct play an essential role in protecting the residents, visitors, and businesses of the Upper East Side. To do their jobs effectively, our police officers deserve a building in good condition, free from leaks and equipped with functioning air-conditioning. The 19th Precinct Station Building located at

157 East 67th Street is unquestionably in need of repairs: the roof leaks; there is no working air conditioning in the building; and the door to the garage and keypad does not operate properly, resulting in a security risk and an inefficient use of police resources as officers must be stationed by the garage entrance. These are just a few of the issues with the Station Building, all of which can be corroborated by the 19th Precinct and/or your office, if necessary. We urge the City to allocate funding to repair the building and support the police officers who protect our community. Furthermore, we request that you provide our Community Board with an update on the status of the study regarding the needed upgrades to this facility, as we have requested this funding multiple times and each time the City has responded that further study is needed.

The Department of Parks and Recreation (Capital Budget Priority #5, 12, 14, 16,17, 18)

The condition of the East River Esplanade continues to be a concern despite investments in repairs and upkeep. Last year, two sinkholes were repaired along the Esplanade at 76th/77th Streets at a cost of nearly $1 million. Surface upgrades to the Esplanade in that area are due to take place as part of the HSS Kellen Tower project. Unfortunately, a sinkhole has recurred in the same spot that was repaired a year ago, and we are concerned that the recurrence of sinkholes creates a risk of additional catastrophic damage to the Esplanade. The Esplanade provides not only essential open space for a community lacking in open space, but is a critical barrier protecting the East Side from rising sea levels. The East River Esplanade is a vital resource that must be protected. We urge the City to provide full funding for the complete structural repair of the Esplanade, including the sea wall and all supporting infrastructure.

There are also a number of other parks in the District that are in need of repair and upgrade. This includes Phase 3 of Andrew Haswell Green Park, continued improvements to John Jay Park, 24 Sycamores Park Lower Level, and Samuel Seabury Playground.

We are pleased that the City is moving forward with the reconstruction of Ruppert Park on Second Avenue between 90th and 91st Streets and that Council Member Menin secured additional funding to support the construction of a comfort station in the park. This item remains in the District Needs Statement under continuing support to express the community's continued support for this priority project. Similarly, we are pleased to see Andrew Haswell Green Phase 2 B continue, and we express our continuing support for this critical project. We look forward to moving on to Phase 3 of Andrew Haswell Green Park.

The Department of Housing Preservation and Development (Capital Priority #7 and #10)

The City has a well-documented housing affordability and homelessness crisis. We urge the City to build more affordable housing in Community District 8 Manhattan. The Upper East Side has barely added new housing units since 2010 and has actually lost affordable units since then, according to a February 2021 report from the Department of City Planning. Despite what seems like extensive new housing construction on the Upper East Side, as a net total the Upper East Side added less new housing over the past decade than 57 of the City's other 58 community districts. At the same time, costs for existing and new housing are rising faster than income. Just over 13% of the rental units on the Upper East Side in 2019 were considered affordable for a household earning 80% of the Area Median Income (AMI). Indeed, 14,000 units of affordable housing were lost in the district over a 12-year period. At the same time, the City must construct supportive safe haven services to ensure that housing insecure individuals and families also provides them with the tools and services needed to get back on their feet. To that end, we urge the City to revert to its original plan to use 419 East 91st Street as a Safe Haven, rather than as some other type of facility.

The New York Public Library (Capital Priority #8 and #9)

Libraries are a vital part of our community and continue to be used by all residents, providing essential access to books and information, Wi-Fi and digital access, as well as events and community support resources. Libraries should be accessible to all, and it is appalling that the Yorkville Branch of the New York public library fails to meet ADA standards. Accessibility for the Yorkville Branch Library has been in

the front-end planning with the Department of Design and Construction for at least two years. We strongly encourage that this project be prioritized and quickly advanced to full design and construction.

Similarly, the 67th Street Library requires upgraded and rehabilitated accessibility. The chair lift at this branch is frequently inoperable, negatively impacting the ability of our elderly, handicapped, and people with strollers from fully accessing the library. This project should be prioritized to ensure that our libraries are accessible to all.

EXPENSE BUDGET

Community Boards (Expense Priority #9)

In FY2019 and FY2020, recognizing the stagnant Community Board base budgets, the City Council established an initiative to increase Community Board budgets. This small $2.5 million initiative funded each Community Board a total of $42,500 – equivalent to the starting salary of a staff member at the Community Associate level. Unfortunately, this initiative was never baselined in the City's Expense budget, meaning that these funds could never be applied to the agency's Personal Services budget, and, as a result of the Covid-19 Pandemic, the Council was unable to renew the initiative in the FY21, FY22 or FY 23 budgets.

An additional $2.5 million, the equivalent of a rounding error in the City's budget, should be baselined in the expense budget to support an additional $42,500 increase in each Community Board's budget – amounting to a 25% increase in staffing levels at the 59 community boards across New York City. With Mayor Adams' call for the City of Yes, and the potential for increased development across the City, community boards will need additional staff assistance to properly evaluate the anticipated increase in zoning and land use proposals to support the City's development goals.

The Department of Education (Expense Priority #1)

There continues to be a high demand for 3K and 4K seats, with the demand for these seats in Community District 8 Manhattan far exceeding the available capacity. Availability of seats for early childhood education will help keep families in New York City and strengthen the City's economy.

The Department of Youth and Community Development (Expense Priority #3 and #6)

We are pleased to see that the city has substantially increased funding for the Summer Youth Employment Program. This is a critical program to provide opportunities for students to gain occupational and vocational experience. We hope that funding for this program will provide summer employment opportunities for youth in the district, especially for youth in neighborhood NYCHA housing.

Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (Expense Priority #4 and #19)



Increased funding for compliance with mobile food vending sanitation as well as rat mitigation efforts is needed throughout Community District 8, as there has been an increase in the presence of rats in the community. This increase may not be reflected in 311 reports, as most residents do not report their rat sightings. The photo taken recently on 86th Street shows a rat underneath a mobile food vending cart. There are also rat burrows in the tree pits and other locations throughout the District. This is a task that falls within different City departments and must be addressed as a critical public health issue.

The Department of Sanitation (Expense Priority #5)

Increased funding for composting and organics collection is an essential sanitation service and should be increased in the budget. Organic waste makes up one-third of the City's waste stream. The consequences of not expanding the organics program are more rats ripping open trash bags and more litter on our streets. Mayor Adams and Department of Sanitation Commissioner Jessica Tisch as part of the Mayor's State of the City and the budget address this year announced a roadmap to implement "weekly collection of compostable material that will become an automatic, guaranteed, free, year-round service for every single resident across all five boroughs." The residents of our community district are ready to do our part for sustainability; we just need support from the City. CB8 supports this priority and fully funding the plan to expand organics collection throughout the City.

The Department of Parks and Recreation (Expense Priority #7, #13, #16)

We call on Mayor Adams to fulfill his campaign promise and dedicate 1% of the City's budget to the Parks. COVID demonstrated just how critical the City's limited open space is to all New Yorkers. There must be sufficient staff at the Parks Department to maintain and operate the City's parks, provide that those PEP officers enforce the rules and protect New Yorkers, and ensure cleanliness and mitigate the growing rodent population. As just one example, the Parks Department planted 2,748 new trees in the first four months of the fiscal year — a 45% drop-off from the same time period in the previous year and the fewest trees planted over that period since 2008. Expanding the City's tree canopy provides health benefits to New Yorkers and helps with resiliency efforts.

The Department of Transportation (Expense Priority #11, #18 and #24)

The CB8M Transportation Committee reviewed the location of all accessible pedestrian signals in the district and passed a resolution determining priority locations for new accessible signals in Community District 8. The resolution was unanimously approved by the full board on April 13, 2022. CB8 has provided a list of specific locations for consideration for installation of accessible signals.

Additional DOT inspectors are needed to enforce City rules regarding the City's outdoor dining program. The outdoor dining program must be implemented in a clear, consistent manner and there must be enforcement of the rules and regulations. The lack of enforcement impacts sanitation with an increased rat presence, garbage collection, emergency services and the ability of emergency vehicles to turn on side streets, fire protection to name a few of the concerns. It is therefore critical that the Department of Transportation be fully funded to ensure compliance with the outdoor dining program and protect the quality of life in New York City.

The New York Public Library (Expense Priority #12)

We continue to stress the importance of restoring Sunday service to one library on a rotating basis so that our working parents will be able to spend time with their children at a library and our residents who need access to a computer will receive it, even on Sundays. We encourage your office to allocate the necessary funds to ensure this much needed agency can effectively continue to address the needs of the community.

Sincerely,

Russell Squire *Felice Farber and Billy Freeland*

Russell Squire
Chair

Felice Farber and Billy Freeland
Co-Chairs, Budget Committee

cc: Honorable Jerry Nadler, 12th Congressional District Representative

Honorable Mark Levine, Manhattan Borough President
Honorable Liz Krueger, NYS Senator, 28th Senatorial District
Honorable José M. Serrano, NYS Senator, 29th Senatorial District
Honorable Edward Gibbs, NYS Assembly Member, 68th Assembly District
Honorable Alex Bores, NYS Assembly Member, 73rd Assembly District
Honorable Rebecca Seawright, NYS Assembly Member 76th Assembly District
Honorable Julie Menin, NYC Council Member, 5th Council District
Honorable Keith Powers, NYC Council Member, 4th Council District