



January 14, 2019

Testimony of John Sudnik, Acting Chief of Department, FDNY

**Oversight Hearing - The Impact of New Development on Long Island City's Emergency Services**

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Good afternoon Chair Borelli and all of the Council Members present. My name is John Sudnik and I am the Acting Chief of Department for the New York City Fire Department. I am joined today by Alvin Suriel, Deputy Assistant Chief for EMS Operations; Christine Mazzola, EMS Division Chief; John Benanti, Deputy Commissioner of Support Services; and Joe Mastropietro, Assistant Commissioner for Facilities. Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today about the impact of new development on emergency services in Long Island City.

Before I address that topic, I want to take a moment to acknowledge a profound loss suffered last week by our department and the City of New York. Firefighter Steven H. Pollard died from critical injuries sustained while operating at a motor vehicle accident on the Mill Basin Bridge in Brooklyn. Firefighter Pollard had a year and a half on the job at the time of his death. As his family mourns him, the Department and the citizens of this city mourn him as well.

Long Island City is an area of Queens that has experienced significant growth in recent years. According to the Economic Development Corporation, more than 8,100 housing units have were completed within Long Island City, between January 2008 and November 2018, and there are currently nearly 10,000 housing units under construction. With the



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recent announcement that Amazon will be locating their second headquarters in Long Island City, there is certain to be additional growth, both residential and commercial. This is also a location where an engine company – Engine 261 – was closed in 2003 under the Bloomberg administration.

In all areas of the city, the Fire Department remains vigilant to ensure that we are able to maintain sufficient capacity to respond to emergencies. We pay careful attention to neighborhoods experiencing rapid changes in population and building density and type. We work closely with agencies such as the Department of City Planning (DCP) and the Economic Development Corporation (EDC) to learn as much as we can about new growth and evaluate whether we need to add to existing resources to serve the surrounding population.

The department conducts constant monitoring of resources across the city on a daily basis. However, in light of rapid growth in Long Island City, we have studied the area more comprehensively to assess the need for additional resources in the neighborhood and surrounding areas. Given what we know about the changing nature of the area, we were already in the process of considering whether additional resources were necessary due to the recent growth of the area when Amazon made their announcement.



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Among the data that we consider is the growing number of responses performed by the fire companies in the area and the response times to those incidents. Another factor in this assessment is that the companies located in Long Island City also serve Roosevelt Island. When there is an emergency incident on Roosevelt Island and an incident in Long Island City, companies have to respond from further away. In Long Island City, we have seen an increase in the number of incidents and in response times to those incidents. In particular, in Queens Community Board 1 calls for all incident types increased 19% between 2014 and 2018, and response times to all calls were up 9%. Our level of need for additional resources in Queens Community Board 1 is among the highest level for any area in the city, and it's the highest level of need for any location in the borough of Queens.

We also study factors across the city to continuously determine whether there is a need for additional EMS resources. The Long Island City neighborhood has seen an increase in incidents in recent years. To address this growing need, in 2018 we added an additional Basic Life Support unit to service the area. We also added Tactical Response Group units to Queens and we have used the flexibility of the TRG program – which began in 2017 – to position units in the Long Island City neighborhood when call volume required it.

We can anticipate with confidence that the growth in daytime population brought on by Amazon will lead to a greater number of incidents. Our understanding is that Amazon will



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initially create 25,000 jobs over 10 years, with a plan to grow to 40,000 over 15 years, so we will continue monitoring the growth of incidents and response times to ensure that we are devoting adequate resources to the area. Our existing need for resources in Long Island City will be expanded by the rapid growth that the area will experience when Amazon arrives. We anticipate a significant increase in commercial office space, initially with Amazon itself and subsequently due to peripheral development. Amazon may also serve as a catalyst for further growth in residential units in Long Island City.

We will continue updating our analysis of the need for additional resources to take into account the additional growth that the neighborhood and surrounding area will see as a result of Amazon. At this time, however, we don't yet know enough details about the Amazon development to precisely factor it into an updated analysis and make accurate projections. We expect to do that once we are able to determine projected square footage and occupancy type of the new developments; projected daytime population growth and evening population growth; and perhaps attain insight into the peripheral development anticipated by DCP and EDC. That information remains unknown at this time but we will work with our partners across city government as it becomes available so that we are able to conduct an analysis of our growing needs with the most accurate and up to date information.



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Put simply, Long Island City is a neighborhood to which we were already considering adding resources due to the growing emergency response needs of the area. The development spurred by Amazon will only add to those needs, and we will refine our analysis and adjust our resources accordingly as we learn more about it.

The Fire Department is dedicated to maintaining a network of capabilities that enable us to provide the best possible service to the people of New York. We monitor and evaluate daily and long-term performance metrics including incident responses and type, resource deployment, response times, and overall effectiveness in our response and handling of emergencies across the city. If the results of our analysis of Long Island City show that we need additional fire and EMS assets, we will provide the resources necessary to maintain the elite level of service that the people we serve have come to expect.

We would be happy to take your questions at this time.

## **Testimony from Gerard Fitzgerald, President, Uniformed Firefighter's Association:**

My name is Gerard Fitzgerald, and I am the President of the Uniformed Firefighters Association of Greater New York.

I want to thank you for allowing me the opportunity to join members of this community and give testimony today in front of the Committee on Fire and Emergency Management.

As president of the UFA, I represent the health, safety and interests of more than 8,500 New York City firefighters and the citizens they keep out of harm's way, and as such it is my duty to bring attention to a critical fire safety issue developing in Long Island City.

Fifteen years ago, the city closed a longstanding firehouse in Long Island City, Engine Company 261, due to Bloomberg-era budget cuts. Ladder Company 116 is now the only company in the area.

Closing Engine 261 was a mistake. The area has been short of fire protection since 2003, and in 2019 Long Island City is now the fastest growing community in the

nation, with thousands of new workers and residents coming to the area.

This huge change in population requires upgrades to infrastructure and fire safety measures.

On top of this, Amazon now plans to build one of its new campuses in Long Island City, creating 25,000 jobs and a 600-seat intermediate school in the neighborhood, according to sources. It is abundantly clear that Long Island City now lacks the resources to deal with fire safety issues effectively.

Reopening Engine Company 261 not only serves to address immediate needs in Long Island City, but also to expand capacity to protect Roosevelt Island.

At present without an engine company in the area, Ladder Company 116 lacks the equipment and personnel to fight fires adequately and relies on engine companies travelling a greater distance.

Increased population growth and added congestion, due in part to lane additions like extended bike lanes, bus lanes and traffic islands, has already increased response times in the area, putting lives at stake.

Furthermore, the FDNY has broken its run record for five consecutive years. We are doing more than ever before, with the same number of resources. 2018 was our busiest year on record. We ran 32,000 more runs than we did the previous year, and 140,150 more runs than we did in 2013. Unit availability is at an all-time low.

With Amazon coming, we cannot wait any longer. Long Island City must be given suitable infrastructure and safety precautions designed to match its future growth.

Reopening Engine 261 should not be a major task. The facility already exists, and the need is highly apparent. We only require the resources to supply equipment and manpower. For the continued safety of the residents of Long Island City, we urge the members of this committee, as well as Mayor de Blasio and elected officials across the city, to call for the reinstatement of FDNY Engine Company 261 at its former location.

Bringing back Engine 261 will ensure that the Long Island City area has the necessary equipment and personnel to fight fires adequately and can respond in a timely fashion to any safety needs that arise.

I would also like to add, with rapid growth in developments across the city, not just in Long Island City, but also in Hudson Yards, Harlem, Downtown Brooklyn, and even the South Bronx, we cannot let situations like these become the norm.

As new neighborhoods and developments arise across the city, we must make sure that New Yorkers' safety needs don't continue to get overlooked. We must plan responsibly. Lives are in danger.

Thank you again for your time today and I am happy to address any questions you may have.

## **Testimony George Farinacci, vice president, Uniformed Fire Officers Association**

Our NYC population continues to grow, it is over 8.6 million at this time. The population of NYC was barely over 8 million at the time of closing Engine company 261 in 2003.

That equates to a **population increase of 5% over the last 15 years**.

Fire and emergency responses continue to increase, in 2018 we responded to 619,000 fires and emergencies vs. 5 years before in 2013 we responded to 479,000 fires and emergencies A record set that year and broken each year following.

This is nearly a **30% increase in responses to fires and emergencies in only 5 years**.

- What is the impact of increased population and responses?
  - A decrease in unit availability.
  - An increase distances units responding when 1<sup>st</sup> due units are unavailable
  - An increase in the time it takes to put water on the fire or mitigate your emergency.
  - An increase in vehicle and pedestrian traffic density that slows our fire trucks down. You may not be aware lights & sirens on the fire trucks do not have a magical power of getting people and vehicles out of the way, responding fire department units often have to sit in traffic.

The increase in fire department calls to fires and emergencies are far outpacing the booming population growth of NYC. The tremendous population growth of LIC, Astoria and Roosevelt Island as well as areas like the Hudson yards development leaves the residents in need of more fire protection services, not less. By not expanding the available resources to meet the growing needs of the people, as well as the growing population, we are failing to maintain the status quo of services in our great city. Please reopen Engine 261 and put a firehouse in the Hudson yards area of Manhattan to address these ever increasing needs of the people of NYC.

Thank you

George Farinacci, ufoa



# Long Island City Partnership

FOR THE RECORD

**Testimony of  
Elizabeth Lusskin, President, Long Island City Partnership**

**Before  
Committee on Fire and Emergency Management**

**January 14, 2019**

Good afternoon, I am Elizabeth Lusskin, President, Long Island City Partnership and Executive Director of the LIC Business Improvement District. I write this letter in support of the reopening of FDNY Fire Engine Company 261 and other emergency management services in LIC.

As the Local Development Corporation for LIC since 1979, and manager of the Business Improvement District (BID), our mission has always been to advocate for economic development that benefits the area's industrial, commercial, tech, cultural, tourism, and residential sectors. The goal is to attract new businesses to LIC, retain those already here, welcome new residents and visitors, and promote a vibrant and authentic mixed-use community.

Until 2003, FDNY Fire Engine Company 261 occupied the same firehouse as FDNY 116. Engine Company 261 provided the hoses and water to actually extinguish fires but it was closed in 2003. Since then, though, LIC has become the fastest growing neighborhood in America experiencing exponential growth in our residential buildings and population, along with greater density of occupation in our industrial buildings, culminating with now millions of square feet and tens of thousands of new office workers arriving from a variety of companies. With LIC's record growth, building and population boom today, essential emergency management services such as reopening of Fire Engine Company 261 and others are imperative to keep up with the growing demands of our neighborhood.

We would like to thank the Committee on Fire and Emergency Management for hosting this hearing and addressing our concerns in improving emergency services in LIC.



# The Uniformed EMT's, Paramedics and Inspectors – F.D.N.Y.



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Over the past decade, Long Island City has experienced drastic transformations, sprouting up residential towers that rival Manhattan, and becoming the fastest growing neighborhood in the country. But unacceptably, its 911 response infrastructure has not grown with it.

Currently there are no primarily dedicated EMS resources assigned to Long Island City. The closest brick and mortar facility is 4 miles away in Astoria and its back-up is 7 miles away in Woodside. The nearest available unit is stationed at Queens Blvd & Greenpoint Ave, with its back up positioned at the Roosevelt Island Bridge.

This response model was created early in 2000 when Long Island City was a collection of warehouses and a few private residences.

In 2017 the area along Vernon Blvd. alone saw a population increase of 6,700 residents. In 2018 it is estimated that the first of 15,400 apartments will become available resulting in a population increase of 80,000 residents over three years. That population increase will be coupled with the arrival of an estimated 25,000 Amazon employees.

In the face of this remarkable growth the EMS response Matrix has not been modified or enhanced. It has, as usual, been left in the rear view mirror.

The current city population is 8.5 million people. The FDNY EMS fields 828 ambulance tours per day which yields a ratio of 1 tour per 9,500 people. Therefore at a minimum at least 10 shifts would need to be added to at least maintain the service level, which is currently, at best, essentially inadequate.

To be clear, Amazon coming to New York will mean great things for investment and innovation for our great city. But we must plan responsibly for such a significant change. We need to keep our

neighborhoods safe and as well as protected as the Upper East Side.

We cannot keep leaving the emergency medical service out of these infra-structure conversations when the well-being of Long Island City's residents is being jeopardized by the Fire Department's current policy of benign neglect.

But as major developers drive ahead with construction and job growth, bringing new community resources like schools, parks and art facilities into Long Island City the Fire Department remains silent on how to address this demand for service.

Across the city, EMTs & Paramedics, who are currently facing a major personnel shortage, are doing more now with fewer resources than ever before imagined. The FDNY/ EMS has seen an increase in call volume every year for decades, and the currently unit availability is at an all-time low.

On a daily basis the response matrix falls short of its target by nearly 60 shifts per day which equates to 420 shifts per week and 1800 shifts per month.

We've seen this scenario play out in the newly gentrified areas of Williamsburg , Morrissiana and Hudson Yards where massive and rapid growth has left residents marginally protected, as those boughs have the worse overall response times. The overall response time now hovers around the 12 minute mark which ruminates of the 1970's. This infection of failing to field proper resources must not be allowed to spread to Long Island City. We cannot let the current system of chronic managerial indifference become the norm. This esteemed committee must insure that the safety needs of our city don't continue to be overlooked as new neighborhoods rise.

The Fire Dept. must be held responsible for planning and implementing the significant changes that are being mandated by exponential population growth and chronic underfunding of the

largest and busiest EMS system in the world. We need to keep our neighborhoods safe and protected. Lives are at stake.

# DIVISION 3 / STATION 35

## UNIT MONTHLY SCHEDULE



January 2019

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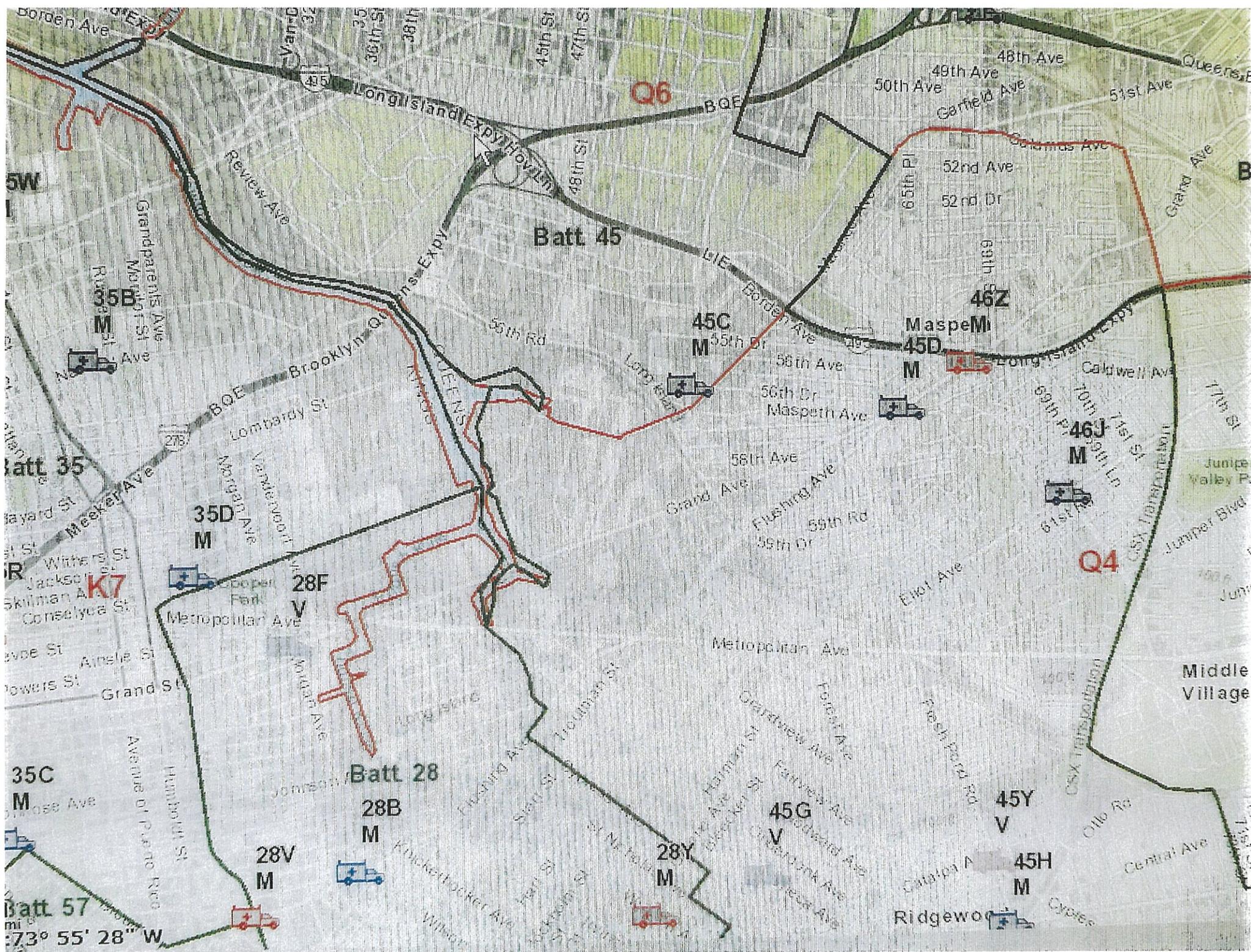
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104HA [45D3](#) [Grand Ave](#) & Flushing Ave  
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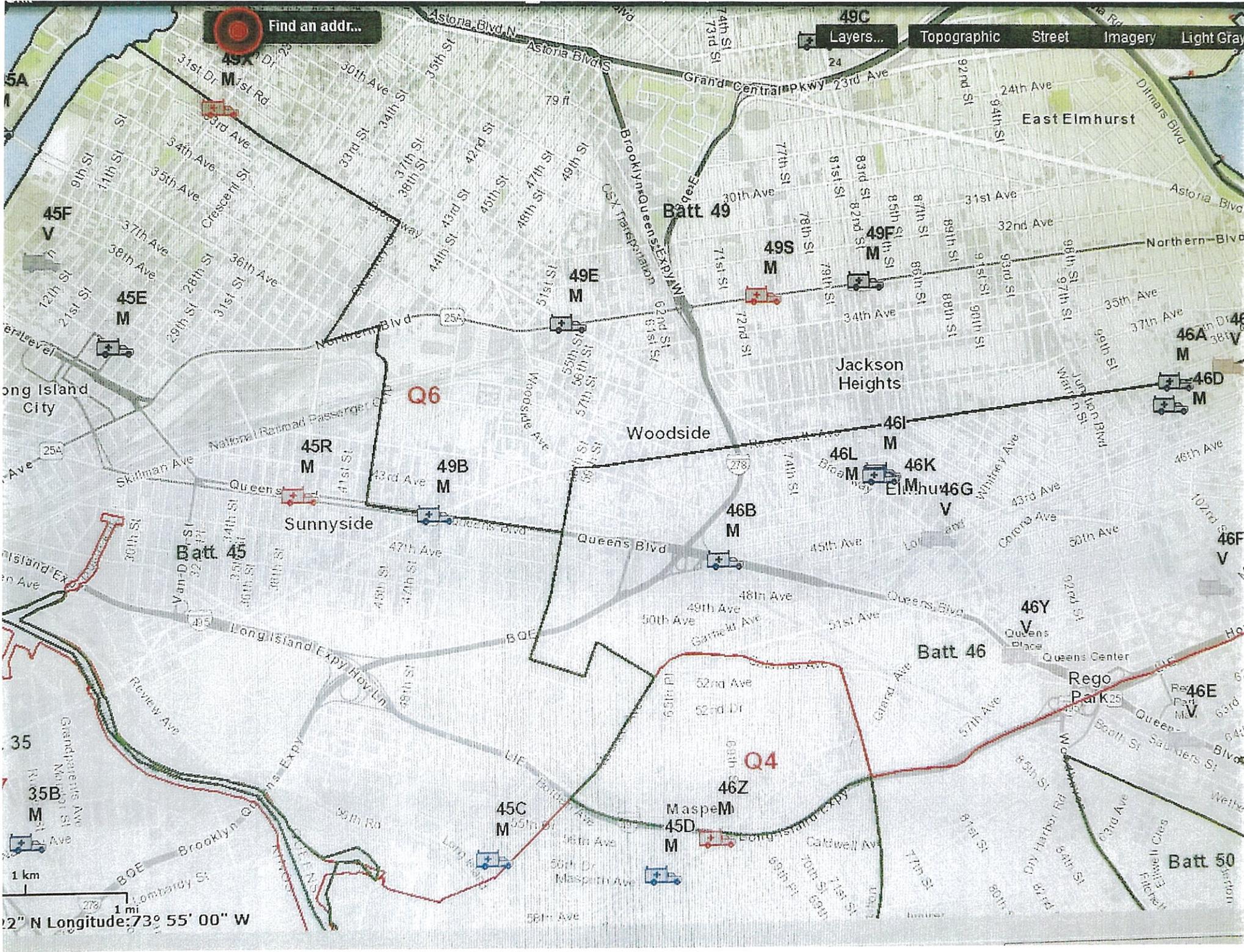
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110AC 46B2 Elmhurst  
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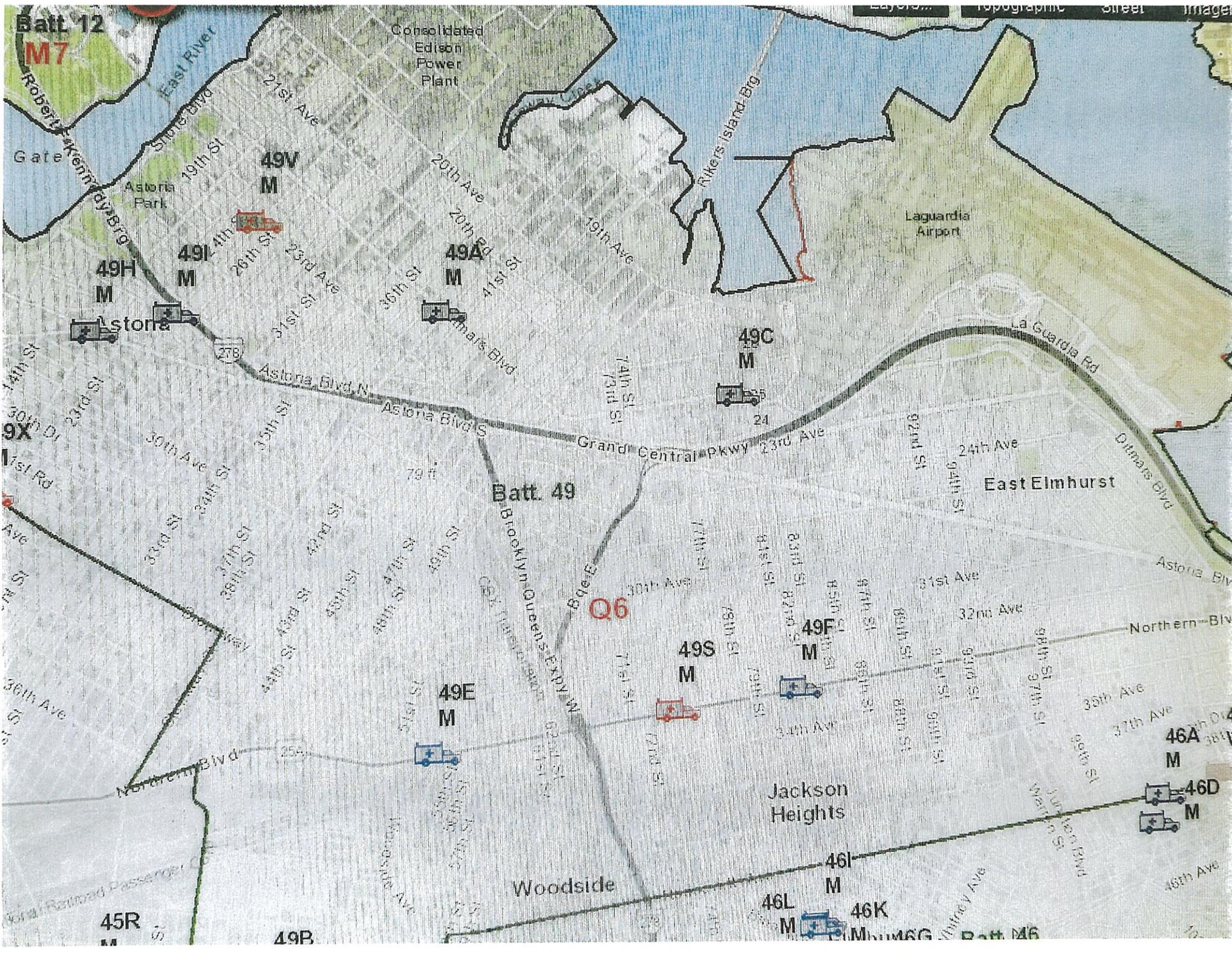


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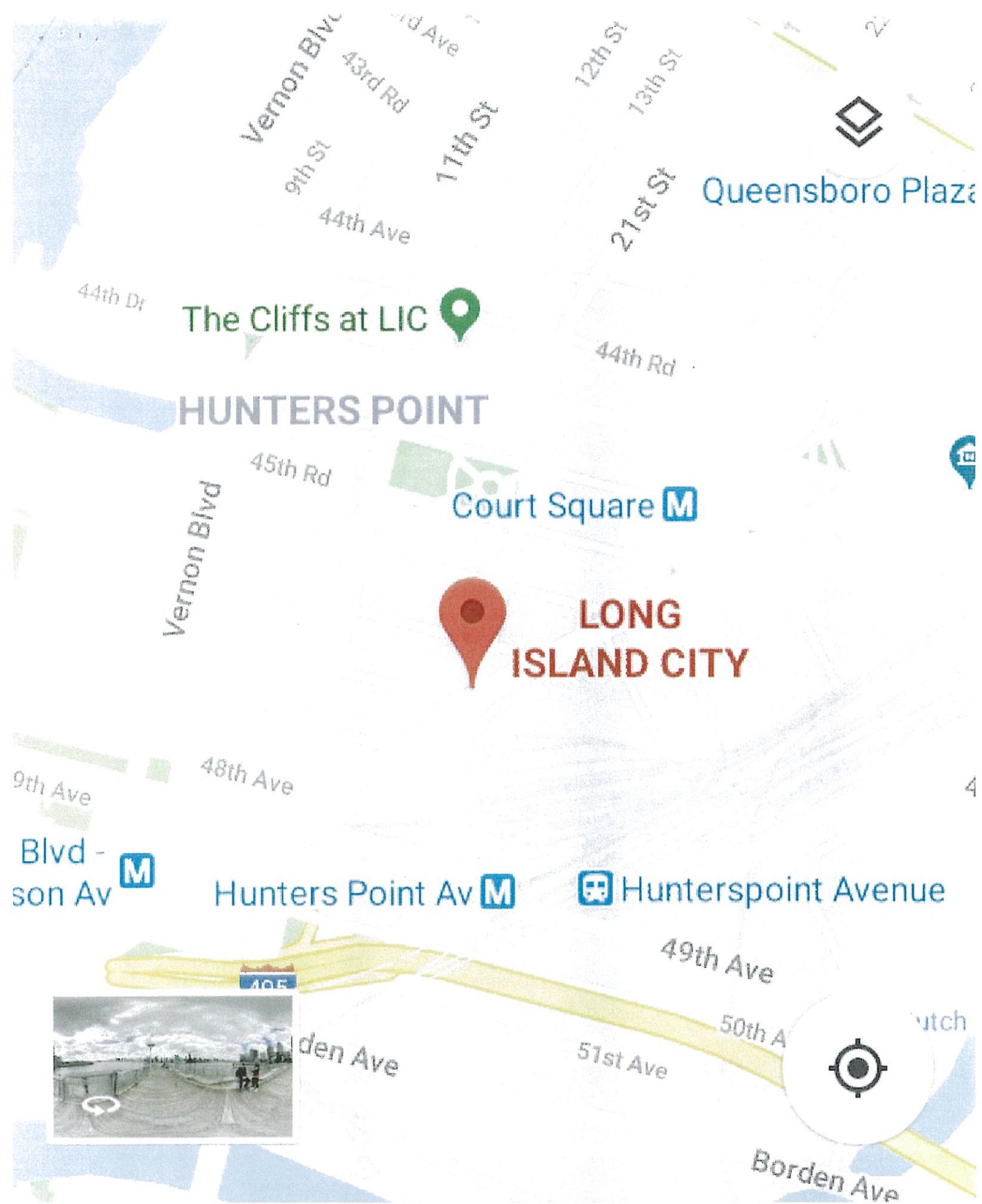
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Long Island City

## Statement of Support for the Reopening of Engine Company 261 from Assemblywoman Nolan

January 14, 2019

In 2003 I opposed the closure of Long Island City's FDNY Engine Company 261. Over the following decade, Long Island City, Dutch Kills, and Astoria, areas have seen unprecedented population growth, and the resulting increase in residential uses of property and ever increasing building heights has served to increase concerns that the FDNY's presence as it currently stands is not enough to effectively fight a large fire in this portion of Queens.

Since its closure, the community has repeatedly requested that the Engine Company be reopened, as a Ladder Company alone cannot safely fight a large fire. Our wonderful Dutch Kills Civic Association, led by its past president George Stamatiades, has been advocating for the Company to be reopened for many years, with my full support. There has been tremendous community support for the reopening of the Engine Company, and my office has reached out both to the Mayor's office and to the FDNY on several occasions to express my concern over the City's failure to respond to this community's concerns over its safety.

There can be no doubt that the population of the Dutch Kills community has grown rapidly, and that the numerous schools, houses of worship, and community institutions of the area are in need of the support of a fully staffed and equipped firehouse. The neighborhood has been without Engine Company 261 since 2003, and this must be rectified.

Thank you for your attention to this most pressing need.

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 1/14/19

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: JOSEFINA SANFELIU

Address: 229 13<sup>th</sup> ST B/NY 11215

I represent: LATINAS AGAINST FDNY CUTS

Address: SAME

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 1/14/19

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Vincent Vaciale Uniformed EMS OFFICERS

Address: 125 Barclay St. NY, NY 10007

I represent: EMS OFFICERS FDNY

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: George FARNACCI

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: UFOA - Fire officers

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: June 14<sup>th</sup> 2019

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Gerard Fitzgerald

Address: 1481 E. 63<sup>rd</sup> St Bklyn. 11234

I represent: Uniformed Firefighters Assoc.

Address: 204 E. 23<sup>rd</sup> St N.Y., N.Y. 10010

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 1/14/19

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Michael Greco

Address: 12 17 Little Whalenock Rd.

I represent: Local 2507 Vice president

Address: 150-39 14 AVE Whitestone NY

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 1.14.19

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: OREN BARZILAY

Address: 150-39 14 AVE WHITESTONE NY 11357

I represent: FDNY EMS LOCAL 2507

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_  
 in favor  in opposition

Date: 1/14/19

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Joe Mustropietro

Address: 9 MetroTech

I represent: FDNY

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_  
 in favor  in opposition

Date: 1/14/19

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Chief John Sudnik

Address: 9 MetroTech

I represent: FDNY

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_  
 in favor  in opposition

Date: 1/14/19

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: John Benanti

Address: 9 MetroTech

I represent: FDNY

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

*Appearance Card*

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor     in opposition

Date: 1/14/19

**(PLEASE PRINT)**

Name: Division Chief (Hustler) Mazzola

Address: 4 Metrotech

I represent: FDNY

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

*Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms*

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

*Appearance Card*

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor     in opposition

Date: 1/14/19

**(PLEASE PRINT)**

Name: Deputy assistant chief Alvin Saniel

Address: 4 metrotech

I represent: FDNY

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

*Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms*