JOINT STATEMENT ON THE COOPER PARK / KINGSLAND SUBSTANCE ABUSE ISSUES

For decades, the area near Cooper Park and Cooper Park Houses has experienced violence, unhoused individuals, and substance abuse on its streets. In the past several years, these issues have become more acute citywide from the stresses of the pandemic, with a commensurate rise in the Cooper Park area.

This is unacceptable. We must do more for our neighbors who are unhoused, we must do more for our neighbors suffering from addiction, and we must make sure our public parks, homes, and streets are safe for everyone.

Our offices are aware of this health and public safety issue in our community, and we have been working closely with a large coalition of stakeholders to design and implement a compassionate response that centers the community and its needs at its core.

These conversations have included local groups, such as Friends of Cooper Park, the Jackson Street Block Association, tenant leadership from Cooper Park Residents Council, the Greenpoint Renaissance Enterprise Core, VOCAL-NY, and other social services organizations in the area, as well as the NYPD’s 94th Precinct, the Kings County District Attorney’s Office, the Department of Sanitation, the Department of Homeless Services, and the Department of Health.

Our approach has been rooted in community feedback and nonviolence, with an understanding that many of these individuals need support, rather than incarceration. Together, we have:

- Convened a Cooper Park Task Force comprising stakeholders across the community and city
- Worked with enforcement agencies and community groups to get many of the people in the area the help they need
- Worked with St. Nicks Alliance to build out community events to establish the area as the community hub it is, including community clean-ups, a health fair, movie nights, and poetry readings
- Hosted Community Public Safety Forums
- Secured a commitment from the Department of Sanitation to do weekly needle clean-ups in the area
- Continued to work with the DA to address the disbursement of harmful substances

Every day, we are strengthened by the knowledge that our community has entrusted us to improve our lives and neighborhoods. We are aware that historically, the solution to issues like these has been to arrest and incarcerate everyone involved. But we have learned that incarceration will not build up a community and address its underlying needs. The epidemic that is ravaging our country and our community needs common sense solutions and responses, which is why we are calling for harm reduction and safe consumption sites in our district so we can make sure that people are getting the help they need, in safe and controlled environments. It takes a village to uplift a community, and our Task Force is working to create substantive change and make our neighborhood the safe, secure, and supportive place we know it can be.

Council Member Jennifer Gutiérrez
Congresswoman Nydia M. Velázquez
State Senator Julia Salazar
Assembly Member Emily Gallagher
Assembly Member Maritza Davila
Brooklyn Borough President Antonio Reynoso