



Creating an Age-Friendly NYC One Neighborhood at a Time



The Office of the Mayor
The New York City Council
The New York Academy of Medicine



A Toolkit for Establishing an
Aging Improvement District in
Your Community

.....

2012



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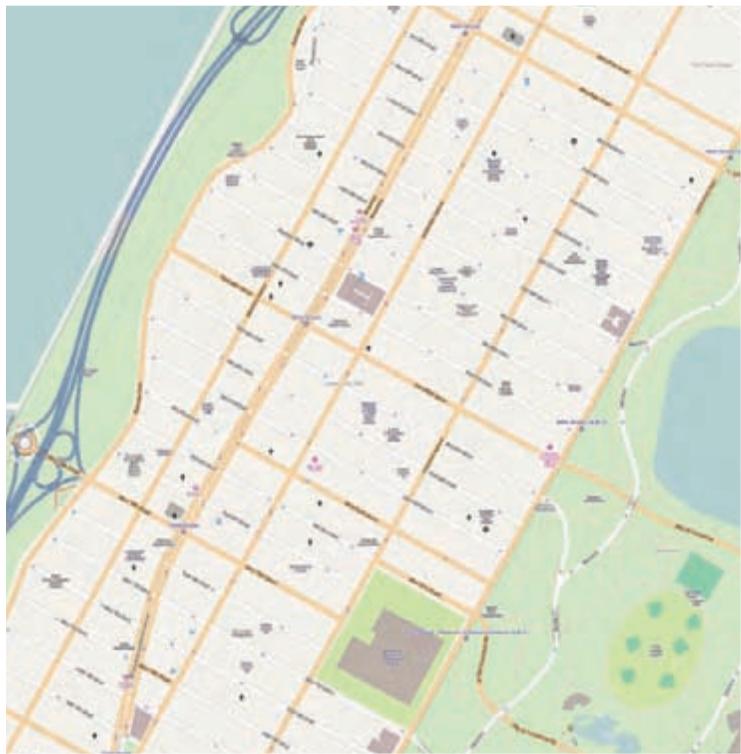
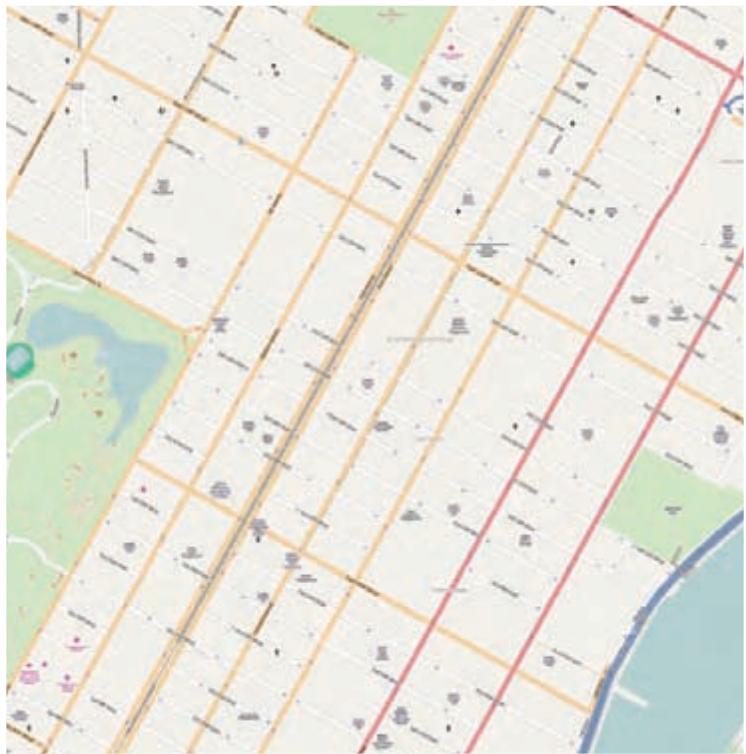
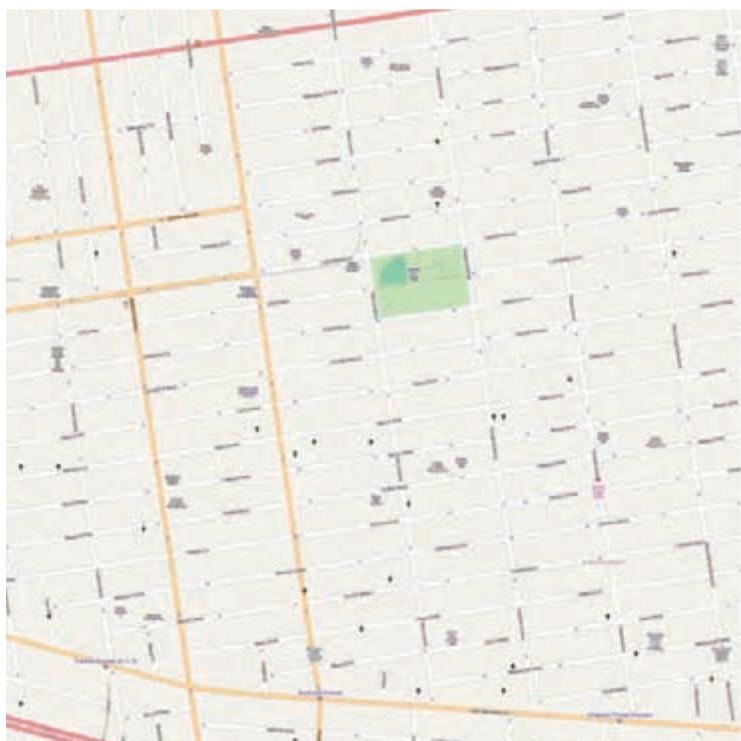
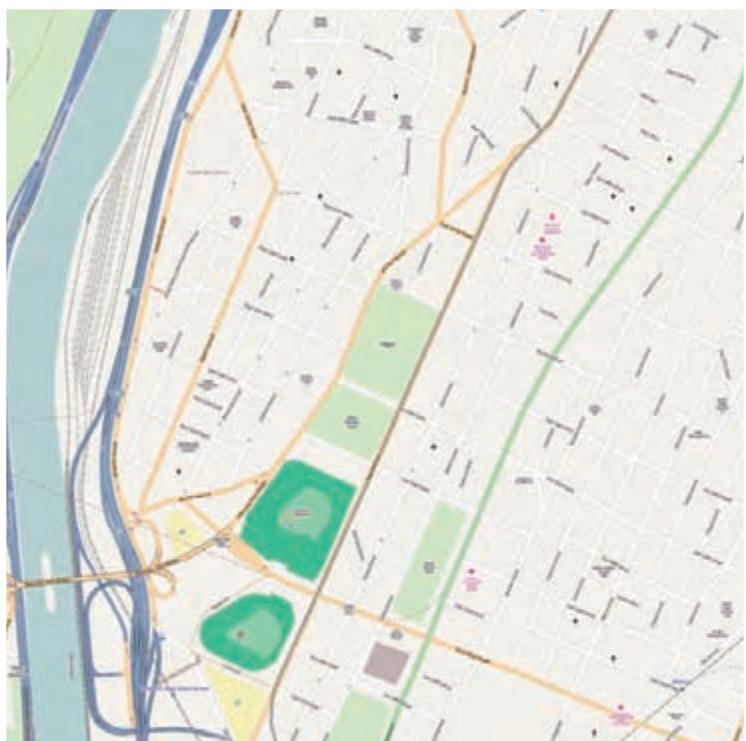
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Two of One Million



Meet Sarah. Meet Ed.

Sarah is a retired occupational therapist for the New York City public school system. She is 91 years old. Ed, her husband, is 84. He is a retired IBM employee who has outfitted their apartment on the Upper West Side with a running model train and a projection screen. They are two of the more than one million older adults living in New York City. Sarah and Ed say they are both grateful for the supports they have that have allowed them to remain independent and active as they have aged. They live in an affordable cooperative building, where they know their neighbors and do not worry much about rising costs. There are bus stops nearby, and buses with hydraulic lifts to take them to most places they want to go now that Sarah uses a wheelchair, and Ed, a walker. They have a wide network of people who assist them. This includes the porters and doormen where they live, an aid who cooks and dresses Sarah several days a week, a local student who helps them with grocery shopping, and the staff and neighbors of the Naturally Occurring Retirement Community (NORC) program where they live.



“I love this neighborhood. This is one of the greatest cities in the world,” Sarah says.



Because of all of these supports, Sarah is able to sing in an opera group at a local church, volunteer at the school where she used to work, and people watch, one of her favorite activities. Both Sarah and Ed love to go to concerts and the theater at nearby Carnegie Hall and Lincoln Center, when they can afford it.

Sarah and Ed know they are lucky. They have pensions, affordable housing, and the love of each other.



So What Needs To Be Improved?

Despite all that they are grateful for, Sarah and Ed are partnering with their local Aging Improvement District, a pilot initiative that is the subject of this toolkit, because they know much still needs to be improved – for them, and for others who have more difficult circumstances.

Some Examples: Ed and Sarah like to go for walks together, but it is difficult. There are not enough benches, which means that Ed cannot travel very far, and as a result Sarah often goes out without him. The traffic signals change so quickly that Ed often finds himself trapped in the crosswalk, afraid a car will hit him. High curbs send Sarah out into traffic with cars and buses.

“I’m hoping that these are the types of things that can be changed,” Ed says. Sarah and Ed cannot reach items on the shelves in most stores, and Sarah must wait for passersby to open the door to most buildings for her. They both love to visit parks but can no longer get to Central Park or Riverside Park, so



pocket parks closer to their home are more important. They also wish there were more opportunities to meet people and more affordable events to attend.

Age-friendly NYC is addressing these issues locally through Sarah’s and Ed’s Aging Improvement District. This toolkit can assist you in making similar progress in your neighborhood.



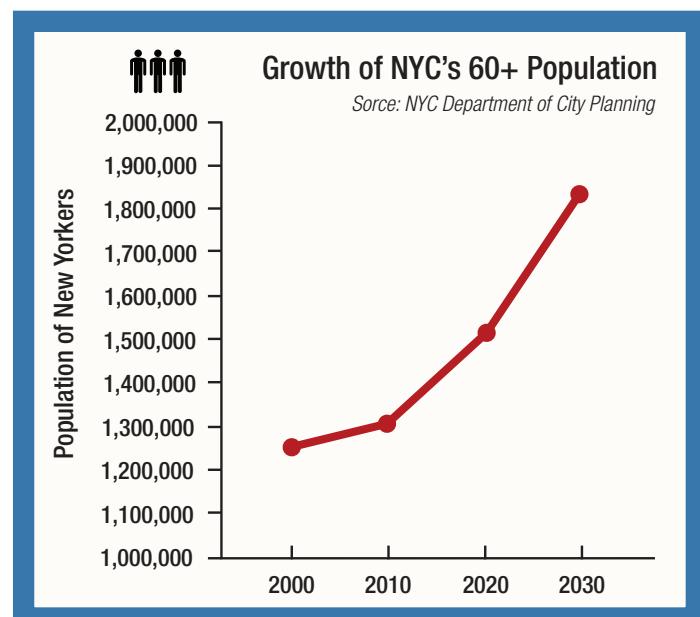
Age-Friendly NYC Overview

Of New York City's 8.2 million residents, one million are older adults. They are as diverse as the city itself, but also have a shared story with Sarah and Ed. It is a story that must be listened to as the city prepares for a near 50% increase in the population over 60 within the next 20 years.

Age-friendly New York City is a collaborative partnership between the Mayor's office, the New York City Council and The New York Academy of Medicine, aiming to make improvements that will enable older New Yorkers to remain as independent and engaged in the life of the city, as they always have been, for as long as possible.

The initiative began in 2007, when New York City became one of dozens of global cities charged by the World Health Organization (WHO) with asking older residents to identify the assets and challenges of aging in urban environments. In New York, conversations were held with more than 2,000 older adults, in 14 neighborhoods, in six languages.

The process revealed that the city's greatest assets in the eyes of older New Yorkers are often



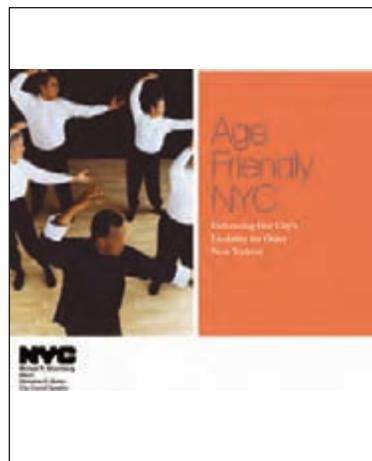
the same as those for people of all ages, but that they only become more important with age. These include the city's comprehensive public transportation system, the walkability of streets and density of businesses and services, the rich cultural institutions, high-quality health care and social services, and the deep-rooted networks of neighborhoods. Challenges of aging in New York include the affordability of these resources

Estimated Changes to Ethnic Composition of New York City Population Age 65 and Older: 2007 to 2020

Racial/Ethnic Group	2007 Population	2020 Population	% Change
White	485,517	448,355	-7.7%
Black	213,775	279,186	+30.6%
Native American	2,550	3,792	+48.7%
Asian/Pacific Islander	92,874	194,478	+109.4%
Hispanic	182,856	275,369	+50.6%

Estimated Changes to Ethnic Composition of NYC's Older Population. Source: Woods & Poole Economics, Inc. New York City profile, 2006.

and of housing and basic needs, the accessibility barriers for those with mobility and sensory impairments and those from different cultures, and the complications caused by changing social networks as family and friends die or move away.



In 2009, New York City became the first city in the World Health Organization's Global Age-friendly Cities network to create a plan of action to respond to the findings of its assessment. The government issued 59 recommendations on how the public sector could transform the city. Examples include lengthening the street crossing times at key intersections, offering taxi vouchers to those eligible for Access-a-Ride, using school buses to bring seniors grocery shopping when they are not transporting children, placing artists in senior centers, and increasing accessibility of the city's parks.

In 2010, the Age-friendly NYC Commission, a high-level public-private partnership, was charged with leveraging the resources of the private sector to further enhance age-friendliness throughout the city. To date, the Commission has made significant progress in three main areas of focus where older adults said they most wanted to see change: age-friendly business; age-friendly schools, colleges, and universities; and Aging Improvement Districts, local efforts to transform neighborhoods.



What is an Aging Improvement District?

- ▶ **Applying “age-in-everything” locally:** An Aging Improvement District applies the “age-in-everything” lens of Age-friendly New York City to a given urban neighborhood to improve the quality of life of older adults who live there. Aging Improvement Districts do this by asking older adults to identify the assets and challenges of a particular neighborhood, and then, bringing together the leadership of all sectors of the community to implement solutions.
- ▶ **People seek change where they live:** This model was developed because consultations revealed that older New Yorkers care most about the area right where they live. This area shrinks as people get older, often to the five or ten blocks immediately around them. Older adults usually do not know about what is happening in another borough, but they do care about the condition of the streets they walk on every day, whether they feel welcome at neighborhood events, and whether they can reach items on the shelves in their grocery store.
- ▶ **Organic and customized:** The improvements needed in each neighborhood are different because the people who live there are different. Even among universal needs, priority levels and achievability levels are different in each place. While there are successful models of creating supportive living environments for older adults, no existing model has promoted this same “age-in-everything” approach across all the elements that make up a neighborhood, and no existing model has been designed specifically for the structures of New York City.
- ▶ **Proof that it works:** The Age-friendly New York City Commission launched three pilot Aging Improvement Districts in 2010 and 2011:
 - ▷ **East Harlem** (with City Councilwoman Melissa Mark-Viverito)
 - ▷ **Upper West Side** (with City Councilwoman Gale Brewer)
 - ▷ **Bedford-Stuyvesant** (with the Coalition for the Improvement of Bedford-Stuyvesant and the Local Initiative Support Corporation)

At the request of other neighborhoods interested in this model, the lessons learned from those pilots make up the substance of this guide. Those interested in creating Aging Improvement Districts in other neighborhoods in NYC can turn to the network of contacts and precedents established by the citywide initiative and these three pilots whenever needed.



What do you need to create an Aging Improvement District?



1

A neighborhood where older adults live and improvements are needed



2

A community organization or entity open to addressing the issues raised by the older adults that also has paid staff available to lead the initiative



3

Support of an elected official or local governmental board or agency



4

Leadership by older adults



What is the process of creating an Aging Improvement District?

- ▶ **Community Consultations** - Aging Improvement Districts begin with a community needs assessment from the point of view of the neighborhood's older adults. This assessment can be intensive or informal depending on the community and the resources available. The only requirement is that older adults feel heard and that leaders are able to identify key, specific, and actionable improvements that will improve the quality of life of older adults in the neighborhood.
- ▶ **Building Support From All Sectors** - Aging Improvement Districts build support for the initiative by introducing the concept of "age-friendly" to as many organizations and businesses in a community as possible, always from the point of view of how the aging of the population is an opportunity for each sector, as opposed to a burden. Partners include those who think of themselves as traditionally serving older adults as well as a much larger bank of resources in the community that do not.
- ▶ **Strategizing** - Out of the community consultations, several key actionable items are identified and prioritized. These are shared back with the community and presented in a way that people of different education levels and languages can understand and in a way that inspires leaders to take action in their own work.
- ▶ **Implementation** - A one-year work plan is developed to address several of the key findings with the help of various sectors of the community. Successes are celebrated and publicized as they occur to build momentum.
- ▶ **Refine And Repeat** - Once initial goals are accomplished, several new goals will likely emerge. Community discussions can be held again to confirm or refine these goals. A new annual plan should be developed.



Is an Aging Improvement District the right model for me?

If you are interested in improving the quality of life of older adults in your neighborhood, then an Aging Improvement District may be the appropriate model to implement in your community.

If you are interested in creating an Aging Improvement District in your neighborhood, contact Dorian Block, Policy Associate, at The New York Academy of Medicine > dblock@nyam.org. The lessons in this guide are also applicable to neighborhoods around the United States and the world.

You should however also consider several other tested models communities use to better serve and engage older adults. It is best to review what options exist and choose which best suits your neighborhood and your organization. Consider the strengths and weaknesses of your organization and which model makes the most sense.

For example:

- ▶ Several of the models below are better suited than Aging Improvement Districts for those looking to improve or increase direct services to older adults (e.g., transportation, case management).
 - ▶ Most of these models are also better suited for those looking to make improvements in a smaller area than a neighborhood – a housing complex or block association, for example.
 - ▶ Aging Improvement Districts are best for those interested in effecting change across all sectors in an entire neighborhood.
 - ▶ It is also important to understand that several of the models are complementary and can coexist.
- For example, there could be NORC programs or Villages within an Aging Improvement District.



What other models should I consider?

- ▶ **NORC (Naturally Occurring Retirement Community)** began as a demographic term used to describe a housing development that, while not originally built for seniors, is home to a significant proportion of older residents who have “aged in place.” The geographic area defined as a NORC can be either “horizontal” (across a neighborhood) or “vertical” (in an apartment building or complex). In New York, once a community or neighborhood meets the demographic criteria to be considered a NORC, it becomes eligible to apply for NORC program funding. NORC program funding is available from the city and state through a competitive process. NORC programs are a partnership between the housing company, social services, health care organizations, and the residents themselves. NORC programs aim to foster social connectivity, improve health and well-being, and empower seniors to take on new roles in their community. The NORC program model uses community building to ensure that, as NORC program leaders say, “everyone from the well elderly to the frailest of the frail are engaged where they live.” The first NORC program was established in 1986 at Penn South Houses, a ten-building 2,800-unit moderate-income housing cooperative located in Chelsea. Today, there are 43 NORC programs in New York City.

Guide to creating a NORC program in your neighborhood, by United Hospital Fund (UHF)

- ▷ www.norcblueprint.org

FAQs about NORCs: ▷ uhfnyc.org/initiatives/aging-in-place/frequently_asked_questions

- ▶ **The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency’s report “Growing Older, Living Healthier”** details “smart growth” principles and “active aging” concepts that help to make a community more age-friendly. The report concludes with a self-assessment component that helps you assess the present state of your community in fulfilling these principles and concepts. The survey is composed of 20 quick, qualitative questions that look at the smart growth and active aging accomplishments of the community. The Philadelphia Corporation for Aging use this model.

Entire report, including the Community Self-Assessment

- ▷ epa.gov/aging/bhc/guide/2009_Aging.pdf





- ▶ **A Livable Community** was a concept developed by the Partnership for Livable Communities and promoted through the lens of aging by the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP) as an “ideal community that has affordable and appropriate housing, supportive community feature and services, and adequate mobility options, which together facilitate personal independence and the engagement of residents in civic and social life.” AARP defined the elements of a livable community using senior focus groups and a community survey. Elements include nearby quality health facilities, a reliable public transportation system, variety in housing types, a safe and secure environment, access to shopping, a walkable physical environment, and opportunities for recreation and culture. AARP encourages various agencies, organizations, and communities to perform local assessments to address quality of life issues and make policy changes when necessary, using their guide.

“Livable Communities: An Evaluation Guide”

▷ assets.aarp.org/rgcenter/il/d18311_communities.pdf

- ▶ **The Village Movement** is based on the model created in Beacon Hill, Massachusetts in 2001. Villages are membership organizations for older residents that link neighbors together to help one another remain in their homes as they grow older. Villages use their fee-based membership base to leverage negotiating and buying power for needed services and also offer shared activities to connect members socially. More than 56 villages now exist in the United States, with another 120 or so in development. Each village is independent and develops services and activities tailored to the needs of its members. Members pay an annual fee in return for services such as transportation, yard work, and bookkeeping and for technical and professional services with screened providers.

Village to Village Network ▷ vtvnetwork.org

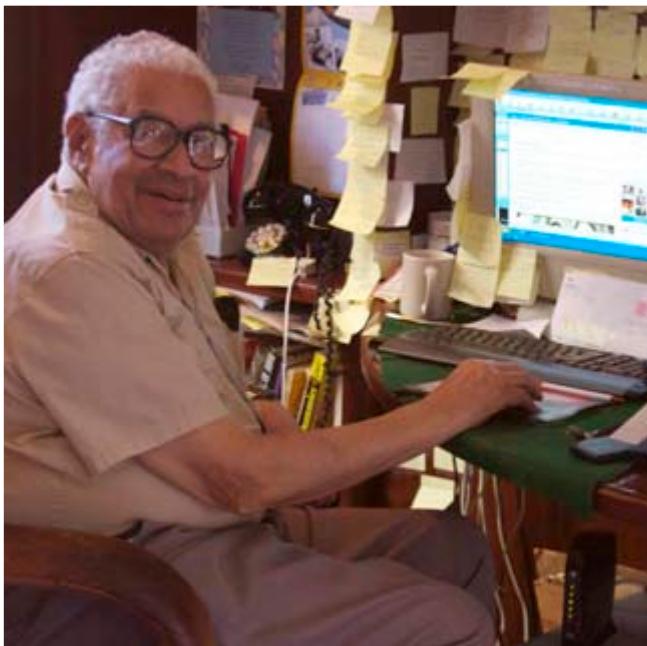


- ▶ **The AdvantAge Initiative** is a strategy of using consumer-derived data to inform community planning and action. The program, developed by the Visiting Nurse Service of New York, utilizes surveys of adults 65+ in order to gather data about their experiences in and perceptions of their communities. The data is used to assess the degree to which the target community addresses basic needs, optimizes physical health and well-being, maximizes independence for the frail and disabled, and promotes social and civic engagement for older adults. The AdvantAge survey may be customized and utilized at the county, district, neighborhood, or housing level in order to identify and quantify unmet needs. AdvantAge Initiative communities build capacity to support the health, well-being, and independence of elders of varying levels of mobility, including disabled or frail older adults.

AdvantAge Survey ▷ vnsny.org/advantage/survey.html

- ▶ **Aging in Place** is a term that refers to people living as independently as possible as they age and having access to resources and services that enable them to stay in their communities as their needs change. The term can apply to an individual or family's efforts to make adaptations to enable an older adult to stay in their home, but is also used to describe a community's efforts to provide information, resources and social opportunities to assist older adults in remaining in their present residences and to secure necessary support services in response to changing needs. Several professions including law, financial planning, and home contracting have adopted the term as a specialization within their fields.

National Aging in Place Council ▷ ageinplace.org





1 How to Begin: Building Support From All Sectors

Staffing and Funding

An Aging Improvement District is an initiative that should not be committed to lightly. In order to achieve success, paid staff are needed to maintain the pace of the project and to demonstrate the commitment needed in order to make high-level change.

Staff should have experience in community organizing or engagement, be able to speak the primary languages of the neighborhood, have strong communication skills, and feel comfortable working with both high-level officials and community members, including older adults.

The three existing pilots cost about \$50,000 a year, including the cost of approximately one half of a full time employee. This cost was also supplemented by the work of community organizations and volunteers. At least a two-year commitment is needed in order to achieve meaningful and sustainable results.

To identify funding for your project, look to both public and private dollars. Be creative and think about the wide range of organizations that may be interested in such a project, from your local political representatives to economic development groups to corporations in your community. Partnering with several local community organizations may also make your proposal more viable and attractive to funders.

City council members have become great advocates and beneficiaries of this work in the three neighborhoods with existing Aging Improvement Districts. Sharing those examples with your city councilperson may be fruitful for gaining support for your project. For information about identifying and contacting elected officials, businesses, and other community organizations, see *Resources For Your Use*.

Sectors to Consider for the Advisory Group

- ▶ Older Adults
- ▶ Cultural Organizations
- ▶ Religious Institutions
- ▶ Elected Officials
- ▶ Senior Service Providers
- ▶ Businesses
- ▶ Housing Organizations
- ▶ Health Professionals



Building Your Lead Team and Advisory Group

The Aging Improvement District is a collaboration of many people in the community, but must begin with clear leadership from a community organization and the partnership of, or at a minimum, the support of, political leadership. This leadership should begin by identifying key members of the community to involve in an advisory group.

The purpose of your advisory group is to build support, receive buy-in, and create partnerships in order to reach the goals of your Aging Improvement District. The advisory group does advise the project, but members are also expected to actively move the project forward by using the resources, knowledge, commit-



ment, and connections of their organizations. It is important that the advisory group be a group of leaders from across several sectors – and a group that does not traditionally work together. The group can begin small and should grow as the project moves forward and more connections are made.

A good way to begin is by making a list of all of the organizations in your community that you know of under each of these categories. Ask your other lead partners to do the same. Reach out to several or one, if there is only one, under each category and invite them to send a representative to participate in your advisory group. The representative should be at the level to make decisions and offer support but should also be able to reliably attend meetings and put effort toward the cause. For guides to identifying and reaching out to partners in each of these sectors in your neighborhood see *Resources For Your Use*.



Tips for Running Your Meetings

- ▶ Send materials in advance to let people know what will be discussed at the meeting.
- ▶ Use your advisory group as a resource – ask them for ideas and connections when planning each step, instead of just updating them.
- ▶ Take good notes and after the meeting, summarize next steps and send out to all members.
- ▶ Keep the advisory group updated on progress by email and at the meetings. Invite advisory group members to join you at meetings with other community leaders.
- ▶ Attend meetings and join coalitions that are important to your members and relevant to their work.
- ▶ Incorporate your members' or their institutions priorities into your district strategy wherever it makes sense.

Whichever category your organization falls into, make sure to invite other organizations in the community in your same category (i.e., people you may traditionally compete with). If you are a senior service provider, invite the other main providers to participate as well.

When you explain the project to others, you do not need to say everything at once. Just tell them what they need to know and what will entice them to get involved.

Leading Your Advisory Group

It is important to create an environment for your advisory group where people feel comfortable sharing their opinion, feel empowered to take action and where each member can see how they or their organization can benefit from and receive credit for the work. Ways to do this include cultivating relationships and projects with individual members, acting as a facilitator versus authority figure at meetings, and accrediting members when success is achieved.



Sample Email Invitation

Dear Local Restaurant and Bar Association,

We are partnering with Councilwoman [NAME] on a project to make East Harlem more “age-friendly” or inclusive of the older adults who live here. As you know, our neighborhood’s small businesses are incredibly important to the neighborhood’s seniors. The expected 50% increase in this population over the next 20 years represents a potential growing customer base for your members.

We are putting together a group of leaders from different sectors of the neighborhood to come together to develop and implement creative ways to better engage older adults in the work that we all do. We plan to meet once every six weeks or so.

Our first meeting will be on [DATE] at [LOCATION] at [TIME].

Our project is connected to a larger initiative called Age-friendly NYC. You can visit www.agefriendlynyc.org for more information. Please let me know if you have any questions or need more information. We look forward to hearing from you.



2 Assessing Your Community: Identifying Challenges and Solutions



Community Consultations

Community consultations with older adults are the foundation of Aging Improvement Districts. Older adults are the best source for knowing what needs to be improved in their own lives and what the potential solutions are. Age-friendly NYC has conducted more than 50 community consultations in 15 neighborhoods, in six languages. The term “community consultation” is used because the discussions are less structured than focus groups and more structured than a general group discussion. The purpose of community consultations is to identify the strengths and challenges of a neighborhood for those aging in the community.

Potential Community Consultations Sites

- ▶ Tenants Associations
- ▶ Senior Housing
- ▶ Senior Centers
- ▶ Homebound Visiting Programs
- ▶ Housing Organizations
- ▶ Parks /Community Gardens
- ▶ Churches
- ▶ Housing
- ▶ Special Interest Groups For Older Adults
- ▶ Libraries



Identifying Participants and Arranging Meetings

Community consultations should be held anywhere and everywhere you can think of where you can find 10 or more older adults from your neighborhood. Be creative. Hold consultations with more formal groups like at your community board or at a senior center and then find ways to reach people who are not connected to senior-serving organizations. Stop by the social hour held after a Sunday church service, speak to a group of people playing cards outside of their building, ask to join a tenants' association meeting.

It is important to reach older adults who are as representative of the general population of older adults in your neighborhood as possible. Consider the gender, race, age, language spoken and mobility, income, and education level of those you talk to compared to the overall older population in your community. Try to conduct consultations in all languages spoken by more than a thousand older adults in the neighborhood. Reaching a sufficient number of men has proven challenging in the three pilot Aging Improvement Districts, as men are less likely to be members of community groups. After you have conducted several consultations, reassess, think about who you are not reaching, and develop strategies to speak to any missing groups.

For demographic information about older adults in New York City by Community District, visit the New York City Department for the Aging's "Profile of Older Adults." ▶ nyc.gov/html/dfta/downloads/pdf/new_yorker_profile.pdf

The New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene "My Community's Health" page provides statistics on your neighborhood's health status. ▶ nyc.gov/html/doh/html/community/community.shtml

The 2010 United States Census offers a plethora of information down to census tracts, which can also be sorted by age. ▶ 2010.census.gov/2010census



Setting the Right Tone

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When you are conducting a consultation, make sure that the room is comfortable, try to arrange the chairs in a circle if possible, and bring snacks. Bring a one-page handout with 1) a paragraph or two explaining the work as simply as possible, and 2) contact information so participants can reach out if they have questions or ideas after the consultation is over.

Ideally, you will have at least two staff members, or one staff member and one volunteer, at the consultation. One person is needed to lead the discussion and the other to take notes and attend to the room.

Begin your consultation with a brief introduction to the project. You may want to mention how your work is connected to the work of Age-friendly New York City and the World Health Organization's efforts around the world. Set some ground rules – that while you have questions, the goal is to hear from them about what they think. Ask people not to interrupt each other and to be respectful of each other's point of view, and explain that while notes are being taken, comments will not be attributed to specific people.

The existing Aging Improvement Districts have used the protocol described below and available in the *Resources For Your Use* section at the end of this report to lead community consultations. The idea is to cover the domains of city life but still leave the conversation open to wherever the group guides it. Try to touch upon each topic at some point, but it is okay if not every question is answered. We have found the ideal consultation to last 60-90 minutes, but shorter can also work if that is all the time available to you. Consultations held spontaneously (e.g., groups sitting on benches, older adults who can not independently leave their homes) will of course be much shorter and can be done in groups or as individual interviews.



What Should I Ask?

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The interview guide you may want to use for consultations, available in the *Resources for Your Use* section, is designed around eight domains of city life defined by the World Health Organization with input from older adults.

Eight Domains of City Life

- ▶ Outdoor Spaces & Buildings
- ▶ Transportation
- ▶ Housing
- ▶ Social Participation
- ▶ Respect & Social Inclusion
- ▶ Civic Participation & Employment
- ▶ Communication & Information
- ▶ Community Support & Health Services



How to Use the Interview Guide

Each domain has suggested questions to get the discussion started and prompts on specific issues if conversation is slow. In many cases, once the discussion leader asks the first few questions about daily life, the group members will bring up most of the domains themselves. It is the leader's responsibility to probe to get specifics and identify potential solutions. For example:

If a participant says:	The leader should ask:
▶ “I do not feel safe”	▶ “Where don’t you feel safe?” “Why?” “When?” and “How does this affect your behavior or daily schedule?”
▶ “I only shop at Pathmark”	▶ “Why?” “Does Pathmark meet your needs?” “How could other stores make changes so you would shop there too?”
▶ “I want more places to sit and more time to cross the street.”	▶ Press for specific locations
▶ “I feel xxxx”	▶ “Do others feel the same or feel differently?”

There will likely be times when the group says that everything is fine or is silent to a specific question. While that may indicate satisfaction, it can often instead indicate an acceptance of a difficult situation, especially in communities where people are not used to being heard. Try probing in each category:

The Leader Asks:	The Participant Says:	The Leader Responds:
▶ “Are there things you used to do that you do not do anymore?”	▶ “visit the park,” “work,” or “go dancing”	▶ Why don’t you visit the park/work/go dancing anymore?
		▶ Do wish you could still do those things?
		▶ “What would be needed to make that happen?”

Taking Notes

When typing up the notes, it is important to categorize comments by topic area rather than chronology. This will help you when you are analyzing the data and prioritizing your findings. For examples of notes from a community consultation, see the *Resources For Your Use* section on page 62.

Notes Should Include:

- ▶ Compelling quotations
- ▶ Specific locations
- ▶ Names of organizations and businesses
- ▶ An indication of how many people in the room felt a certain way about a specific issue (e.g. unanimous, the majority, a few).

How Many Consultations Should You Have?

You will know that you have conducted a sufficient number of community consultations when you are not learning new things from the groups you are speaking to and when you have collected enough information about each of the topics in the protocol and that people have identified to draw conclusions. Past Aging Improvement Districts have conducted 10-25 consultations in order to develop findings.

Analyzing the Information

Once your community consultations are completed, you will want to analyze the information to develop your findings. It is a good idea to involve several people, including someone who is unfamiliar with the information, to look at the notes from the consultations.

- ▶ Have those analyzing the data sit in a room together and go topic by topic identifying any trends. **For each “trend,” develop a clear and accurate statement that specifies a finding or a problem.**
- ▶ The finding should indicate **how many or what type people are affected** (e.g., the majority of older adults, older adults who live east of 5th St., older adults who are newer to the neighborhood).
- ▶ It is likely that you will develop some **broad statements** about each topic area (e.g. older adults in the neighborhood are grateful and dependent on the public transportation in the neighborhood, but feel that improvements are needed to make the transportation system more accessible) and **more specific statements** (e.g., several older adults mentioned the need for a bus shelter at 7th St.).
- ▶ Out of the list of findings you develop, you will likely want to **choose several “key” or “top” findings**. These should be issues that were mentioned most often, issues mentioned often that are not being addressed by other groups, or issues mentioned often that have solutions you know you can accomplish.



Other Assessment Options

.....

To complement your community consultations, consider using other surveys that have been developed to assess communities. You can use these to confirm findings from your consultations or to do a separate assessment.

- ▶ **The AARP “Sidewalks and Streets Survey”** can help you assess the “walkability” of your neighborhood by identifying the presence of a series of issues (e.g., presence of pedestrian signals, curb cuts, cleanliness).
 - ▷ createthegood.org/sites/default/files/how-to/SidewalksStreets.pdf
- ▶ **The “Community Needs Assessment Walking Survey”** enlists older adults and others to assess the age-friendliness of a community. Volunteers walk areas and record their observations such as safety, retail amenities, and community services. The observations can be used to identify and begin a dialogue on areas in need of improvement. This survey was developed by graduate students at NYU’s Wagner School of Public Service in conjunction with the NYC Mayor’s Office and Department for the Aging.
 - ▷ agefriendlynyc.org - Tools and Resources section
- ▶ **The United Hospital Fund’s “Health Indicators Survey Tool: Advancing Healthy Aging in Communities”** is a 72-question survey to be administered to older adults that assesses health care access and the health services available in a community.
 - ▷ norcblueprint.org/health_indicators
- ▶ **The Geriatric Mental Health Alliance of New York’s “Addressing the Mental Health Needs of Older Adults in Age-friendly Communities”** tool can help you understand the substance abuse and mental health needs of your community as well as how well the community is meeting those needs.
mha-nyc.org/media/1251/agefriendly.pdf
- ▶ **U.S. Environmental Protection Agency’s report “Growing Older, Living Healthier”**
 - ▷ epa.gov/aging/bhc/guide/2009_Aging.pdf
- ▶ **Rotary International’s “Community Assessment Tools”** gives helpful instructions for developing a survey and assessment process customized to your neighborhood’s needs.
 - ▷ rotary.org/ridocuments/en_pdf/605c_en.pdf
- ▶ **The Visting Nurse Service of New York’s (VNSNY’s) AdvantAge Initiative**
 - ▷ vnsny.org/advantage/indicators.pdf & http://www.vnsny.org/advantage/ai_chartbookfinal.pdf



3 Community Report Back: Moving From Assessment to Implementation



Communicating the Information

Once your community consultations are completed, the Aging Improvement District will need to transition from the stage of information gathering and support building into implementing change.

The pilots found that an effective way to make this transition is to hold an event to share the information gathered, show the support that has been built, and potentially announce some early wins toward implementing change.

To share your findings, you will want to use several methods of communication, in order to reach those who speak different languages and have varying levels of literacy and to encourage people to respond on an intellectual and emotional level.

In the three existing pilot neighborhoods, we put together summaries of findings, which are both understandable to the community and to policy makers. To view those summaries, see page 67 and 74 in the *Resources For Your Use* section.

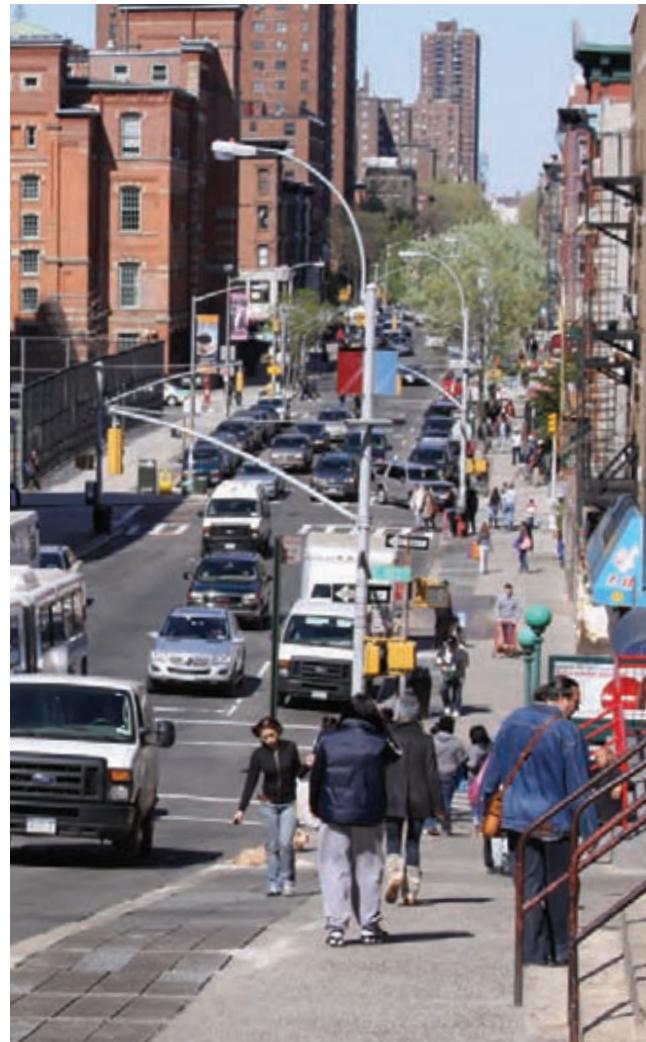


We also created videos to illustrate the findings, use the voices of older adults, and show the human face of broader issues. A multimedia slideshow with photos and voice recordings or quotes could be similarly effective. It is very important that whatever method is chosen, it is told from the point of view of older adults.

Videos from the East Harlem and Upper West Side Aging Improvement Districts are available at:

► nyam.org/agefriendlynyc/multimedia

You may also want to invite a few select and strategically chosen people to speak at the event, including older adults and community leaders. You will likely want to acknowledge your advisory group and find active roles for them at the event. Even giving “Age-friendly Champion” ribbons to all those who you have been working with can go a long way in setting the right tone at the event.



Potential Methods of Communication.

- ▶ Invite one older adult to speak about each one of the key findings based on their personal experience.
- ▶ Record a few older adults from your consultations who were particularly articulate and use their words in a slideshow with photos of their lives and the neighborhood.
- ▶ Give older adults disposable cameras and use the results to show the assets and challenges of the neighborhood.
- ▶ Develop a report that includes your findings, photos, and narrative from older adults.



Setting Up Early Wins

While your findings will be interesting to your community, it will be even more motivating if they see examples of people, organizations, and businesses who are already age-friendly or who have newly committed to making changes.

In East Harlem, awards were given out to Age-friendly Champions including a florist, a supermarket, a McDonald's, and two older adult activists in the community. People who had the power to make change (e.g., the Commissioner of the Department of Parks and Recreation, the Chairman of the New York City Housing Authority, business owners) also attended and immediately responded to the findings with new commitments. This demonstrated immediate success and left attendees believing in the potential of the project.

On the Upper West Side, awards were given out and leaders were contacted in advance to announce new initiatives and commitments. Awards included the doormen and porters of a large housing development who were described by older adult residents as going beyond their duties to be helpful, a concert hall with special programming for older adults, and an organization that created traffic medians with flowers and benches along Broadway, which were frequently cited as assets to older adults. The range of leaders present at the event demonstrated the scope of the project, including the Commissioner of the Department of Cultural Affairs, Business Improvement Districts, and an alliance of supermarkets.

In Bedford-Stuyvesant, where planning is underway for their "report back," the Brooklyn Academy of Music (BAM) plans to announce new initiatives at the event in response to older adults' requests.

Make sure that all attendees will be comfortable, engaged and able to understand what is going on.



Logistics Matter

The success of your report back to the community will largely come down to logistics. A meeting with strong content can be brought down by poor planning. The physical space, the timing, and the methods of communication used all matter tremendously. Make sure that all attendees will be comfortable, engaged, and able to understand what is going on. Providing a meal will attract attendees, set a more celebratory tone, and keep people's attention for a longer period of time.



Some Questions To Ask Yourself

- ▶ Is the time of the event good for older adults?
- ▶ Is the event entertaining?
- ▶ Is the location easy to access?
- ▶ Is there food?
- ▶ Is the room physically accessible?
- ▶ Are the right people going to be in the room?
- ▶ Will all attendees be able to hear and see?
- ▶ Are attendees learning something new?
- ▶ Can everyone in the room understand what is going on?
- ▶ Will there be translation for people who speak languages other than English?
- ▶ Is the length of the event appropriate?
- ▶ Do attendees have a chance to speak?
- ▶ Are older adults as involved as other leaders?
- ▶ Are the next steps clear and actionable?



4 Making Change: Implementation



Developing a Strategy and Establishing a Work Plan

Once you have shared your findings with the community, you will need to develop an action plan. The plan should include several of the issues identified during the consultations and outline two to five steps for addressing each of those issues. The action plan should also include an approximate timeline for each of the issues or steps.

Your action plan should be developed in consultation with your advisory group. This may take two meetings – one for brainstorming solutions and the other for looking at a draft strategy. Throughout, members should be encouraged to take on pieces of the strategy as their own responsibility. This is likely to become easier the more success is demonstrated.

To view the year one action plans for the East Harlem and Upper West Side Aging Improvement Districts, see the *Resources For Your Use* section.

“Organizing for Change,” a resource developed by the New York City Public Advocate, may help you through the prioritization process: > advocate.nyc.gov/organizing-toolkit/part-b/3/defining



Factors to Consider When Choosing the Issues

- ▶ How important is this issue to older adults?
- ▶ Have others worked on this issue in the past?
If yes, what were the results and why?
- ▶ Does the Aging Improvement District bring something new to the table?
- ▶ Are the partners needed to act on this available to you?
- ▶ Are there people in the neighborhood who will oppose your action steps?
- ▶ Are community partners who do not work together needed to solve this issue?
- ▶ Do your solutions raise awareness and bring attention to the needs of older adults?
- ▶ Will this action inspire others to act?
- ▶ How likely is it that you will achieve the steps laid out before you? How long will it take?
- ▶ Is money needed to accomplish your goal?
If yes, what are potential sources?
- ▶ Do the steps you have chosen make large or small progress on each of the issues?
- ▶ Will there be translation for people who speak languages other than English?
- ▶ Will elected officials and/or the media be interested in this issue or the solutions to it?

Events, Programs, Improvements and Policy Change

The approaches taken by an Aging Improvement District to address age-friendliness in different sectors can range widely. Be creative and think about what will make the most impact. The following suggestions and success stories provide examples for addressing a variety of issues.



Ways to Address Your Findings

- ▶ Convene a meeting around a specific issue to create action steps.
- ▶ Write letters in support of or in opposition to city actions.
- ▶ Testify at community board meetings or other hearings.
- ▶ Work with city agencies to address identified problems.
- ▶ Work with several organizations, businesses, or institutions to make commitments.
- ▶ Inspire groups to launch new programs.



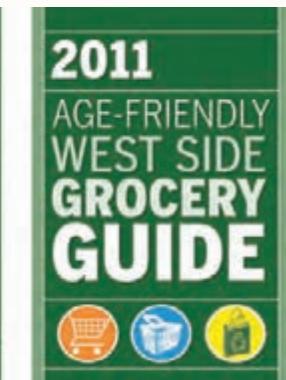
Success Achieved by Aging Improvement Districts

- ▶ **To address a lack of seating in the neighborhood**, a local insurance company helped the East Harlem Aging Improvement District purchase 200 folding chairs, which were branded with “Age-friendly New York City” stickers. Advisory group members and members of the community canvassed all of the neighborhood’s main business corridors, speaking to owners about low or no-cost changes they might make to help attract older customers. Businesses signed up to accept chairs and window stickers. Media, including the *Wall Street Journal* and local TV news, covered the chair distribution day. Participating businesses were advertised to older adults through a flyer and the back of a community calendar.
- ▶ **To address a lack of benches in the community**, Councilwoman Melissa Mark-Viverito met with the Department of Transportation and provided a list of more than 50 locations in the community identified by older adults and community leaders through the East Harlem Aging Improvement District as needing benches. The Department of Transportation has begun installing benches in most of the locations requested by the community.
- ▶ **To encourage supermarkets to become more age-friendly** as well as to help older adults looking for certain age-friendly features when shopping (e.g., delivery, discounts, seating, restrooms, single food portions), City Councilwoman Gale Brewer’s office went door to door and worked with The Food Industry Alliance and Local 1500 to have all the neighborhood’s grocery stores fill out a survey, which was turned into a Senior Grocery Guide and distributed to thousands of older adults in the neighborhood. The guide was so popular, *The New York Times* wrote a story about it.



Promote New York City. We're starting here on the West Side of Manhattan.
We have surveyed grocery stores on the West Side in order to highlight the best practices of local businesses in addressing the needs of local older adults. This report will enable you to see the resources and services local grocery stores are providing in the neighborhood.
I want to thank the businesses who have taken the time to participate in our grocery store survey. Food Industry Alliance, and Local 1500. For resources and support on how to better meet the needs of older adults or to share best practices you are already doing, please contact NYAM at agefriendlybusinesses@nyam.org or call 212-429-0542.

Sincerely,
Gale A. Brewer
GALE A. BREWER
COUNCIL MEMBER





- ▶ **To address older adults' limited access to information about events and opportunities for socializing** and to help organizations reach older adults, a calendar of free age-friendly events in East Harlem was compiled with the assistance of a dozen organizations, including libraries, museums, senior centers, farmers markets, and businesses. The calendar was distributed through these organizations, at community events, and online.
- ▶ In East Harlem, **many older adults spoke of not being able to do their laundry** when they needed to or of having to do it by hand because of a lack of access to laundry facilities. Several tenants' associations had advocated for laundry facilities to be installed in the past, but had not made progress. As a result of the Aging Improvement District process, the Chairman of the New York City Housing Authority committed to piloting new laundry facilities in one of East Harlem's all-senior buildings.
- ▶ **The Lincoln Square Business Improvement District** was inspired by the Age-friendly project and created their own brochure about what makes their neighborhood age-friendly, with a complementary website that is updated regularly. The brochure included everything from public spaces to seating to restrooms to free events in the community.
- ▶ **The Apple Store** on the Upper West Side began holding free introduction to computer classes before the store opens in the morning, when it is quiet and there is plenty of space. The store offered a free tour of the store, coffee and donuts, and additional classes the week after the Upper West Side Aging Improvement District "report back" event to specifically reach the older adults of the neighborhood.
- ▶ The three **New York Public Library branches** in East Harlem met to share their best practices working with older adults. The 96th St. Library had a special "Age-friendly Resource Day" with free computer classes, performances, and lectures tied into the project.
- ▶ **El Museo del Barrio created a Senior Membership Card** to publicize free Wednesdays for seniors at the museum and a 10% discount in their café. They also hosted a training for all staff on working with older adults, and increased outreach to seniors.

Giving and Allowing Others Ownership

While the Aging Improvement District may be an initiative led by your organization, it is important to be willing to give credit to others and let go of control. The goal is to make the community more age-friendly. If you inspire your local museum and the museum begins its own programming that is age-friendly, it is a victory that is yours, even if your name is not on it. There will likely also be times when other groups will do things that they call age-friendly in a different way than you would do them. Unless the group is doing something harmful, this should also be celebrated and considered a success of the project. Those creating the change have to be able to do this on their own and take the credit. When planning events or placing logos on print materials, make sure to think strategically about who to include and credit.



Keeping the Momentum

Success breeds success. The faster you can accomplish things, the more support and faith the community will have in your initiative. Be persistent and work on several goals at once. You are working against commonly held perceptions that organizing efforts involve much talk and not much action.

Once you have found success in one area, try to expand and replicate it. If you work with one supermarket, try to get others on board. If you have a successful event around affordable housing and someone else wants to have future meetings, give them your blessing. Your role is to act as a connector, as well as implementer. Publicize your successes and let people know what is in the pipeline, to keep them involved and motivated.



5 Success Breeds Success: Publicize And Celebrate Victories



Attracting the Media Attention You Want

One of the best ways to spread your message and bring attention to the needs of older adults is to publicize the work you are doing. You can and should do this by creating your own newsletter or by building an email list, but media reaches many more people and will give your work credibility.

When pitching a story to the press, be as concise as possible, avoid jargon, and think about what you would want the headline to be. “Fifty Bed-Stuy Businesses Change Their Store Layouts to Attract Older Adults” is more interesting than “Coalition of Businesses and Non-profits Work Together.”

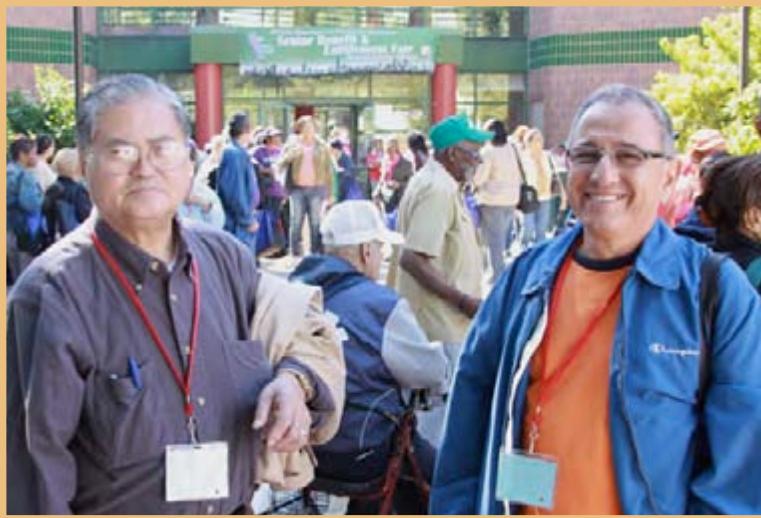
Andrew Martin, Director of Communications for The New York Academy of Medicine, developed a helpful guide for non-profit organizations looking to get press coverage.

“Understanding the Media: Steps to Improve Your Coverage in the News” is available at

▷ agefriendlynyc.org

The Institute for Comprehensive Community Development also offers “Ten Steps to Better News Coverage”:

▷ institutecccd.org/case-studies/2384



When pitching a story to the press, be as concise as possible, avoid jargon, and think about what you would want the headline to be.

When reaching out to the press, send out a press release to many outlets and reach out to individual reporters and editors. You can develop such contacts through your local elected officials and other partner organizations that have communications officers.

While informal, this list of New York media outlets may be helpful: > en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_New_York_City_newspapers_and_magazines

When calling or emailing a reporter or editor, your pitch should be short, catchy, and clear. It should be something you can explain in a few sentences on the phone or in a paragraph in an email.

Reporters are particularly interested in why what you are saying is newsworthy. Is this the first event or change of its kind in your neighborhood or even in the city? Are there partners who don't normally work together collaborating?

For examples of press coverage of other Aging Improvement Districts, visit > agefriendlynyc.org



A screenshot of the WNYC website. The top navigation bar includes links for "DONATE NOW!", "NEWS", "CULTURE", "MUSIC", "SHOWS", and "THE GREEN SPACE". The main article title is "Growing Gracefully Grayer in Gotham". It features a photo of an elderly couple and discusses the challenges and opportunities for seniors in New York City. The website has a clean, modern design with a red header.

A newspaper clipping from the Uptown News. The main headline is "No kidding around" in large, bold, capital letters. Below it, a sub-headline reads "East Harlem pool offers free senior swim hours". The article discusses a program at a pool in East Harlem that provides free swimming lessons for seniors. The newspaper layout includes various columns for news and advertisements.



6 An Iterative Process: Reassess Your Work, Adjust, and Repeat



Value of Continued Consultations and Prioritization

You will find one of the most valuable tools you will have when creating change in your community is being able to say, “We’ve talked to hundreds of older adults and they say....” While much of this will happen in the initial community consultations, you should always be in conversation and working in partnership with older adults. You may want to go out and talk to older adults about new things you have learned and to test new ideas. In East Harlem, for example, when several restaurants wanted to develop a special age-friendly initiative, it was helpful to speak to a group of older adults about what time would be best, what would be most attractive, what they would be willing to spend, etc.

Each year, you should reassess and reprioritize, developing a new action plan. Community consultations may be needed to help you do this.

Evaluating your Aging Improvement District

How will you know if you are making a difference? It is important to demonstrate to your own organization, the community, funders, and potential supporters that your work is making an impact. That impact should be measured in terms of

- 1. Concrete changes made in the community;**
- 2. Level of involvement in the Aging Improvement District by older adults;**
- 3. Sectors of the community that had not previously focused on aging and now are; and**
- 4. Service providers that had not previously focused on making changes to the wider neighborhood.**

At a minimum, you should document the process and products of your Aging Improvement District, so that they are ready to share with others as needed. Also collecting feedback and surveys from participants in any Aging Improvement District programs can contribute to this documentation. Ideally, when applying for funding, include a budget for a formal evaluation from an independent evaluator.

To read the evaluation of the East Harlem Aging Improvement District, visit agefriendlynyc.org

Sharing Best Practices

Aging Improvement Districts will be successful if those running them can learn from each other. It is crucial that you articulate what has worked and what hasn't in your community and share that information with Age-friendly NYC, so that it can be passed along to other neighborhoods. Also, some of your successes may be easily replicated in other places thanks to your work. If an initiative with the a city agency works well in one place, it may be created in others without all of the hours you put into it. To share information, please contact Dorian Block at dblock@nyam.org or (212) 822-7284.

When Does the Work End?

As you meet the goals in your strategic plan, you will most likely identify new issues to address or further steps that can be taken to expand on successes. Each year, a new strategic plan is helpful. To measure whether your work is done, think about whether there really is an age-in-everything lens in your community. Are cultural institutions and businesses considering older adults in their work? Can older adults independently access basic needs? Have you addressed your original key findings? It is likely this work could continue for decades, but at a minimum, it will take 3-5 years to demonstrate a sustained difference in the lives of older adults.

Resources For Your Use: How To

■ How to Involve Elected Officials



Involving or partnering with your elected officials is crucial to building support for your Aging Improvement District. Working with elected officials is a part of what makes this model different from many other models of organizing. This design means that you will be working together with many of the people who can help implement change.

There are many different levels of New York City government that can help with aspects of your Aging Improvement District, from providing funding to organizing community consultations to working with City agencies to create the change older adults have asked for. For a comprehensive diagram of **New York City government**, visit

▷ nyc.gov/html/om/pdf/citywide_org_chart.pdf

You can find contact information for all of the people who represent your neighborhood in the New York City government by entering your address at ▷ gis.nyc.gov/doitt/nycitymap

The New York City Council consists of 51 elected officials who each represent a neighborhood of the city. Your Council Member can help you identify which city agencies, state agencies, and private organizations are responsible for your particular issues and location. Additionally, find out what committees your Council Member sits on. When developing a strategy, consider including or highlighting issues that apply to those committees, as you may have better access to the appropriate city agencies and organizations that pertain to those committees. For example, the East Harlem Aging Improvement District had great success with the Department of Parks and Recreation largely because the Council Member in East Harlem chairs the City Council's Committee on Parks and Recreation.

TIP

If your Council Member becomes a partner in your Aging Improvement District, it may be helpful to include his or her seal on your official documents and to use his or her name when speaking with others. Involving any elected official in your work can give you the necessary credibility when making initial contacts and advocating for change. That said, while you may partner with elected officials, you cannot promise that certain changes will happen or speak for them on any issue.

To find the list and contact information of the committees and your City Council Member(s), visit

- ▷ council.nyc.gov/html/home/home.shtml

To learn which organizations in your community are already funded by City Council, visit

- ▷ council.nyc.gov/html/budget/council_disclosure_funding.shtml

To gain support for your Aging Improvement District, you should contact the **Community Board(s)** in your district. Community Boards consist of local representatives and are designed to address the concerns of community members. Each Community Board contains committees with specific focuses such as public housing, education, and public safety. Use a local community organization or elected official to reach out to the Community Board's district manager.

To learn about and find Community Boards in your Aging Improvement District, visit

- ▷ nyc.gov/html/cau/html/cb/main.shtml

TIP

Ask to make a presentation to the entire Community Board at its monthly meeting, not only to the committee that addresses seniors or health and human services. Issues of transportation and business, for example, are just as important to the lives of older adults as are issues of senior housing and health services. You may need to help the Community Board realize this shift in thinking.

Each borough has a **Borough President** who advocates for his or her borough in various facets of city life. Your Borough President's staff may be open to taking an active role in your aging improvement district.

The following is each Borough President's website with borough-specific resources, statistics, and contact information. **Bronx** ▷ bronxboropres.nyc.gov • **Brooklyn** ▷ brooklyn-usa.org • **Manhattan** ▷ mbpo.org

Queens ▷ queensbp.org • **Staten Island** ▷ statenislandusa.com

The Public Advocate is a city-wide elected official who is mindful of the needs and voice of the people and can also be a useful resource in building support for your Aging Improvement District. For more information about the role of the Public Advocate and his or her programs, recommendations, and contact information, visit ▷ pubadvocate.nyc.gov

City agencies oversee many of the areas where you will want to implement change. There are approximately 100 city agencies that address and improve different aspects of New York City. They are all



overseen by the Office of the Mayor. When approaching an agency or setting up a meeting, communicate a clear ask and use connections whenever possible.

The following is a list of some of the most relevant city agencies:

The Department for the Aging (DFTA) oversees services for New Yorkers who are 60 years old and above. ▷ nyc.gov/html/dfta

The Department of Cultural Affairs (DCA) works to foster a more lively cultural life for New Yorkers. ▷ nyc.gov/html/dcla

The Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH) aims to improve the health of New Yorkers through, for example, efforts to reduce smoking or increase the level of New Yorkers' physical activity.
▷ nyc.gov/health

The Department of Transportation (DOT) deals with transportation issues throughout New York City. It is responsible for issues including sidewalk safety, control over bike lanes, ability to install bus shelters that provide sidewalk seating, and regulation over the length of pedestrian traffic lights.

▷ nyc.gov/html/dot

The Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) maintains all city-owned parks and recreation centers. You may want to approach about making the park(s), swimming pool(s), dog run(s), and recreation center(s) and in your Aging Improvement District more age-friendly.

▷ nycgovparks.org

The Health and Hospital Corporation (HHC) is the largest municipal healthcare organization in the country. Its website includes a map of its facilities in each borough.

▷ nyc.gov/hhc

The Office for People with Disabilities (MOPD) ensures that the city addresses the needs of people with disabilities and advocates for city programs and policies that take into account these needs.

▷ nyc.gov/html/mopd

How to Involve Senior Services



Those already serving seniors can be one of your greatest resources in creating your Aging Improvement District. Senior service providers can help you identify locations for consultations, may provide information on the history of different issues in the community, and may want to partner with you on implementing initiatives.

While the majority of older adults in the community are not touched by senior services, thousands are, and partnering with these organizations and older adults is a great beginning.

The New York City Department for the Aging provides a range of services to older adults including senior centers, case management, and financial and legal services. To search these services by zip code, visit [► nyc.gov/html/dfta](http://nyc.gov/html/dfta)

Each borough in New York City has its own **Inter-Agency Council for the Aging**. The members are agencies that receive public funding to provide senior services, and the group often advocates on behalf of senior services and older adults. Neighborhoods also have their own inter-agency councils. The borough councils can help you identify your neighborhood council and which senior services providers to partner with in your neighborhood.

Bronx Regional Inter-Agency Council on Aging: [► bricaseniors.org](http://bricaseniors.org)

Brooklyn-Wide Inter-Agency Council of the Aging: [► \(718\) 686-1333](tel:(718)686-1333)

Manhattan Borough-Wide Interagency Council on Aging (MBIAC): [► mbiac.org](http://mbiac.org)

Queens Inter-Agency Council on Aging: [► qicany.org](http://qicany.org)

Staten Island Inter-Agency Council for Aging: [► seniorcitizenhelp.org/](http://seniorcitizenhelp.org/)

The Council of Senior Centers and Services of New York City, Inc. (CSCS), a membership organization of more than 200 senior service agencies, can also help you identify partners in your neighborhood. [► cscs-ny.org](http://cscs-ny.org)

To find a list of NYCHA senior centers in your neighborhood, visit [► nyc.gov/html/nycha/html/ccshtml/seniorcenters.shtml](http://nyc.gov/html/nycha/html/ccshtml/seniorcenters.shtml)

How to Involve Businesses



Local businesses, including grocery stores, banks, and pharmacies, are an essential part of the lives of older adults. Involving local businesses in your Aging Improvement District is crucial to the success of your project. When approaching local business leaders, it is important to stress the benefits of their involvement in your Aging Improvement District from their perspective. You should emphasize how simple changes such as making a business easier to find, enter, move around in, and make purchases in are good for customers and better for their business.

Creative ideas like discounted “senior lunches” when a business is otherwise slow or publishing an age-friendly guide to businesses could be a victory both for older adults and for businesses.

There are more than 200,000 small businesses in New York City. It can be difficult, and will probably be impossible, to contact all of the local businesses in your neighborhood. While there may be times when door-to-door campaigns are necessary, you can begin by reaching out to business associations, such as **Business Improvement Districts (BIDs)**, in order to more easily contact large numbers of local businesses. To find out if there is a BID in your neighborhood, visit [> nyc.gov/html/sbs/html/neighborhood/bid.shtml](http://nyc.gov/html/sbs/html/neighborhood/bid.shtml).

Additionally, many neighborhoods have a **Chamber of Commerce** that solely focuses on issues pertaining to the businesses in its jurisdiction. If your local Chamber of Commerce is active, it can be beneficial to have its support and ideas. It is a good idea to attend a meeting in order to introduce your work.

To contact the Chamber of Commerce in your borough, visit: **Bronx** [> bronxchamber.org](http://bronxchamber.org) • **Brooklyn** [> ibrooklyn.com](http://ibrooklyn.com) • **Manhattan** [> www.manhattancc.org](http://www.manhattancc.org) **Queens** [> www.queenschamber.org](http://www.queenschamber.org) **Staten Island** [> www.sichamber.com](http://www.sichamber.com)

Most boroughs and many neighborhoods have economic development corporations that provide businesses with more local support and may be able to connect you to them. These corporations may be good resources for connecting to the business community in your neighborhood.

The New York City Economic Development Corporation (NYCEDC) promotes city-wide and borough- or neighborhood-specific initiatives that encourage economic development and stimulate business. Learn more at [> nycedc.com](http://nycedc.com). Other EDCs include the following:

Brooklyn Economic Development Corporation ▷ bedc.org

Lower Manhattan Development Corporation ▷ renewnyc.com

Queens Economic Development Corporation ▷ queensny.org

Staten Island Economic Development Corporation ▷ siedc.org

South Bronx Overall Economic Development Corporation ▷ sobro.org

When approaching businesses it may be helpful to use our **Age-friendly Local Retail Initiative** materials. These materials have been distributed to more than 1,000 businesses in New York City through door-to-door campaigns with the goal of raising awareness of the needs and benefits of older adults. They are available in English, Spanish, and Korean.



Business Initiative ▷ nyam.org/agefriendlynyc/docs/AFB _Local_Retail_Initiative_Pitch_Final.pdf

Brochure of the Business Initiative ▷ nyam.org/agefriendlynyc/docs/AF_Business_Brochure_Final.pdf

Mobility Resource Guide ▷ nyam.org/agefriendlynyc/docs/Mobility-Final.pdf

Sound Resource Guide ▷ nyam.org/agefriendlynyc/docs/Hearing-Final.pdf

Business Vision Resource Guide ▷ nyam.org/agefriendlynyc/docs/Vision-Final.pdf

We also suggest that local businesses visit ▷ nyam.org/agefriendlynyc to enroll in the Age-friendly NYC Business Initiative. To enroll, businesses commit to welcoming older adults into their business and to working toward making improvements to better serve them. They do not have to sign any documents or promise anything else more specifically. Businesses are given the above educational materials and an Age-friendly NYC sticker to display in their window.

How to Involve Cultural Organizations



Making sure that local cultural organizations are age-friendly and involving them in your Aging Improvement District is crucial to its vibrancy. You can contact these organizations directly or visit The Alliance for the Arts and the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs to identify such organizations in your community.

The Alliance for the Arts also compiles borough-specific cultural guides designed particularly for seniors. These guides are written in large print and contain information about programs for seniors, ticket and membership discounts, and accessibility for visitors with disabilities. The guides can be found by visiting ▶ nyc-arts.org/page/get_involved/53

You can also use the list of cultural organizations in the guide to locate the cultural organizations in your Aging Improvement District.

The Alliance for the Arts website contains information about hundreds of cultural opportunities in each of the following categories: dance, festivals, film, galleries, gardens, history, libraries, media, museums, music, parks, and theater. The website also provides an interactive map, calendar, and list of cultural organizations in New York City, all of which you can search according to your cultural interests, time period, and location: ▶ nyc-arts.org

The Department of Cultural Affairs also updates a calendar of cultural events and list of cultural organizations in New York City on its website: ▶ nyc.gov/html/dcla.

Additionally, there are arts service organizations that particularly focus on cultural events in certain boroughs and neighborhoods. Some examples: **Bronx Council on the Arts** ▶ bronxarts.org

Brooklyn Arts Council ▶ brooklynartscouncil.org • **Harlem Arts Alliance** ▶ harlemaa.org

Council for the Arts and Humanities in Staten Island ▶ statenislandarts.org

Queens Council on the Arts ▶ queenscouncilarts.org

Once you are working with a cultural institution, you may want to offer them resources to help them become more age-friendly. A few examples:

The National Center for Creative Aging (NCCA) has created a national database on Arts Programs Involving Older Americans that is posted on its website and updated regularly. The database profiles a wide variety of arts programs across the country with contact information to encourage networking among the arts and aging fields. NCCA is located in New York City. ▷ creativeaging.org

The Museum Access Consortium (MAC) members include about 100 cultural institutions from the New York City metropolitan area that are diverse in size and type of institution as well as service organizations, educational institutions, design firms, and consultants. MAC strives to enable people with disabilities to access cultural facilities of all types. MAC defines accessibility broadly to include architectural, physical, programmatic, communication, attitudinal, and other forms of access. ▷ cityaccessny.org/mac.php.

The National Endowment for the Arts' Office for AccessAbility is the advocacy-technical assistance arm of the Arts Endowment to make the arts accessible for people with disabilities, older adults, veterans, and people living in institutions. Their site has information about best practices at different institutions across the country.

▷ nea.gov/resources/accessibility/office.html

Finally, “**Access on a Shoestring**,” a part of the Museum, Libraries and Archives’ larger Access Project, helps museums think about no-and low-cost solutions to making their museums more accessible and welcoming to older adults and people with disabilities. ▷ mla.gov.uk/what/support/toolkits/libraries_disability/choose_a_module/~/media/Files/pdf/2003/dis_guide08.ashx



How to Involve Housing Entities



National surveys show that at least 80% of older adults want to “age in place,” in their homes and communities, rather than in retirement communities or nursing homes. The majority of older adults in your neighborhood live in the same age-integrated housing they have lived in for their entire lives. To reach these older adults, try connecting to local block associations, coop boards, tenant associations, and landlords.

The New York Council of Cooperatives and Condominiums may be able to put you in touch with specific buildings in your neighborhood. > cnyc.com

NYCHA provides affordable housing to low- and moderate-income residents in New York City and also runs educational and recreational programs in the housing developments. To locate a NYCHA housing development in your neighborhood and learn about its tenants association and facilities and programs for seniors, visit

> nyc.gov/nycha

For information about NYCHA’s senior community programs and services, visit > nyc.gov/html/nycha/html/community/senior_services.shtml

Older adults also live in residences consisting exclusively of people of their age, such as federally-funded Section 202 housing, nursing homes, assisted living communities and senior-only NYCHA buildings.

The Department for the Aging has created helpful descriptions of each type of housing available to seniors: > nyc.gov/html/dfta/html/senior/housing.shtml

The Department for the Aging also has a comprehensive, searchable database of senior housing in New York City, which can be accessed here: > a069-webapps12.nyc.gov/egovt/housing/index.cfm

As described previously, a **NORC** is a community that was not originally built for seniors, but that now is home to a significant proportion of older residents. To find if there is an NORC program in your Aging Improvement District, visit > nyc.gov/html/dfta and search for “NORC” in the “Senior Services” search on the right panel.

■ How to Involve Religious Institutions



New York City is home to the national headquarters of several major religious denominations and hundreds of religiously based non-profit organizations. From grand cathedrals, synagogues, and mosques to neighborhood churches and storefront prayer groups, New York City's older adults report that religious communities provide a social support system, natural mental health promotion, and in some cases assistance with daily life activities and obstacles. In 2000, the **Association of Statisticians of American Religious Bodies (ASARB)** gathered information from 149 religious denominations and found that there are more than 3,000 congregations city-wide with 959 in Brooklyn, 882 in Queens, 665 in Manhattan, 426 in the Bronx, and 156 in Staten Island.

It is important to reach out to religious institutions in your Aging Improvement District in order to involve their strong communities in your work. Often you will find that by contacting local religious institutions, you can reach out to older adults who are not connected to other organizations. You may want to offer to introduce your work to their members and should research and inquire about their existing programs for older adults. Once you create a relationship, you can suggest means for their collaboration in your Aging Improvement District and ways for them to make their congregations more age-friendly.

The best way to reach religious institutions in your neighborhood is to ask your advisory group to connect you to the leadership of organizations or any members they may know of. Stopping by in person when religious institutions are open and speaking to an office worker may also be an effective way to make a connection.

To develop a list of all religious institutions in your neighborhood, visit [▷ yelp.com](https://yelp.com) and search “religious organizations” in a particular location, for example, “East Harlem, NY.” You can also refine your search to locate specific religious organizations in a particular location, for example “churches,” “synagogues,” “mosques,” “Buddhist temples,” or “Hindu temples” in “East Harlem, NY.”

To locate a list of churches in your neighborhood, you can also visit

[▷ usachurch.com/new_york/new_york/home.htm](https://usachurch.com/new_york/new_york/home.htm)

Protocol for Age-friendly Community Consultations

Information for Discussion Leader

Ask all of the questions in the left column. Only use the examples on the right to enhance the conversation if needed.

Warm-up Questions	Follow-up Questions
▶ What is it like to live in (name of the city/district) as an older person?	▶ Good features? Problems?
▶ Tell me about your daily life - what do you leave your home to do?	▶ How often?
▶ What sort of places do you visit each week or month?	
▶ What do you leave the neighborhood to do? Why?	Ask about... ▶ Grocery Stores ▶ Other Shopping ▶ Banks ▶ Pharmacies ▶ Churches ▶ Banks ▶ Community Organizations ▶ Employment ▶ Senior Centers ▶ Movies ▶ Salons ▶ Cultural Institutions ▶ Community Gardens ▶ Health Care Facilities
▶ How could things be improved at each of these places so you would be outside of your home in the community more often?	

Topic 1: Outdoor Spaces and Buildings

Let's talk about outdoor spaces and buildings. I want to hear about your positive experiences, your negative experiences, and I want to get your ideas for improvements.

Primary Questions	Follow-up Questions
▶ What is it like to step outside of your home to go for a walk to get fresh air, run errands, or visit someone?	▶ Design and maintenance of sidewalks and curbs? ▶ Street intersections and crosswalks? ▶ Traffic volume, noise? ▶ Particular times of day, like nighttime? ▶ Weather conditions? ▶ Green spaces? walking areas? ▶ Street lighting? ▶ Protection from sun, rain or wind? ▶ Benches, rest areas? ▶ Sense of physical safety? ▶ Sense of security from criminal victimization?
▶ What is it like to go into buildings, such as public offices or stores?	
▶ How often do you visit parks/pools? How could things be changed so you would visit them more often?	▶ In buildings: stairs, doors, lift devices, corridors, floors, lighting, signage, doors, toilets, rest areas. Can you reach items in stores, and is there someone to help you if you need it? ▶ Improvements to make going outside at night easier?
▶ How do you feel about going outside at night?	

Topic 2: Transportation	
<p>The next area is transportation in your community. I want to hear about your positive experiences, your negative experiences, and I want to get your ideas for improvements.</p>	
Primary Questions	Follow-up Questions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Describe your experience using public transportation in NYC. ▶ What could be changed about the public transportation system that would make it easier for you to use? ▶ What is it like to drive in your community? 	<p>Are buses and trains...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Affordable? ▶ Easy to get to? ▶ Easy to board? ▶ Frequent enough when you want to travel? ▶ On time? ▶ Secure from crime? ▶ Extensive routes to go wherever one wants? ▶ Waiting areas and stops with benches, lighting, protection from the elements? ▶ Are there adaptations appropriate for different types of weather? ▶ Adapted transportation for people who use walkers or wheelchairs? ▶ Access-a-ride? ▶ Assets and problems? <p>For drivers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Legible street signs? ▶ Legible street numbers? ▶ Lighting at intersections? ▶ Easy to understand traffic signals? ▶ Sufficient and close parking? ▶ Handicapped reserved parking? ▶ Drop off and pick up allowance? ▶ Driver refresher courses?
Topic 3: Housing	
<p>Housing is the next topic we will cover. Tell me about the house or the apartment where you live.</p>	
Primary Questions	Follow-up Questions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ If you need something fixed, do you know who to go to and how to make that happen? ▶ If your needs change, what are your choices for housing in the community? 	<p>Acceptability...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Cost? ▶ Comfort? ▶ Physically safe? ▶ Security from crime? ▶ Proximity to services? ▶ Preference for mixed age v. all senior environment? <p>Mobility and independence in the home:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Move about easily? ▶ Reach and store things easily? ▶ Do housework and chores?

Topic 4: Respect And Social Inclusion

The next area deals with how the community shows respect for, and includes, older people. I want to hear about your positive experiences, your negative experiences, and I want to get your ideas for improvements.

Primary Questions	Follow-up Questions
▶ In what ways does your community show, or not show, respect for you as an older person?	▶ Politeness? ▶ Listening? ▶ Helpfulness? ▶ Responsiveness to needs in services and programs? ▶ Consultation? ▶ Choices offered? ▶ Public recognition of the contributions of older people?
▶ In what ways does your community include, or not include, you as an older person in activities and events?	▶ Intergenerational activities? ▶ How do you communicate across languages?
▶ How do you feel about the neighborhood changing and new people moving into it?	

Topic 5: Social Participation

Let's now talk about social and leisure activities. I want to hear about your positive experiences, your negative experiences, and I want to get your ideas for improvements.

Primary Questions	Follow-up Questions
▶ How easily can you socialize in your community?	Are social and leisure activities... ▶ Affordable? ▶ Accessible? ▶ Frequent? ▶ At convenient locations? ▶ At convenient times? ▶ Varied? ▶ Interesting? ▶ In your language?
▶ Tell me about your participation in other activities, like education, culture, recreation, or spiritual activities.	
▶ How do you feel about the neighborhood changing and new people moving into it?	

Topic 6: Communication and Information

The following topic we will explore deals with information. Again, I want to hear about your positive experiences, your negative experiences, and I want to get your ideas for improvements.

Primary Questions	Follow-up Questions
▶ Where do you get the majority of the information you need in your community, for example, about services and events? (e.g. telephone, radio, TV, in print, or in person)	Is information... ▶ Accessible? ▶ Useful? ▶ Timely? ▶ Easy to understand? ▶ In your language? ▶ Difficulties with automated systems, print format and size?
▶ Where do you get the majority of your news?	
▶ Do you feel that you are informed?	

Topic 7: Civic Participation And Employment

I want to know about your experiences doing volunteer or paid work, and about your participation in public affairs. I want to hear about your positive experiences, your negative experiences, and I want to get your ideas for improvements.

Primary Questions	Follow-up Questions
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ Tell me about your participation in volunteer work.▶ Tell me about your participation in paid work, if you are employed now or if you are looking for paid work?▶ What was your work experience in the past?▶ Tell me about your participation in public community affairs, like community associations or municipal councils.	<p>Ask about...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ Availability of information about opportunities▶ Accessible opportunities▶ Variety of opportunities▶ Attractiveness▶ Recognition provided▶ Remuneration (paid work)▶ Adjustment to older persons' abilities▶ Adjustment to older persons' preferences▶ Ways used to motivate older persons' participation

Topic 8: Community Support and Health Services

I want to know more about the health and social services in your community that help older people living at home. I want to hear about your positive experiences, your negative experiences, and I want to get your ideas for improvements.

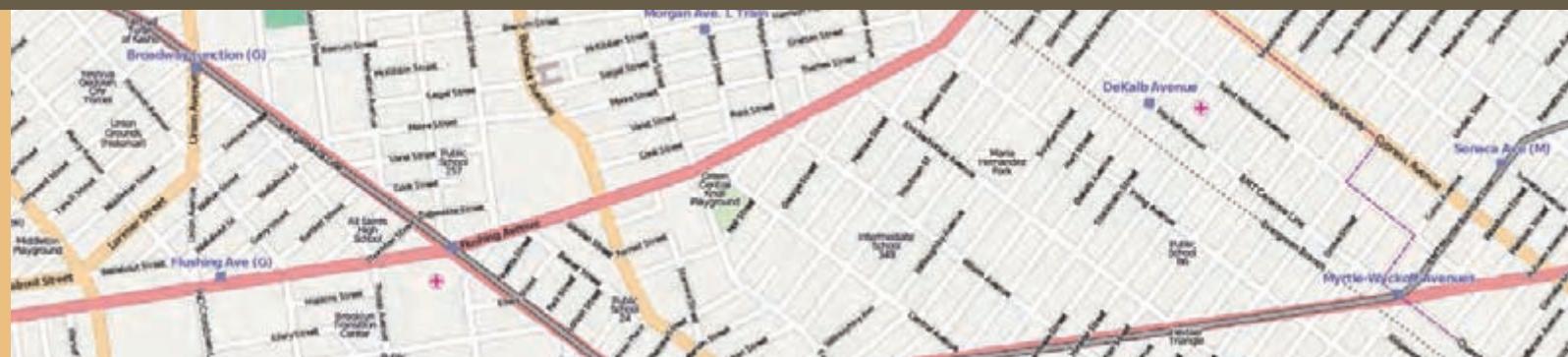
Primary Questions	Follow-up Questions
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ Do you get these services within this neighborhood, or outside? If so, where?▶ What is your experience with the services in the community to help older persons?▶ How are you prepared if as you get older you are less mobile or can not live as independently as you do now?	<p>Ask about...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ Do you have access to all of the healthcare that you need?▶ Types of services available▶ Accessibility▶ Affordability▶ Responsiveness of services to individual needs▶ Do you have a primary care physician?

Wrap-up Questions

<ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ What are the greatest strengths of New York City and your neighborhood for older adults?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ What should we tell public officials and community leaders about how things can be improved for older adults?
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ Are there changes that could be made that would make you want to do those activities or visit those places more often?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ Before we finish, are there any other issues or areas that we haven't discussed?
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ Are there activities you used to do or places you used to visit that you don't anymore?	

Resources For Your Use: Samples

Bedford-Stuyvesant Community Consultation Notes



On Wednesday, July 13, 2011, a community consultation was led by staff from The New York Academy of Medicine (NYAM) and the Coalition for the Improvement of Bedford Stuyvesant (CIBS) at the Brooklyn Community Church at Restoration Plaza. It is part of a series of consultations with older adults of the community aimed at informing the process of developing an Aging Improvement District in Bed-Stuy.

Group Profile

The group consisted of 19 participants, all female. Almost all described themselves as longtime or lifelong residents of Brooklyn. Many have lived in Bed-Stuy for decades, and those who no longer live in Bed-Stuy continue to consider it their home. Most participants described themselves as active and independent in accomplishing daily tasks. All spoke English as their primary language. All were proud of their neighborhood and expressed a great love for it. The discussion touched upon the following topics: parks, streets and transportation, safety, respect, access to information, housing, working and volunteering, religious life, grocery stores, pharmacies, movies, and other recreation.

Parks and Open Spaces

- ▶ Participants complained that most parks in the Bed-Stuy area are crowded and noisy and that Prospect Park is too far to get to, “not like when we were younger.” Linden Park was touted as one example where changes have made it “quiet and peaceful.”
- ▶ Participants told us that older men enjoy playing chess and checkers in Fulton Park.

Streets and Transportation

- ▶ Participants told us that insufficient time to cross streets is a problem in all of Bed-Stuy for both senior pedestrians and senior drivers encountering those trying to cross the street. Atlantic Avenue and Flatbush Avenue require turn arrows to control vehicles from turning into pedestrians that are crossing. This topic was the one that brought the most interest others during the discussion.

- ▶ Poor lighting in the evening makes it difficult for participants to walk safely on the streets and was another topic of great interest.
- ▶ Participants felt that streets become noticeably less cared for once you reach Atlantic Avenue and Bushwick Avenue. They would like to see their neighborhood's streets smoothly paved. Participants also mentioned that they would like to see more curb cuts for wheelchair and walker access.
- ▶ One participant was pleased to announce that Fulton Street is currently undergoing construction to bring more benches, trees, and bus shelters.
- ▶ The 16 bus, 26 bus, A train, C train, and L train were all listed as great sources of transportation that offer older residents "freedom and mobility."
- ▶ Access-A-Ride was described by participants as a crucial part of their transportation routine. Since it has a lift it is more desirable than the subway, which does not have elevators for people in mobility devices.
- ▶ Many participants do drive their own cars.

Safety

- ▶ Many participants feel that the Bed-Stuy neighborhood has gotten much safer in the last 25 years.
- ▶ One participant said, "There is crime everywhere in the world...you must learn to deal with it."
- ▶ One participant explained that the best part of her senior residence was its "24-hour security," which makes her feel protected.

Respect

- ▶ Several participants feel that the city is not built for older adults.
- ▶ One participant wanted to know why fun services such as dating services and social activities are not designed for older adults. Several others nodded and chimed in that they agreed. When asked if any of the participants are joining online dating web sites, all replied no.

Information

- ▶ Many participants get their information from Our Time Press newspaper, a local Brooklyn newspaper, or TV channels NY1 and NY12.

- ▶ One participant recommended that everyone go to monthly Community Board meetings for all information about “past, present, and future.”
- ▶ Participants explained how many Bed-Stuy residents do not realize that they are eligible for supplemental security income (SSI) and electronic benefit transfer (EBT). One participant suggested that some older residents know about these programs, but simply mistrust the idea of giving out personal information.

Housing

- ▶ Participants told us it is difficult to get into senior housing.
- ▶ Many participants were not familiar with the Senior Citizen Increase Rent Exemption (SCRIE) program. When discussion began, many participants commented on the difficulty of eligibility for such credits. As one participant told us, “If you make just \$5 more than their cut-off you will not be given the benefits of the program, even if you really need them.”
- ▶ When asked about Bed-Stuy’s high foreclosure rate, participants told us that there are various programs that provide residents with information about this process. The Pratt Institute and the Bridge Street Development Corporation both provide resources at Community Board meetings, senior centers, and churches. The participants said that they only know about these resources because they are connected to organizations in the community, and that those who are not would not know about them.

Working and Volunteering

- ▶ Many participants help with church activities. One participant teaches Sunday school, another leads the senior group, and many others contribute to social events. Church is the center of social and community life for almost all of the participants.
- ▶ Many participants are also politically engaged. Participants are involved with Community Board 16, NYPD’s 73rd Precinct Council, and the 1200 Dean Street Block Association, Inc. One works directly with City Councilmember Albert Vann as an advocate for older adults and their issues. Their senior center keeps many participants informed about City efforts and federal programs such as Social Security and Supplemental Security Income.
- ▶ Participants expressed concern that younger Bed-Stuy residents are not taking over community positions. Although many participants serve as energetic leaders, they feel it is time for “younger folks to take over these responsibilities.”

Religious Life

- ▶ Many participants attend church regularly and feel that they are part of a church community. When

participants were asked how they gain access to food or medication when ill they replied, "We call someone from the church." It serves a crucial communal function. Participants also noted that older Bed-Stuy residents who are not church members are probably without access to information about everything from City weatherization services for seniors to social events.

- ▶ Church also provides social and volunteer opportunities. Brooklyn Community Church has its own senior center and cancer survivor group. Participants were sad to share that Bridge Street's senior center no longer exists, due to budget cuts, but it continues to be an accessible place for older residents, in part due to wheelchair access. Participants who described themselves as active members of the church also shared stories about their activism in other sectors, including performing arts, politics, and senior activities.

Grocery Stores

- ▶ The grocery store most frequented by participants was Foodtown on Fulton Street. Several mentioned how helpful the car service it offers is. Several participants drive outside of the neighborhood to grocery shop.
- ▶ Participants described their challenges managing a shopping cart. One participant suggested that more grocery stores should offer personal shoppers that can help older adults reach high items, read information about food products, and push shopping carts. Another participant told us that the motorized shopping carts designed for wheelchair users allow her to shop independently, even with her impaired mobility.
- ▶ Many participants complained that grocery stores do not update their shelves, or may even place expired and outdated food products in the easiest-to-reach positions in order to take advantage of older shoppers and others unlikely or unable to read food product labels.
- ▶ Fresh, high quality food is not always available in local grocery stores. One participant told us that meat products are especially questionable, and she would like to see better cuts of meat sold in local markets.
- ▶ When asked if grocery stores lacked sufficient seating, participants agreed that "more seating would be good," but seating did not come across as a primary concern.
- ▶ Participants described bathrooms as being "usually open" and "available."

Pharmacies

- ▶ Although some local pharmacies offer delivery options, none of the participants are currently taking advantage of this service. In fact, participants were excited to share that the competition caused by

order-by-mail prescriptions had led Kings Pharmacy on Flatbush Avenue to offer special discounts to seniors in hopes of retaining their business.

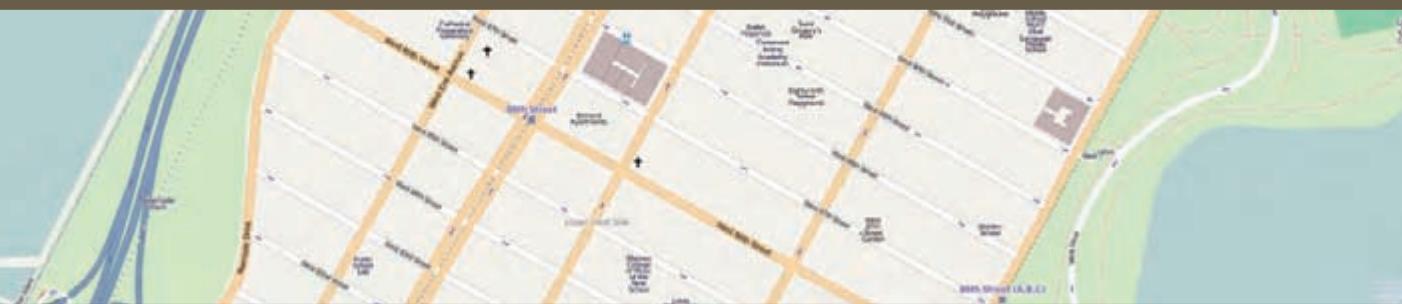
Movies

- ▶ Some participants knew that BAM offers free monthly movies for seniors, and a few had attended. Participants would like to see these offerings expanded at BAM and other theaters. A handful of participants were confused about whether special deals like this were available to individuals, or senior groups only. Many felt that this opportunity is not well advertised.
- ▶ All agreed that Bed-Stuy needs its own commercial movie theater.

Other Recreation

- ▶ More than anything else, these participants described shopping as their recreation of choice. Stores located in Manhattan, such as Bloomingdales, are most popular, followed by shops in downtown Brooklyn such as Filene's Basement. Participants told us there is a shortage of good shopping in Bed-Stuy, but one participant explained she likes that she needs to travel outside her neighborhood for good shopping because it makes her shopping outings a whole-day event. All participants would like to see special days and discounts for seniors in retail stores.
- ▶ Several participants enjoy eating out at restaurants. Businesses they mentioned include Peaches and its sub-restaurant on Tomkins Street as well as Applebee's. One participant told us that there are too many take-out and deli options in the Bed-Stuy neighborhood, and more sit-down options should be made available.
- ▶ Many participants expressed a desire to expand their social network. One participant suggested that churches, senior centers and others should collaborate in citywide parties or holiday events, giving older adults more opportunities to meet people from other parts of the city.
- ▶ Nail salons were described as a regular stop by many participants.
- ▶ Theatre was described by several participants as a favorite activity. One participant remembers when "the Billie Holiday Theatre first opened." Several people attend shows at Restoration.
- ▶ The Bible store was also mentioned by several participants as a nice place to visit.
- ▶ One participant takes an annual vacation with a group of friends.

■ Upper West Side Findings Based on 20 Community Consultations



Community Consultations were hosted by:

- American Bible Society
- Aurora Residence
- Community Board 7
- Council Senior Center Men's Group
- Council Senior Center Women's Group
- DeHostos Towers (NYCHA)
- DOROT staff
- DOROT University Without Walls
- DOROT volunteers and participants
- Lincoln Square Neighborhood Center NORC Advisory Group
- Westside Campaign Against Hunger at St. Paul and St. Andrew Church
- Ethical Culture Society
- Holy Name Church (Franciscan Community Center)
- Jewish Guild for the Blind
- Lincoln Square Neighborhood Center
- One Stop Senior Services
- Project FIND – Hamilton Senior Center
- Project FIND – Clinton Senior Center
- St. Paul the Apostle Church
- Sondra Thomas floor captains (NYCHA)

Public Spaces and Transportation

Parks And Plazas

- ▶ Central Park and Riverside Park are tremendous assets to older adults. Many older adults would like to visit the parks more often, but find it difficult because the parks are too far away from where they live, too difficult to enter or not comfortable once there.
 - ▶ Older adults ask that more green space (e.g., trees and gardens with benches) be created closer to where they live.
 - ▶ Older adults said that access to Riverside Park is particularly difficult because of all of the stairs.
 - ▶ Older adults said that the lack of open public restrooms makes visiting parks difficult.
 - ▶ Many older adults said they do not feel comfortable attending events in parks at night.



- ▶ The benches created along Broadway's medians are a tremendous asset to older adults in allowing them both to rest so they can travel further and to have a free place to sit alone or socialize.
 - ▷ Older adults ask that such spaces be replicated in other parts of the neighborhood.

Streets

- ▶ Traffic signals do not allow enough time for many older adults to cross the street. Older adults told us that this causes anxiety over their safety, as well as actual pedestrian injuries and fatalities. They told us that this discourages them from leaving their homes, causes them to be more dependent on others, and prevents them from taking advantage of community resources or spending money in the neighborhood.
- ▶ Cracked sidewalks, potholes, and partial street repairs are major obstacles for older adults traveling in the neighborhood. This includes those with mobility impairments and those who do not have mobility impairments, but who are afraid of falling.
 - ▷ Older adults ask that a better street repair policy be put into effect so that repairs are effective and sustainable, not only temporary fixes.
 - ▷ Among others, older adults mentioned 87th Street, 70th at West End, 93rd at Columbus and 91st between Broadway and West End as being particularly difficult to traverse.
- ▶ Water pooling at curbs and intersections makes streets nearly impassable for many older adults, especially those using walkers and wheelchairs. Older adults feel that this is considered an acceptable part of New York City living, but that it is not acceptable when it prohibits them from accomplishing daily tasks.
- ▶ It is difficult for older adults who have mobility problems to scale the curbs outside of community organizations, including those specifically designed to serve them.

- ▶ Snow and slow cleanup of snow create a barrier for many older adults that leads to increased isolation and a lower quality of life during the winter.
- ▶ Bicycle riders violating traffic laws and riding on sidewalks pose a major safety concern for older adults.
- ▶ Many older adults use 311 to report problems with streets and transportation. While they are grateful that there is somewhere to call, they are often dissatisfied with the response.
 - ▷ Older adults said that they are often referred to departments who do not answer their questions or do not answer the phone.
 - ▷ Older adults feel that at best many 311 calls lead to temporary fixes instead of sustainable repairs.
 - ▷ Many older adults were not familiar with 311.

Transportation

- ▶ Buses are the primary form of public transportation that older adults use. While older adults appreciate recent upgrades to make buses better for those with mobility impairments, there are still obstacles for older adults who depend on buses.
 - ▷ Older adults ask that bus drivers wait for older adults to sit before moving.
 - ▷ On many buses all the seats are already taken up by older adults.
 - ▷ Older adults feel that children should be taught through school and their parents to get up for older adults on the bus.
 - ▷ Adding bus shelters with seating at every bus stop would allow older adults to use buses more often.
- ▶ Most older adults do not use the subway system because of the large number of stairs throughout the subway system. Where elevators do exist, older adults described them as often broken, dirty or unsafe.
- ▶ Older adults described Access-a-Ride as unreliable, often leaving older adults outside waiting for vans for long periods of time without somewhere to sit or the ability to call for assistance.
 - ▷ Older adults praised the new taxi voucher system and ask that it be expanded.
 - ▷ Organizations complain that Access-a-Ride does not coordinate their service so that people who live near each other can be picked up in the same van to go to the same event. This makes it difficult for organizations to use Access-a-Ride to bring older adults to one place at the same time.

Community and Civic Participation

Retirement/Work/Volunteering

- ▶ Many older UWS residents have high levels of education and have lived exceptionally active lives for many

decades. They were connected to community organizations, attended city and cultural events, took classes, worked and volunteered. They want to continue feeling the sense of purpose and connectivity to the greater world that they were accustomed to, even if they have less energy or physical ability to be involved with such frequency. Many feel that access to such purposeful activities is limited.

- ▶ Some older adults were retired and did not desire to work again, but many older adults said they had looked for part-time work and found it “nearly impossible” to find any work or work that offered the type of schedule they were interested in.
- ▶ Some older adults were aware of the vast array of volunteer opportunities available on the UWS and in the city as a whole, but many seemed intimidated to take the first step to participate.

Technology

- ▶ Computers and other electronic devices came up at almost every consultation as a creating a rift between older adults and the rest of the city. Older adults feel like younger adults can not understand them, and they can not understand younger adults because of their real or perceived drastically different lifestyles.
- ▶ Older adults feel disconnected and dependent on others when they can not access information they need that is only available on the Internet.
- ▶ Older adults feel disrespected when they walk on the street or ride on transportation and everyone is talking on cell phones or wearing headphones. This is an issue for the whole population and also creates divisions within families. Older adults suggested an educational campaign around this issue.

Cultural Institutions

- ▶ Older adults would like to attend more cultural events, concerts and museums especially because of the world class opportunities offered in their neighborhood, but there are barriers of accessibility and affordability that prevent them from doing so.
- ▶ Older adults would like an organized system to learn about and get discounted or free tickets. It is difficult for older adults to both go online and physically wait in lines, so another system is needed. Currently, individuals and organizations usually receive groups of tickets depending on who they know. Senior service providers and older adults expressed frustration with the randomness of the current system.
- ▶ Ticketmaster often does not know answers to how accessible a theater is (e.g., whether they have an elevator, where the bathrooms are).

- ▶ Most free events are at night, and many older adults said they do not feel comfortable traveling at night. There was a consensus at nearly every consultation that older adults would appreciate companions to help them attend events and get home safely at night.
- ▶ Many older adults asked that there be seating for older adults at events in Central Park because it is difficult or impossible for them to sit on the ground.
- ▶ Older adults like the idea of having a senior day at different theaters/museums/jazz clubs etc.
- ▶ Many older adults said they would love to go to the movies, but they haven't gone in a long time because of the cost. They would like more opportunities for discounted tickets early in the day.

POST OFFICES

- ▶ Post Offices are used frequently by older adults, but they are often frustrating for older adults to use because of physical barriers and long lines.
- ▶ Some post offices have stairs, which means there are areas that many older adults can not reach. Older adults mentioned the post offices at 83rd, 95th, and 104th Streets as having stairs that prevent access to services.
- ▶ At least some of the post offices with stairs have wheelchair lifts, but older adults say that they are often inoperable and are unusable to those with mobility impairments who are not in wheelchairs.
- ▶ Older adults appreciate when post offices have employees in front of the counter assisting them, especially to reach items on other floors.
- ▶ There are often lines out the door at the post office and no seating.

Housing

- ▶ Those who live in supportive living environments (e.g., NORCs) expressed much greater satisfaction with their living situation. They said they feel safe, more socially connected, and able to access information and receive assistance with performing various tasks.
- ▶ Many of those who live in buildings outside of supportive living environments felt isolated from their neighbors. Many said that their longtime neighbors have died or moved away and that new neighbors are wealthier and not interested in knowing others in the building. Several people expressed feeling like they are in a totally new, unfamiliar environment even though they are in the same apartment they have lived in for many years.
- ▶ Those who live in buildings with doormen said that doormen were a tremendous resource and support to them. Despite this, older adults said that having doormen did not make them feel less isolated from their neighbors.

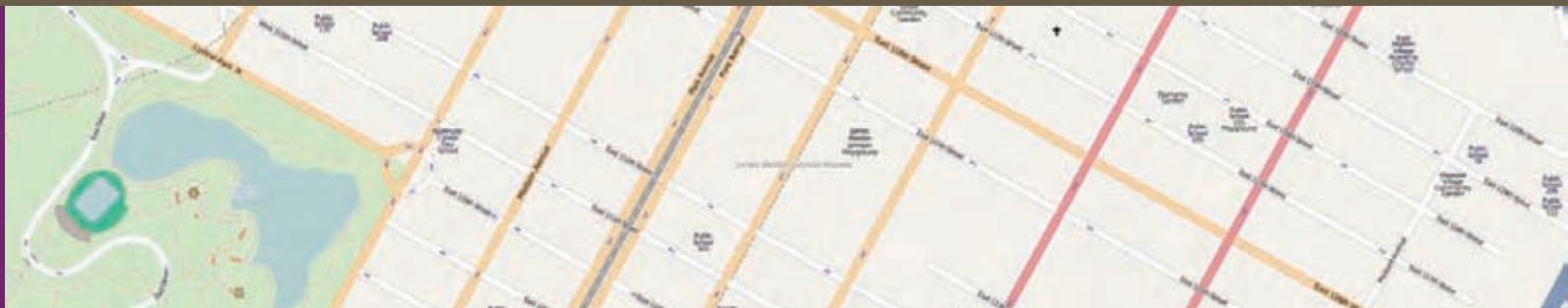
- ▶ Those who live in public housing expressed a greater sense of community and ability to rely on neighbors.
- ▶ Two groups suggested the city offer incentives to buildings to build ramps or buy portable ramps. One woman told the story of a man in her building who uses a wheelchair and has to carry the ramp down with him every morning because the building will not keep it on the first floor.
- ▶ Two service providers suggested that the city and federal government need a single point person for the senior housing lottery system. Currently you have to visit each building to get an application.

Businesses

- ▶ Older adults praised many businesses for their age-friendly practices and asked that they be replicated by other businesses. These include proactive employees, improvements to physical facilities, special senior shopping days, and senior discounts.
- ▶ Older adults said that they are more likely to frequent businesses that offer senior discounts. They provided many examples including a barber, beauty salon, health food store, pharmacy, thrift shop, movie theater, and specialty food store.
- ▶ Many older adults said they need more assistance with daily errands or urgent, non-medical tasks and wish there was a free or cheap place that they could turn to.
- ▶ Prices in grocery stores on the Upper West Side are higher than in other neighborhoods, and many older adults struggle to afford food. Some older adults say they resent the shift to more organic food because they can not afford it.
- ▶ Older adults appreciate senior discounts in food stores and ask that stores that offer them post them clearly.
- ▶ Older adults fear that they will be priced out of the neighborhood if the few cheaper grocery stores and all-purpose stores close and more expensive stores, like those that have recently opened, move in.
- ▶ Fairway is a hub for most of the older adults in the neighborhood because of its range of products and prices. Older adults feel that some characteristics of the store are age-friendly and could be replicated in other places and that there are some improvements that would make shopping easier for older adults.
 - ▶ Older adults praised the store's recently intensified focus on proactive customer service, as evidenced by new uniforms that invite customers to ask for help and a greater presence of employees walking the aisles.

- ▶ Older adults who live in the Lincoln Towers NORC are grateful for the free transportation and discount they are given for shopping at Fairway, and those who live outside of the NORC would like a similar arrangement.
- ▶ Older adults said several improvements to the physical facility of the store would make shopping there easier. These include improvements to the entrance (e.g., adding a curb cut, eliminating pooling), making the aisles wider and keeping them unobstructed, restoring hooks to shopping carts, and adding seating at the deli counter and the checkout line.
- ▶ Banks are one of the businesses older adults visit more often in the neighborhood, and older adults praise those who cater services to them.
 - ▶ TD Bank, which offers educational seminars for older adults, and Apple Bank, which just made physical improvements to make its space more accessible, were praised as being particularly welcoming to older adults.
- ▶ McDonald's and Starbucks were mentioned by several groups as being among of the few businesses that provide a safe, free space for older adults to socialize indoors, use the bathroom, and sit over a cup of coffee for many hours.

■ East Harlem Finding Based on 11 Community Consultations



Community Consultations hosted by:

- Linkage House - Section 202 residents
- Corsi Senior Center
- Alice Kornegay - Section 202 Tenants Association
- Covello Senior Center
- Linkage/Alice Kornegay - Chinese Speakers
- JWJ Senior Center
- James Weldon Johnson - NYCHA Tenants Assn.
- IPR/HE - Carver Homebound Program
- Carver Senior Center
- Holy Rosary Church
- Casabe Senior Center

Based on Individual and Small Group Interviews

- | | |
|------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| HOPE Community Garden | Casita Park - Section 202 |
| Franklin Plaza - coop building | St. Cecilia's Church |
| 1199 Housing Corp. - coop building | |

Based on a Survey of 110 older adults at the East Harlem Senior Health Fair

Key Findings

- ▶ Most older adults in East Harlem have lived in the neighborhood, often in the same apartment, for the majority of their lives. As a result, neighbors help each other, most people feel comfortable and safe, and many people tolerate poor housing conditions and obstacles (e.g., stairs, lack of laundry) because they do not have the resources to move.
- ▶ Having somewhere to sit inside and outside is very important to older adults. Chairs and benches encourage people to be outside, increase the distance people can travel from home, lengthen the time they can spend away from home, and allow people to use community resources, spend money in the community, and remain independent (e.g., able to wait on lines).

- ▶ There are few delivery services in East Harlem, yet there are many obstacles for older adults attempting to carry groceries and laundry home.
- ▶ 125th St. between Park and Lexington Avenues is an important intersection for older adults as a transportation hub, the location of Pathmark and other businesses, and as a street in the neighborhood. Older adults expressed concern about the convergence of drug users, gypsy cab drivers, bottle recyclers, and others blocking the entrance and exit to the grocery store. It is also the intersection with the highest incidence of injuries to pedestrians and bicyclists in the neighborhood.
- ▶ Many older adults would like to participate in more activities and events that the city offers, but living alone means they do not have an automatic companion and they do not feel safe going out at night.
- ▶ Many older adults change their plans or do not go out because of the lack of restrooms.
- ▶ Almost all older adults do not use public swimming pools, but many say they would if there was a time they could be there without the crowds and regulations.

Summary Of Findings

General

- ▶ Almost everyone we spoke to feels like they can never move out of their apartments because of rising rents or because they live in public housing – this makes them feel paralyzed and shapes much of their thinking.
- ▶ Most of the people we spoke to occasionally leave the neighborhood and almost never leave the city.
- ▶ Senior services and other community activities disproportionately reach women. Men are not as formally connected to community infrastructure but also seem more accepting of their circumstances, at least outwardly.

Public Spaces

- ▶ They care about benches, trees, gardens and open space closest to where they live. Big parks are for occasional visits in most cases.
- ▶ Benches are very important for them to be able to walk farther distances and to be able to be outside near their homes.

- ▶ Cracked sidewalks and pot holes and the potential of falling are a big concern for most people. This is a problem throughout the neighborhood.
- ▶ Most people said they do not feel comfortable going outside at night. Lighting and safety issues were the biggest concerns.
- ▶ Public events and festivals are very difficult for older adults to get to and participate in for several reasons including transportation, physical accessibility, the crowds, the lack of seating, the fact that many people live alone and do not have a natural partner to accompany them, and that free events are often held at night.
- ▶ The lack of public restrooms keeps many people from traveling too far from home. Many knew of one or two specific places where they often stop and use a bathroom.
- ▶ Very few older adults use public pools, but many said they would if there was a special hour for older adults.

Buildings and Businesses

- ▶ Waiting on line without the option of sitting or having someone hold their place in line is a problem for many people. Pharmacies, banks, check cashing outlets, governmental offices, grocery stores and the post office were where people had the most problems. The post office at 110th St. was repeatedly mentioned.
- ▶ Older adults walk far distances to shop at Pathmark because it is the largest supermarket in the area and has a variety of goods at prices that are often cheaper than other stores. Despite this, many customers described feeling unsafe while shopping there. Issues cited include the entrance, which is crowded by people recycling bottles, gypsy cab drivers accosting customers, people from nearby methadone clinics, people openly drinking, people who are living in shelters on Ward's Island and take the bus to 125th St. but have nowhere else to go, and lines that spill out of the store leading to the restroom and the bank inside. Once inside, it is difficult, at times, to find people to help reach items, there is no seating, people accost customers to give them change, lines are long, and people stalk the exit area to offer to carry your groceries home or drive you somewhere and expect payment.
- ▶ When mentioned, La Marqueta brings up great feelings of nostalgia and represents all things positive about East Harlem. Older adults would love for it to reopen, as long as prices are not too high.
- ▶ Fresh fruits and vegetables are available in East Harlem, but they are often of poor quality.

- ▶ McDonalds was mentioned at almost every consultation as being age-friendly (allows older adults to sit for a long time without purchasing much, has clean public restrooms).

Housing

- ▶ Rising rents and gentrification are a concern, but most seniors we spoke to live in public housing or rent-regulated apartments, so as long as they stay where they are, they feel fine. Not being able to move or get repairs done are bigger concerns.
- ▶ Those living in senior housing, with laundry machines in the building, were content and able to remain independent. Those living in NYCHA buildings without laundry facilities often do their laundry by hand at home, lug it to a laundromat, or need an attendant to help them.
- ▶ Many people in NYCHA buildings complained about problems getting needed repairs done.
- ▶ The Section 202 lottery system places people who speak many languages, often not the dominant language or languages of the neighborhood, in one place. In East Harlem, the population of Chinese older adults has almost no way to communicate with the people around them. There are also residents who speak Russian, Greek, and French Creole. Those who speak only Spanish expressed nearly no concerns with communication.

Recreation and Work

- ▶ Almost everyone we spoke to said they have almost no disposable income. If they have any, they like to play the lottery, go to Atlantic City, buy gifts for others, and eat out or buy prepared food.
- ▶ People tend to do free things like visiting parks, walking, reading the newspaper, doing tai chi or playing dominoes, mahjong, ping pong.
- ▶ People would like to go to the movies more often if they were more affordable and closer.
- ▶ People would like to eat out more often if it was more affordable and welcoming to older adults.
- ▶ People feel more comfortable doing activities in groups or pairs. Because they often live alone, they do not have people to do things with, especially spontaneous activities.
- ▶ People who volunteer regularly expressed feeling great fulfillment.
- ▶ People who have looked for paid work as older adults described it as nearly impossible.

East Harlem Aging Improvement District Goals



East Harlem Aging Improvement District Goals for 2011

Following extensive consultations, a survey, a film, and a community-wide brainstorming luncheon with older adults, the East Harlem Advisory Group developed a strategic plan to implement improvements in the community in 2011. Issues were chosen based on importance to older adults, complexity, and the ability of partners to create change.

Seating

- ▶ Older adults told us that having somewhere to sit inside and outside lengthens the distance and time they can travel from home, and allows them to use community resources and remain independent.
- ▶ Create “age-friendly chairs” to be placed inside and outside of businesses and public offices with a focus on locations with lines.
- ▶ Improve Post Office lines and seating in partnership with elected officials. Work with Community Board 11 to assure that seating is included in new developments.

Laundry

- ▶ Older residents of buildings without laundry machines told us it is extremely challenging to do laundry. Some do laundry by hand, others lug loads blocks away, and many said there are times when they would like to do laundry but can not because of mobility impairments, illness, or weather conditions.
- ▶ Partner with tenants’ associations to advocate for laundry in NYCHA senior buildings.
- ▶ Identify a community partner to examine the potential of laundry delivery.

Swimming Pools

- ▶ Almost all older adults do not use public swimming pools, but many say they would if there was a time they could be there without the crowds and regulations.
 - ▷ Ensure success of new senior hours at the Thomas Jefferson Park pool by training staff, assuring the pool's accessibility, advertising the hours to older adults, and co-hosting launch party when the pool re-opens.
 - ▷ Advocate to expand initiative at public pools if senior hours prove successful.

125th Street And Lexington Avenue Intersection

- ▶ This intersection is important for older adults as a transportation hub, the location of Pathmark and other businesses, and as a street in the neighborhood. Older adults expressed safety concerns over the convergence of people blocking the entrance and exit to the grocery store. It is also the intersection with the highest incidence of injuries to pedestrians and bicyclists in the neighborhood.
 - ▷ Assign a community partner to research what the current plans and improvement efforts are at this intersection. Insert the needs of older adults into ongoing efforts.
 - ▷ Convene area stakeholders and meet with Pathmark to discuss older adults' concerns.

Connect To Community Resources

- ▶ Many older adults would like to participate in more activities and events that the neighborhood and city offers, but living alone means they do not have an automatic companion, they do not feel safe going out at night, and they often lack access to a computer where events are advertised.
 - ▷ Improve older adults' access to community resources, connect senior services to other sectors, and inform all sectors about the needs of the aging population. Partners include:
 - ▷ Colleges
 - ▷ Cultural Institutions
 - ▷ Libraries
 - ▷ Businesses (grocery stores, banks, restaurants, etc.)
 - ▷ Non-profits

■ East Harlem Senior Pool Hours Press Release



City of New York
Parks & Recreation



AGE-FRIENDLYNYC

The Office of the Mayor
The New York City Council
The New York Academy of Medicine

For Immediate Release

July 6, 2011

www.nyc.gov/parks

www.agefriendlynyc.org

Contact: Vickie Karp / Phil Abramson (212) 360-1311

Andrew Martin (212) 822-7285

City parks and recreation to host East Harlem Senior Pool Party!

Date: Thursday, July 7, 2011

Time: 9:00-11:00am

Location: Thomas Jefferson Park Pool
112th Street and 1st Avenue
Manhattan

New York, NY – NYC Parks and Recreation, in partnership with The New York Academy of Medicine (NYAM), the East Harlem Aging Improvement District and the office of New York City Council Member Melissa Mark-Viverito is pleased to announce the launch of special senior hours at the Thomas Jefferson Park Pool for the summer 2011 season. As a result of requests from older adults in the East Harlem community, the Thomas Jefferson Park Pool will hold a senior swim session every Tuesday and Thursday from 9 to 11 a.m.

Councilwoman Melissa Mark-Viverito and staff from the NYC Department of Parks and Recreation and NYAM will be on hand to kick-off to these new senior hours. With music provided by El Museo del Barrio, water safety and exercise classes, and many giveaways, this seniors-only pool party is sure to be a great way for the older adults of the East Harlem community to get out in their neighborhood, go for a swim, and take advantage of their local park and pool.

The event is part of Age-friendly New York City, a collaborative effort to respond to and benefit from this aging of the population, led by the Office of the Mayor, the New York City Council, and NYAM.

Age-friendly NYC has several neighborhood-level projects aiming to make improvements for older adults called Aging Improvement Districts. The city's first is in East Harlem.



April 6, 2011

Growing Gracefully Grayer in Gotham

The city's elderly population is expected to grow by 50 percent over the next 20 years — and the city is trying to soften some of the edges of the urban environment to help seniors not only live longer but also more easily.

Sara Aarons, 91, who attended a city-sponsored Age Friendly NYC event on the Upper West Side on Tuesday, said she would never move from Manhattan but would like to see the city focus on creating more wheel-chair accessible sidewalks.

"People say, 'You know in assisted living you could have everything at your fingertip, you wouldn't have to struggle,'" said Aarons, who is wheel-chair bound. "I said, 'It's not a struggle!' It's wonderful to get out into the environment and the community and then you feel a part of it."

The event, held in a conference room off of 61st Street and Broadway, allowed seniors to pick up tips on where to find free supermarket deliveries, improved bus routes and volunteer opportunities.

One of the organizers, Councilwoman Gail Brewer, said one volunteer resource, TimeBank, allows New Yorkers to barter and exchange skills for services.

"If you need your apartment painted or you need a ride to the airport, then there's somebody ... so you can exchange currency, which is just your interest, and that person's car," she said.

Philip Cherry, who attended with his wife Ruth of 60 years, was a cellist in the orchestra for the Metropolitan Opera for 38 years. He still plays music and paints. She sculpts, volunteers, and is also busy working on a memoir. They both made contorted faces when asked if they had ever considered spending their later years somewhere else, like Florida for instance.

"If you want to sit on your backside and rock back and forth, then maybe there are better spots to live," Cherry said, "but this is the only place you can only go to the Metropolitan Opera, to the Philharmonic, the Metropolitan Museum and Central Park. Those are the outstanding, irreplaceable things."

In the few years since the Age Friendly pilot project began, the city has launched nearly 60 initiatives focused on improving life for older adults. According to the group, the top items surveyed seniors would most like to see fixed are: Physical, linguistic and cultural barriers to accessing resources; affordability; and changing neighborhoods, networks and families that lead to social isolation.



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