

Dignity by Design: Streets for an Aging City

NEW YORK CITY IS FAST BECOMING a city of seniors. The NYC Department of City Planning now predicts that by 2030 the number of New Yorkers 65 years and older will increase 44% to 1.35 million citywide, with Manhattan's senior population projected to increase a whopping 58%. Urban planners and senior advocates nationwide are beginning to realize this elder-boom will bring with it unique transportation challenges. As senior citizens give up their drivers licenses, walking and walking to transit are their primary modes for maintaining access to basic services. As long as it is safe, older New Yorkers will continue to walk as their main mode of both transportation and recreation.

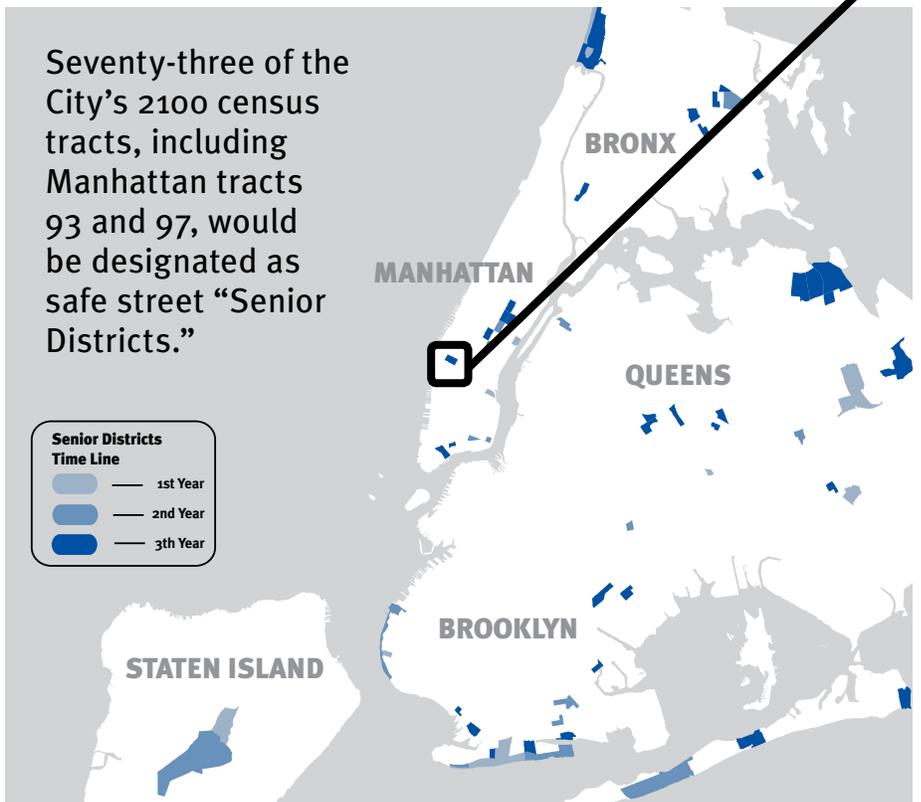
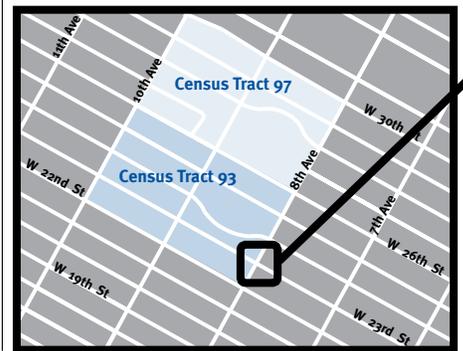
T.A.'s Safe Routes for Seniors program is at the forefront of the local and nationwide effort to identify the street changes that have to occur if walking is to be a safe and frequent mode of transportation for the booming senior population. Safe Routes for Seniors makes walking more viable through a combination of preventative engineering and proactive street planning for neighborhoods with the highest populations of senior citizens. With the city's senior population on the rise, elected officials and government agency leaders should embrace this plan and work to implement its comprehensive package of street safety and quality of life improvements.

Safe Streets for Seniors was developed by T.A. working in concert with local senior citizens. The program calls for "universal design" standards for streets in neighborhoods with high densities of seniors. Universal design describes designs that take into account the widest possible spectrum of users including those with visual or mobility impairments, therefore making them accessible to all. Universal design considerations for senior-safe streets would include for example: ADA accessible curb ramps, audible crosswalk signals and extended crossing time. The plan goes on to call for traffic calming measures to slow traffic, which is important both for preventing injuries and reducing the severity of injuries if a crash does occur. Changes that make streets safe for seniors make them safe for pedestrians of all ages. But senior-safe streets will do

more than just improve street safety. They will maintain the dignity and independence of aging New Yorkers.

To apply Safe Routes for Seniors on a citywide level T.A. is developing a new three-year, \$25 million project to create Senior Districts in 73 of the 2,246 census tracts that make up New York City. The 73 census tracts have the highest percentages of senior citizens and are distributed throughout the City. The census tracts would be broken down further to prioritize improvements at locations with the most seniors first (see map). There are currently 16 census tracts with 40%-90% people age 60 and over; these will be the priority places for the first round of studies and implementations. Under the proposed plan each of these locations would receive up to \$50,000 for plan-

age 60 and over. Each of these census tracts would receive \$50,000 for planning/traffic studies and up to \$450,000 for capital improvements for a total cost of \$10 million. The final year of the plan would focus on the 37 census tracts with 30%-35% peo-

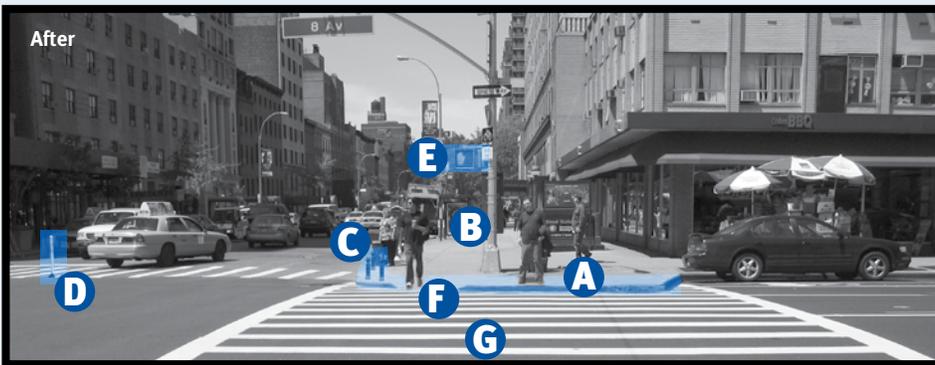


Seventy-three of the City's 2100 census tracts, including Manhattan tracts 93 and 97, would be designated as safe street "Senior Districts."

ning/traffic studies and up to an additional \$700,000 for capital improvements for a total cost of \$12 million.

The second year of the plan would include the 20 census tracts with 35%-40% people

ple age 60 and over. Each of these census tracts would receive up to \$80,000 for planning and traffic studies, possible traffic signal modifications and street maintenance, for a total cost of \$3 million. □



23rd Street at 8th Avenue

Mutual Redevelopment Houses also known as Penn South encompasses two of the census tracts recommended for the first phase of this plan. Penn South includes 2,820 apartments and has a senior population of approximately 33%. Shown here are some examples of how the intersections around Penn South could be redesigned specifically for seniors.

- A** Curb extensions at the NE and NW corners of 8th Avenue: \$20,000-\$40,000
- B** Eight accessible Audible Signals: \$10,000
- C** 12 steel fixed bollards mounted on the curb extensions: \$4,000
- D** Two large flexible bollards: \$500
- E** One leading pedestrian interval: cost of study
- F** Eight ADA-compliant pedestrian ramps: \$4,000-\$6,000
- G** Pothole-free street: general maintenance costs

AMY PFEIFFER

Safe Routes for West Side Seniors!



Assemblymember Linda Rosenthal convened a meeting of Upper West Side seniors and T.A. to discuss ways to improve walking conditions in their neighborhood.

BROOKE DUBOSE



Assemblymember Rosenthal and Manhattan Borough President Scott Stringer address the workshop.

BROOKE DUBOSE

IN RESPONSE TO TWO FATAL CRASHES involving senior pedestrians on the Upper West Side in Manhattan, Assemblymember Linda Rosenthal contacted T.A. to help organize an effort to make streets and sidewalks safe for local residents. On January 25th the Safe Routes for Seniors team, in collaboration with Assemblymember Rosenthal and the Council Senior Center held the first of a three-part workshop focus-

ing on improving the urban street environment for seniors and people with disabilities. The concerns facing Upper West Side seniors are similar to the concerns voiced by seniors at other Safe Seniors workshops: there is not enough time to cross the street; motorists fail to yield to pedestrians and are generally aggressive and sidewalk obstructions like scaffolding and bus stop changes associated with construction are enormous impedi-

ments to walking.

During the second workshop a core group of people from the Council Senior Center will take to the streets, take pictures of problematic intersections, look at signal timing, and collect additional street data. At this workshop we will organize this information, and draft recommendations to improve the problem intersections. This spring during the last workshop the working group will present the final senior pedestrian safety plan to community members and together we will create an action strategy to transform these ideas into real infrastructure improvements.

If you are interested in learning more about how you can help T.A. bring attention to senior pedestrian safety issues throughout New York City please write to the Safe Routes for Seniors team at safeseniors@transalt.org or the address listed on the back of this magazine, or call us at 212-629-8080. □