



**The Actors Fund,
for everyone
in entertainment.**



**Center for Home Care
Policy & Research**

Seniors Community Survey

Final Report based on findings from the
Senior Needs Assessment Project of Clinton/
Hell's Kitchen and Chelsea Neighborhoods

June 2013

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“I’ll do it for Angela.”

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Final Report based on findings from the Senior Needs Assessment Project of Clinton/Hell’s Kitchen and Chelsea Neighborhoods

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The Actors Fund,
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The Actors Fund is a national human services organization that helps all professionals in performing arts and entertainment. The Fund is a safety net, providing programs and services for those who are in need, crisis or transition. The Senior Care Program helps entertainment industry professionals who are 65 years and older, as well as their families and caregivers, address a myriad of issues they may face on a daily basis as they grow older.

Manhattan Plaza, located in the heart of Community District 4, opened in 1977 as the first affordable housing complex dedicated to performing arts professionals. With 1,680 apartments, as of 2012, Manhattan Plaza was home to 2,600 residents, 1,196 or 46% of whom are aged 60 and older.



Manhattan Plaza

Introduction

The Seniors Community Survey Project was inspired by discussions in 2010 between The Actors Fund, a human services organization for people who work in the entertainment industry, and the management of Manhattan Plaza, the largest affordable housing complex in the nation dedicated to performing arts professionals. Many of the original residents of Manhattan Plaza, which opened in 1977, have aged in place and over 1,100 residents, almost 50% of the building, are now over 60 years of age. Both organizations were looking for ways to help Manhattan Plaza's seniors maintain independent living in their homes for as long as possible.

The changing demographics of Manhattan Plaza's residents are part of a larger societal trend of an aging population. The Actors Fund sees evidence of this trend among the arts and entertainment professionals it serves, many of whom live in the neighborhoods of Clinton/Hell's Kitchen and Chelsea (Community District 4), where Manhattan Plaza is located. This area has historically been home to many professionals in the arts and entertainment industry because of its close proximity to the theater district.

The Actors Fund recognizes the need to expand its programs and services to support this growing number of seniors and decided to conduct an assessment of social service and healthcare needs, as well as community supports and services. In an effort to understand the needs of seniors within the context of the "communities" in which they live, a survey was conducted among three interrelated constituencies: senior residents of Manhattan Plaza; senior performing arts professionals in Clinton/Hell's Kitchen and Chelsea; and seniors residing in the neighborhoods of Clinton/Hell's Kitchen and Chelsea (Community District 4). The survey was designed to provide a snapshot of how well seniors are currently faring as they grow older in their communities.

The survey was developed and conducted through a partnership of The Actors Fund, Manhattan Plaza's Rodney Kirk Center, the Visiting Nurse Service of New York's (VNSNY) Center for Home Care Policy & Research's AdvantAge Initiative and Manhattan Community Board 4. An Advisory Committee was established to develop and review the survey results and make recommendations on how best to serve the aging population of this community. The Advisory Committee is comprised of elected officials, city agencies, local seniors, health and social services organizations, arts and cultural organizations, entertainment unions and private foundations.

The survey was administered both online and in a paper format with residents aged 60 years and older from October 15, 2011 to January 15, 2012.

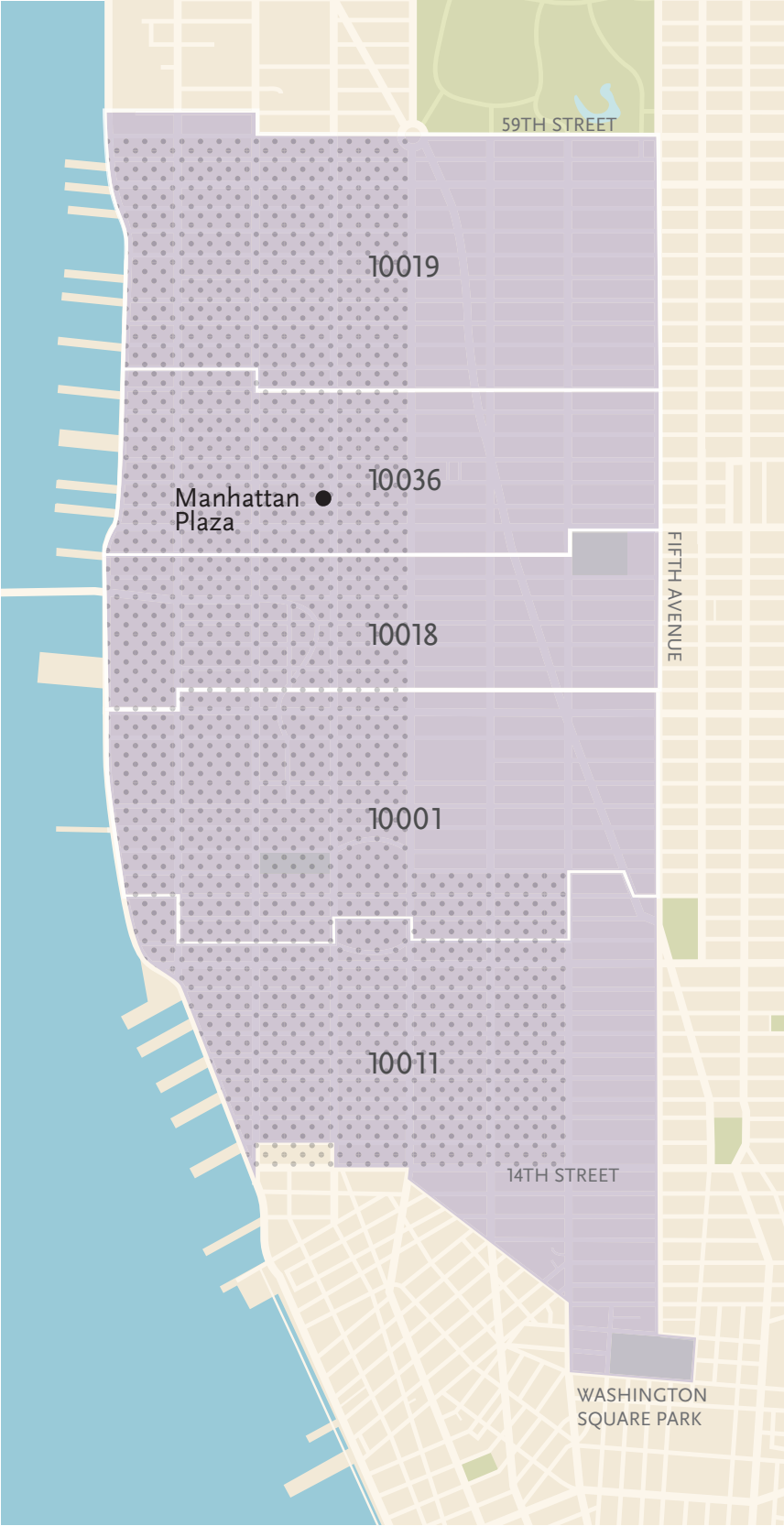
Survey items were designed to capture key aspects of older adults' lives, including basic demographic information; living situation;

Figure 1: Map of study area

Seniors living in zip code areas 10001, 10011, 10018, 10019 and 10036 were asked to participate in the survey representing a geographic spill-over from the district boundaries of our partner, Community Board 4. Outreach workers concentrated primarily on encouraging and assisting seniors in neighborhoods within Community District 4 boundaries where higher concentrations of residents live as opposed to business dominated midtown neighborhoods east of 8th Avenue. Since the survey was heavily promoted through online and posted mailings, it was necessary to include every zip code area associated with Community District 4. The map illustrates zip code and Community District 4 boundaries.

- STUDY AREA BY ZIP CODE
- COMMUNITY DISTRICT 4

“It’s not what I would call a stable neighborhood, but it’s an exciting neighborhood.”¹



The Clinton/Hell’s Kitchen and Chelsea neighborhoods are home to many in the performing arts industry, due to their proximity to Broadway.

“In general my immediate neighborhood has become very upscale over time so that continuing to live here has become more and more expensive. In order to survive and afford food and goods, I must travel outside the area. When and if I move in the future it will be because the cost of living has increased beyond my means.”

—Survey Respondent



Left: Clinton / Hell’s Kitchen. Right: Chelsea.

financial security; social connectedness to neighbors, families and friends; housing needs; perceptions of community and civic engagement; needs relating to food and nutrition; health status and needs for health programming; knowledge of the availability of neighborhood resources and transportation; and caregiving responsibilities. Specific questions were designed to target issues encountered by performing arts professionals. This report summarizes findings from more than 1,200 older adults who completed the survey and makes recommendations based on committee discussions of these three constituencies. Overall survey results of participants from Community District 4 are presented, along with recommendations on how to make Clinton/Hell’s Kitchen and Chelsea more elder-friendly, and how to prepare for the growing senior population by improving existing policies, programs and services to support seniors as they age in their homes. This is followed by subsets of specific results for Manhattan Plaza, with recommendations to inform and expand its existing seniors’ program, and specific results for senior performing arts and entertainment professionals, with recommendations for The Actors Fund and other service providers and groups concerned with the growing population of aging performing artists. The project was funded by The Fan Fox and Leslie R. Samuels Foundation and Broadway Cares/Equity Fights AIDS. Survey data were shared with the project partners and advisors who worked together to identify priorities that will help older adults age in place.

Survey Project Associates

SENIORS COMMUNITY SURVEY PROJECT PARTNERS

The Actors Fund
Manhattan Community Board 4
Center for Home Care Policy and Research, VNSNY
Manhattan Plaza’s Rodney Kirk Center

FUNDERS

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ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Elected Officials

City Council Speaker Christine C. Quinn
Manhattan Borough President Scott M. Stringer
Council Member Gale A. Brewer
Congressman Jerrold Nadler

Assemblymember Linda B. Rosenthal
Assemblymember Richard N. Gottfried
State Senator Thomas K. Duane

Government Agencies

New York City Department for the Aging
New York City Housing Authority

Entertainment Unions

Actors’ Equity Association
American Guild of Musical Artists
Association of Theatrical Press Agents & Managers
Directors Guild of America
IATSE Local 1, Theatrical Stage Employees
IATSE Local 52, Motion Picture Studio Mechanics
IATSE Local 600, International Cinematographers Guild

IATSE Local 700, Motion Picture Editors Guild
IATSE Local 764, Theatrical Wardrobe Union
IATSE Local 798, Makeup and Hair Stylists
IATSE Local 829, United Scenic Artists
Local 802 American Federation of Musicians
SAG-AFTRA
Writers Guild of America East

Community and Cultural Organizations

AARP New York
The Actors’ Temple
The Alliance of Resident Theaters/New York
Alzheimer’s Association
Beth Israel Medical Center Senior Health
Clinton Housing Development Company
Council of Senior Centers and Services of NYC
Encore Community Services
Hartley House
Henry Street Settlement Senior Companion Program
Housing Conservation Coordinators
Hudson Guild Fulton Center
Irish Arts Center
Joan Mitchell Foundation
Karpas Health Information Center, Beth Israel
Lincoln Square Neighborhood Center
Manhattan Plaza Tenants Association

Medicare Rights Center
The New York Academy of Medicine
New York Foundation for Senior Citizens
Older Adults Technology
Services (OATS)
Penn South Program for Seniors
Project FIND
Research Center for Arts and Culture
Rubin Museum of Art
Ryan Chelsea Clinton Community Health Center
SAGE
St. Malachy’s—The Actors’ Chapel
United Hospital Fund
VISIONS Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired
Visiting Neighbors
Visiting Nurse Service of NY/Congregate Care
Volunteers of Legal Service

Background

Growth of the Senior Population

New York City will see striking increases in its older population. Over the next 20 years, the number of New Yorkers aged 65 and older is expected to increase by nearly 50%, representing a demographic shift where, for the first time in history, older New Yorkers are expected to outnumber school-age children.²

In the wake of similar demographic shifts throughout the country, as well as economic insecurity and the changing landscape of healthcare, communities are working to better understand the needs of their aging residents in order to create a system that can serve today’s senior population as well as the waves of seniors to come.

Clinton/Hell’s Kitchen and Chelsea

The Clinton/Hell’s Kitchen and Chelsea neighborhoods of New York City are the theater district’s backyard, and have historically been preferred neighborhoods for people working in the performing arts.

Clinton, also known as Hell’s Kitchen, is familiar to many people as the inspiration for *West Side Story*. Its gritty reputation kept real estate prices lower than other areas of Manhattan until the early 1990’s when it became a desirable neighborhood and rents increased dramatically. Zoning regulations limit building heights to no more than six stories on inner streets, and 12 stories along the avenues, a restriction that helps create the area’s urban village feel. Many of the older buildings are five-story walk-up tenements, inhabited by older adults who have lived in the neighborhood for decades.

Chelsea, which borders Clinton/Hell’s Kitchen to the south, is a neighborhood of mixed housing, with apartment buildings, brownstones and tenements. Similar to Hell’s Kitchen, Chelsea was more affordable in

THE CHALLENGE

Will communities approach aging with a new perspective? How can we ensure older adults are given maximum opportunity to age with dignity in the environment of their choice?

“Gentrification affects not just real estate, but access to schools, small businesses and government services.”³

103,245 residents live in Clinton/Hell’s Kitchen and Chelsea

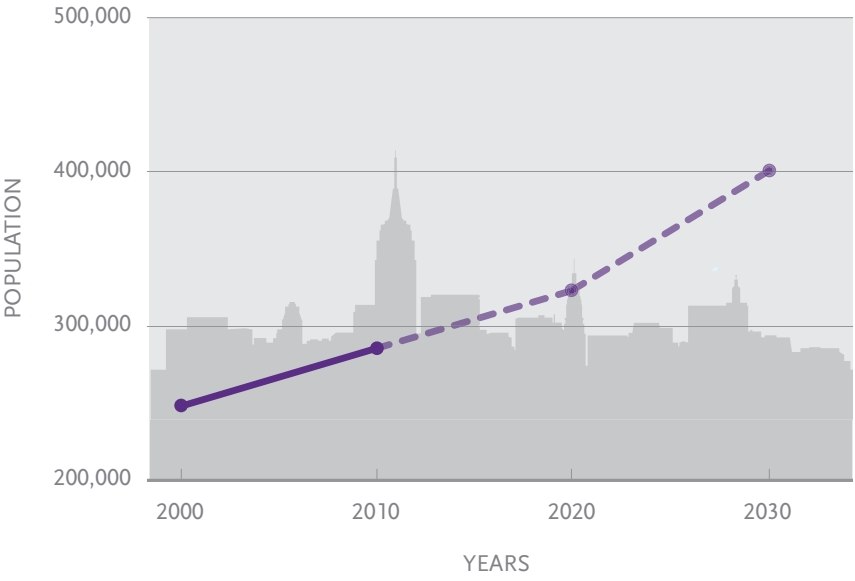
17% of them are aged 60 and older

“Chelsea has... an aging population that can’t do things...much longer, like go out of the neighborhood to get their needs met. It’s so much more than housing.”

—Rachel Jaffee, Housing Conservation Coordinators, Inc.⁴

Figure 2: The growing senior population of Manhattan

Projected growth of senior (aged 60+) population in Manhattan ⁵



THE ACTORS FUND

In 2012, The Actors Fund provided direct services to 13,523 individuals in 46 states and disbursed more than \$2.8 million in emergency financial assistance



Lillian Booth Actors Home. Photo: Claudio Papapietro

MANHATTAN PLAZA
RESIDENTS ARE AGING

10%
are 80 years of age and older

13%
are between the ages of 70 and 79. The largest group of seniors (24%) is between 60 and 69 years old

56%
of surveyed performing artists have lived in the neighborhood for at least 30 years

As they age, few Manhattan Plaza residents move. They stay until they can no longer live independently, or until they die

decades past, and has experienced rising rents as the neighborhood’s popularity increased. Chelsea has become a vibrant part of the New York art scene—a destination for art lovers and tourists. While low-income housing remains, the popularity of the neighborhood has brought new retail stores and restaurants, which have replaced the more affordable shops older residents have frequented for decades.

The restoration of Times Square as a tourist destination and its renewed appeal as a district for businesses has increased the popularity of both Clinton and Chelsea. While these changes have brought vitality to the area, they have also resulted in higher rents, more expensive retail and food establishments, and an increase in pedestrian and vehicular traffic.

Manhattan Plaza and The Actors Fund

At the center of the theater district is Manhattan Plaza, which opened its doors in 1977 as the largest affordable housing complex in the nation for people in the performing arts.

With 70% of its residents working in the performing arts industry, Manhattan Plaza has had a close relationship with The Actors Fund since the building opened. This relationship grew stronger in the 1980’s and 1990’s when The Actors Fund coordinated support services for Manhattan Plaza residents with HIV/AIDS. Over the years, The Actors Fund has provided a wide range of social services and financial assistance to over 1,000 residents of the complex.

In 1985, with 400 seniors in the building, the Stay Well Center for Manhattan Plaza Seniors was established, and in 2002 it was renamed the Rodney Kirk Center. Related Companies purchased Manhattan Plaza in 2004 and has continued this commitment of providing social support for its residents. Today, 1,196 of the building’s 2,600 residents are age 60 or older.

The Actors Fund has assisted aged and retired performing arts and entertainment professionals since its inception in 1882. By 1902, The Fund opened its first retirement home in Staten Island. In 1928 the Actors Home was moved to Englewood, NJ. Today, The Lillian Booth Actors Home continues this tradition of care through its 124-bed assisted living and skilled nursing home, which is a gold standard for senior care.

THE FOUR ADVANTAGE
INITIATIVE DOMAINS

Addresses Basic Needs

- Appropriate and affordable housing
- Safety in home and neighborhood
- No one goes hungry
- Useful information on available services

Promoting Social and Civic Engagement

- Meaningful relationships
- Active engagement in community life
- Meaningful paid and voluntary work
- Community priority for aging issues

Optimizing Physical and Mental Health and Wellbeing

- Healthy behaviors
- Community activities to enhance wellbeing
- Access to preventive health services
- Access to medical, social, and palliative services

Maximizing Independence for the Frail and Disabled

- Resources for living at home
- Accessible transportation
- Support for caregivers

In addition to the Lillian Booth Home, The Actors Fund has three other residential facilities. The Fund owns the Dorothy Ross Friedman Residence (formally the Aurora), a 178-unit affordable supportive housing building with one-third of the units designated for seniors; The Fund is co-owner of The Schermerhorn, a 217-unit supportive housing residence in downtown Brooklyn; and The Fund is the largest investor, and social service provider, in the Palm View, a 40-unit residence in West Hollywood California.

The Actors Fund provides a variety of programs and services to meet the needs of performing arts and entertainment professionals. Serving professionals in film, theatre, television, music, opera, radio and dance, The Fund’s programs include social services and emergency financial assistance, healthcare and insurance counseling, housing, and employment and training services. With offices in New York, Los Angeles and Chicago, The Actors Fund is a safety net for those in need, crisis or transition.

The AdvantAge Initiative

The Fan Fox and Leslie R. Samuels Foundation recommended that The Actors Fund partner with another of its grantees, the Center for Home Care Policy and Research (CHCPR) of the Visiting Nurse Service of New York (VNSNY) which developed the AdvantAge Initiative in 1999 and uses a data collection and community planning process to help communities become more age friendly. The AdvantAge framework is based on four domains that impact the health and wellbeing of senior residents. The AdvantAge Team provides communities with a survey tool, as well as a range of data analysis and technical assistance. To date, AdvantAge studies have been conducted in more than 50 communities nationwide. The Seniors Community Survey was the first made available online.

The AdvantAge Initiative helps communities:

- Measure their elder-friendliness
- Identify and prioritize aging-related issues
- Develop data-driven solutions to their unique situations
- Engage individuals and organizations throughout the community to help make these solutions a reality

New York City Council Speaker
Christine C. Quinn, Congressman
Jerrold Nadler, Assemblymember
Linda B. Rosenthal, Council Member
Gale A. Brewer, Assemblymember
Richard N. Gottfried and Angela Lansbury
at the October 21, 2011 Survey Launch
Event. Photos: Karissa Krenz



The Survey Launch

Actor Angela Lansbury, a resident of Community District 4 and former Manhattan Plaza tenant, accepted The Actors Fund’s invitation to be the spokesperson for the *Seniors Community Survey Project*. Promotional materials designed to market the survey featured Ms. Lansbury as the “face” of the project, as well as a slogan asking for seniors’ point of VIEW: Vision, Insight, Experience and Wisdom. With the assistance of the Advisory Committee, the survey was promoted through elected officials’ offices, entertainment unions and guilds, community and health organizations, e-blasts, local businesses and newspapers. The Seniors Community Survey was launched at a public gathering on October 21, 2011 by Ms. Lansbury and elected officials who welcomed more than 125 attendees from the community. Attendees were educated about the needs of their older neighbors and asked for their help in spreading the word about the survey throughout Clinton/Hell’s Kitchen and Chelsea.

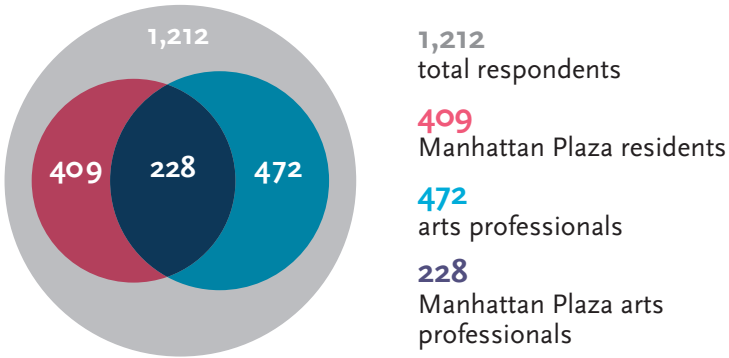
Promotional materials were designed to market the survey featuring Angela Lansbury as the “face” of the project with a slogan asking for seniors’ point of VIEW: *Vision, Insight, Experience and Wisdom*. Photo: Stephen Paley



Figure 3: Who We Surveyed

CONDUCTING THE SENIOR COMMUNITY SURVEY IS A CALL TO ACTION FOR THE COMMUNITY

It engages community stakeholders, generates conversation, encourages problem-solving and creates a mechanism for meaningful community change



Surveying the Community

Outreach workers encouraged and assisted seniors taking the survey at Manhattan Plaza, senior centers, health clinics, libraries, block association events, tenants’ meetings, houses of worship and a variety of local community organizations hosting senior programs and group gatherings. This outreach helped ensure that people throughout the community completed the survey; however, although efforts were made to reach an accurate representation of the whole community, it is possible that some groups (such as the frail and homebound) are underrepresented.

Examining the Data

The Seniors Community Survey data report produced by the AdvantAge Initiative team summarized the responses for each question in six ways: for total survey participants; for arts professionals; for non-arts professionals; for all Manhattan Plaza residents; for Manhattan Plaza arts professionals; and for Manhattan Plaza non-arts professionals. This allowed comparisons to be made among these various sectors and made it possible to target program planning for each group. After preliminary results were presented to the Advisory Committee, the Committee members divided into four subcommittees based on their fields of expertise which aligned with the four domains of the AdvantAge Initiative Framework: addressing basic needs, promoting social and civic engagement, optimizing physical and mental health and wellbeing, and maximizing independence for frail and disabled seniors. Each subcommittee met twice to discuss specific challenges to independent living for senior residents of Clinton/Chelsea, and to brainstorm strategies to address them.

Figure 4: Select *Seniors Community Survey* demographics compared to census and community health survey data for residents 60 years of age and older in Clinton/Hell’s Kitchen and Chelsea (CHKC)

Age*	Respondents	
	SURVEY	CHKC
60–64	24 %	30 %
65–74	41 %	39 %
75–84	25 %	22 %
85 and older	10 %	9 %
Gender*		
Male	42 %	47 %
Female	58 %	53 %
Ethnicity/Race*		
Hispanic/Latino	14 %	14 %
White	85 %	72 %
Black/African American	6 %	6 %
Asian	2 %	14 %
Other	6 %	8 %
Living Situation*		
Living Alone	69 %	52 %
Health**		
Note: Heart related diseases are the leading cause of deaths in CHKC		
Residents who have been told by a health professional that they have hypertension/high blood pressure	39 %	20 %
Obese/Overweight	18 %	37 %
Income***		
Less than \$20,000	45 %	37 %

CHKC data from:
* Bureau of the Census, US Dept of Commerce, 2010
** Bureau of Epidemiology, NYC DOHMH, 2009
*** American Community Survey, 2005–2009, residents 65+.

Figure 5: Additional *Survey* Participants Demographics

Marital Status	SURVEY RESPONDENTS
Single	40 %
Married/Partnered	26 %
Divorced/Separated	19 %
Widowed	15 %
Sexual Identity	
Heterosexual	80 %
Gay	13 %
Lesbian	2 %
Bisexual	2 %
Other	4 %
Living Children	
No children	58 %
One child	16 %
Two children	15 %
Three or more children	11 %
Educational Level	
Less than high school	7 %
High school or GED	14 %
Some college	24 %
College graduate	23 %
Some graduate study/graduate degree	32 %
Employment	
Retired	58 %
Working full-time	12 %
Working part-time	12 %
Working periodically	11 %
Not working but seeking employment	7 %

Survey Results and Recommendations for Community District 4

The Seniors Community Survey results include both quantitative data and qualitative responses to open-ended questions. The results offer insight into the everyday lives of older people in the Clinton/Hell’s Kitchen and Chelsea neighborhoods and provide useful information to propose recommendations for policies, programs and services.

Lack of information and poor access to resources was a recurring issue throughout the survey—respondents had a lot to say about their successes and failures when trying to get information and obtain services. Their answers to open-ended questions gave subcommittee members much to consider, and led to a series of recommendations in this area. Although New York City does offer an array of support services, subcommittees noted that information about available services needs to be more easily available through multiple access points; that services must be accessible when seniors need them; and that barriers that make it difficult to obtain support need to be identified and removed.

The four subcommittees also noted that respondents were concerned with how quickly their neighborhoods are changing. Gentrification is affecting their lives in many ways: the cost and availability of housing is in question; the neighborhoods are more crowded, which has made it more difficult for older pedestrians to navigate the streets; and affordable local stores are closing. These changes leave older residents feeling increasingly economically challenged and disconnected from the neighborhood.

The good news is that older residents reported many positive things about their lives and their communities, ranging from self-reported health status to satisfaction with the neighborhood as a place to live.

The concerns: Low incomes, living alone, hazards in the physical environment, and lack of awareness of resources and services that could help older adults age in place stand out as the most pressing concerns related to healthy aging, wellbeing and independent living. Subcommittee members felt that connecting seniors to a person, service or program was crucial to ameliorate the effects of financial hardship, increased disconnection as the neighborhood changes and possible physical, cognitive and functional decline.

Recommendations to Improve Access to Information:

- **Provide easy access to information** about housing, Medicare and Medicaid, healthcare, social services, and benefit/entitlement programs such as Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and the Elderly Prescription Insurance Coverage (EPIC) Program.
- **Establish a centralized neighborhood information hub** with paid staff, to ensure that residents receive the information they need, provide assistance in applying for benefits/entitlements, and confirm that applications have been received and approved.
- **Develop a comprehensive Seniors Resources Directory for Clinton/Chelsea**, to be posted on the Community Board 4 website and provided to seniors and health organizations throughout the area.
- **Enlist community leaders** to promote existing services and supports.
- **Encourage health professionals** to pass more information about resources and services to their patients and clients.
- **Enhance and promote the Community Board 4 website** as a central directory and resource for information about Clinton/Hell’s Kitchen and Chelsea.

Figure 6: Best Sources of Information

About Services

Survey participants response to what is the best resource to get information on services

Local senior service programs	26 %
Senior center	22 %
Internet	10 %
Doctor or other health professional	8 %
Family member or friend	8 %
Department for the Aging	5 %
Information center such as 311	3 %

Figure 8: Approximate Value of Savings/Assets

	SURVEY RESPONDENTS
Less than \$20,000	46 %
\$20,000 to \$50,000	10 %
\$50,000 to \$75,000	7 %
\$75,000 to \$100,000	8 %
\$100,000 or more	29 %

Figure 7: Approximate 2010 Annual Income

Before Taxes

	SURVEY RESPONDENTS
Less than \$20,000	45 %
\$20,000 to \$50,000	35 %
\$50,000 to \$75,000	12 %
\$75,000 to \$100,000	4 %
\$100,000 or more	4 %

Figure 9: Perceived Problems in the Community*

Percentage of survey respondents who said the following are problems in their neighborhood:

Heavy traffic	71 %
Noise	55 %
Streets and sidewalks need repair	27 %
Traffic lights are too fast	15 %
People don't get involved enough to improve the neighborhood	14 %
Crime	10 %
Streets are too dark	9 %

* The evidence is clear and compelling that unwanted and excessive noise increases stress which in turn has health impacts such as higher anxiety and confusion, increased heart rate, blood pressure and fatigue, delayed wound healing, impaired immune function and impaired hearing.

Addressing Basic Needs



14% live in walk-up buildings, and it may become more difficult for them to climb stairs as they grow older

“Pave the sidewalks and streets, which are full of crevices and potholes and other irregularities, which make walking hazardous (9th Ave. area in particular).”

—Survey Respondent

The four dimensions of basic needs—housing, food, safety and the ability to get help when needed—are what older adults require, at minimum, to remain in their homes as they age. Without them, it is difficult, if not impossible, for people to address their social, emotional and healthcare needs.

These four basic needs resonated with survey respondents. But their concern was not just for themselves—it was for all of their neighbors as well. This cross-generational concern demonstrates how important it is for communities to be safe, healthy and supportive places for people of all ages.

The Basic Needs Subcommittee identified affordable housing and safety in the home and neighborhood as priority issues, and recommended a series of steps to address residents’ concerns in this category. The following are survey findings illustrating challenges in meeting basic needs:

Dimension	Residents Say...	Survey Says....
Appropriate and affordable housing	“Affordable housing. I did not foresee ending one’s life in one room.”	59% of community residents (not living in Manhattan Plaza) do not live in rent controlled or subsidized apartments.
Safety in home and neighborhood	“I think my most likely cause of death in the coming year is being hit by a bike or pedicab.”	71% are concerned about the dangers of heavy traffic.
No one goes hungry	“Should I eat, pay my rent or pay for dental work? That’s not a real choice.”	7% did not have money to pay for food at times in the past 12 months.
Useful information on available services	“We need information on services, and the knowledge of where to find it.”	11% did not know where to access resources in the community.

Recommendations to Address Basic Needs:

- **Continue to address housing needs** by keeping the community and legislators educated about and involved in decisions regarding new housing options in the area.
- **Work to improve transportation, traffic and noise conditions** through DOT initiatives such as Safe Streets for Seniors.
- **Provide safer walking environments** by repairing defective sidewalks, crosswalks and curb cuts that make navigating the streets difficult, and may lead to injury for those who are physically challenged.
- **Ensure affordable supermarkets and farmers markets** remain in the neighborhood.
- **Support Chore Service Programs** that repair and adapt seniors’ homes to enable them to live safely.

Promoting Social and Civic Engagement



69% live alone (While living alone does not automatically mean loneliness or isolation, it can be a strong contributing factor)

37% don't socialize as much as they'd like

The roles of socialization and civic engagement have long been recognized as essential to one’s wellbeing. These needs do not diminish with age, and may actually become more important over time. Older adults in the Clinton/Hell’s Kitchen and Chelsea neighborhoods expressed the wish to remain active in the social life of their communities, as well as in volunteer and paid work. This desire, however, was tempered by the belief that these opportunities are not always available to them.

Respondents know from experience what social scientists have theorized: social engagement may stimulate multiple body systems, including the cognitive, cardiovascular and neuromuscular systems.⁶ In other words, we are social creatures who thrive—physically, emotionally and physiologically—through activity and engagement with the outside world.

In their discussions, subcommittee members noted that aging issues and the needs of older residents should be a community priority. They talked about the need to 1) raise awareness about the value of older adults to the community and the financial and social contributions they make to community life; 2) provide seniors with additional opportunities for social and civic engagement; and 3) encourage the entire community to recognize the aging-related issues raised in the survey and work together to improve quality of life for older adults and for the community as a whole.

Following are some survey findings for this domain:

Dimension	Residents Say...	Survey Says....
Meaningful relationships	<i>"It is very difficult for a senior living alone, particularly if there is no interest from close family."</i>	14% were in contact with a neighbor, family or friend less than once a week.
Active engagement in community life	<i>"Create a political activist group! Make the politicians take our neighborhoods concerns seriously."</i>	85% voted in a local election.
Meaningful paid and voluntary work	<i>"We need jobs! I am a wasted resource—MFA Yale. Hire me for something!"</i>	42% are still working or looking for work.
Community priority for aging issues	<i>"This neighborhood is all for young tourists. It is terrible. We were here first."</i>	27% believe city officials don't take older residents' interests and concerns into account.



“We need something more visible to notify able-bodied people on how and where to volunteer their time in a variety of ways.”

—Survey Respondent

- Recommendations to Promote Social and Civic Engagement:
- Sponsor intergenerational activities to encourage interaction among people of all ages.
 - Provide more volunteer and paid work opportunities for older adults.
 - Develop a comprehensive online calendar of events and activities for seniors through the Senior Planet website, in collaboration with Older Adults Technology Services (OATS).
 - Promote [agefriendlycollege.org](https://www.agefriendlycollege.org), a website for connecting older New Yorkers to educational and cultural opportunities in the New York City area.
 - Foster a neighborhood initiative to raise awareness of seniors as productive citizens, emphasizing the value and stability they bring to the neighborhood.

Optimizing Physical and Mental Health and Wellbeing



31% said they needed help from a mental health professional, but 43% of them did not get the help they thought they needed

“My husband died recently, and my attention span is limited. I feel overwhelmed. I am getting some help, but am not well yet.”
—Survey Respondent

This domain examined how older adults are caring for themselves, and how the community supports them in their efforts to maintain health and wellbeing.

Subcommittee members were intrigued by the survey data and respondents’ comments regarding their difficulty accessing services since the closing of St. Vincent’s Hospital, the need for more varied community activities and residents’ desire to remain active in their community. Social isolation, unhealthy lifestyles and untreated depression and medical conditions can affect health and wellbeing and may ultimately lead to poor health outcomes.

Clinton/Hell’s Kitchen and Chelsea are vibrant, busy areas and older adults want to remain part of the action. Subcommittee members acknowledged the importance of keeping the neighborhood accessible to older adults, not only in terms of mobility, but also by ensuring that public spaces, community activities and healthcare services meet the needs of, and are attractive to, older residents.

Dimension	Residents Say...	Survey Says....
Healthy Behaviors	“Provide group walks along the river.”	57% do not get the recommended level of physical activity.
Community activities to enhance wellbeing	“Provide activities that mix generations. I’d like to feel that I was still valued.”	37% would like to be involved in more social activities.
Access to preventive health services	“We need a non-emergency medical clinic.”	30% had not received a complete physical exam in the past 12 months.
Access to medical, social and palliative services	“We need a hospital to replace St. Vincent’s, and more primary doctors.”	28% had difficulty finding a doctor or paying for healthcare.

- Recommendations to Optimize Physical and Mental Health and Wellbeing:
- Provide discounts for seniors to use health clubs and gym facilities during off hours.
 - Start walking clubs to encourage physical activity and socialization. The High Line and Hudson River Park are excellent walking paths.
 - Work to alleviate noise and air pollution to reduce stress and anxiety, improve mental health and increase seniors’ ability to leave their homes and travel in the neighborhood.
 - Conduct an informational campaign to promote the importance of receiving preventive vaccines.

Maximizing Independence for Frail and Disabled Seniors



Photo: Ed Yourdon

43% who have been caring for a loved one have been doing it for more than three years



Supporting people as they age means not only helping them remain as active and independent as possible, but also providing assistance when they experience a decline in health which hinders their ability to remain independent. It is important to provide the necessary support to help them remain in their homes and communities.

Subcommittee members discussed challenges for seniors attempting to access information to assist them in acquiring the services, benefits and resources they need to maintain independence. There was consensus about the importance of connecting older adults to a person or organization before a crisis sets in or before cognitive decline interferes with instrumental activities of daily living and general functioning.

Respondents were very concerned about maintaining their ability to live at home and recognized the fact that their needs would change and likely increase as they age.

Dimension	Residents Say...	Survey Says....
Resources for “living at home”	“We need more resources for people living alone at home.”	20% need help with personal tasks, such as getting to the doctor and preparing meals, but almost half don’t get the help they need.
Accessible transportation	“Public transportation is a disaster, taxis are too expensive and Access-a-Ride is not always reliable.”	21% are sometimes or never able to get transportation when they need it.
Support for caregivers	“We need convenient options for daytime care for the very old. I care for my mom, but I have to work, too.”	20% are caregivers to a family member or friend.

- Recommendations to Maximize Independence for Frail and Disabled Seniors:
- Develop a comprehensive Seniors Resource Directory.
 - Raise awareness and educate the public and city officials about the need for more funding to support critical services for those who live in the community.
 - Designate and educate sentinels throughout the community to identify at-risk seniors and connect them with community support.
 - Develop neighbor-to-neighbor programs, so that those who are able and willing to help others can do so.
 - Advocate for more senior transportation options, such as taxi voucher programs and additional services for the physically disabled.
 - Invest more in resources for informal caregivers, as they are the backbone of in-home care in the U.S. When a family member or friend becomes too overwhelmed or ill to care for a loved one, both people lose.

“**The theatre is no place to make a living. But it’s a wonderful place to live a life.**”

—Survey Respondent

MANHATTAN PLAZA RESIDENTS’ FINANCIAL CONCERNS

45%

live on less than \$20,000 a year

47%

have less than \$20,000 in savings/monetary assets

45%

have no retirement plan

THE FIVE MOST COMMON CHRONIC CONDITIONS AMONG MANHATTAN PLAZA RESIDENTS

1. Arthritis 43%

2. Hypertension 38%

3. Overweight/
Obesity 16%

4. Chronic Pain 15%

5. Difficulty
Breathing 13%

Survey Results and Recommendations for Manhattan Plaza

Manhattan Plaza is home to 2,600 people, 70% of whom are current or former performing arts professionals and 46% of who are aged 60 and older. The number of older residents is projected to increase. By 2017, individuals 60 and over will comprise 49% of Manhattan Plaza’s population.

The vitality of Manhattan Plaza is evident in the findings and comments of the 409 residents who completed the survey. Overall, older adults living in Manhattan Plaza expressed more satisfaction with their homes and community than did their peers living elsewhere in the neighborhood. The results also show that Manhattan Plaza tenants attend more social and cultural events and are more likely to vote in local elections.

But the survey also uncovered many concerns that must be addressed. Older Manhattan Plaza residents are financially at risk: low incomes, inadequate savings and lack of retirement plans make them particularly susceptible to monetary hardships.

Although 82% rated their health as excellent, good or very good, 84% of residents have at least one chronic condition, indicating they do have health concerns, whether or not they are addressing them. Sixty percent do not get the recommended level of physical activity and 1 in 10 gets none at all.

As respondents’ 5 most common chronic conditions reported (see sidebar) often respond positively to physical activity and exercise, some kind of fitness program could be a low-cost, non-medical intervention that would benefit almost all seniors living in the building.

Manhattan Plaza residents do report some strong, positive social connections—they like the building and the people who live there—but also indicate they may not have the social supports they need to remain independent and able to stay there.

In addition, many tenants do not have close family members who live nearby, which suggests they do not have access to the frontline, informal caregiving support they may need as they grow older and possibly frailer.

Despite their age and physical condition, Manhattan Plaza residents strive to be socially active and civic-minded. They have a sense of community and take pride in their building and neighborhood. These social assets can be leveraged to increase mutual support among tenants, and to create new opportunities for social participation within the building and throughout the Clinton/Hell’s Kitchen and Chelsea areas.

The large senior population qualifies Manhattan Plaza as a Naturally Occurring Retirement Community (or NORC), an area or building in which large concentrations of older people have aged in place and now live, although the housing was not originally built for seniors. These older residents require additional support and care if they are to continue to live independently in their homes, and the NORC service model provides these additional supports through a partnership of social service and healthcare providers, housing managers and community residents.

One of Manhattan Plaza’s greatest assets, especially for older residents, is the Rodney Kirk Center, which provides a range of critical services including annual health and supportive services needs assessments, information and referral, and assistance with applications for benefits and entitlements.

MANHATTAN PLAZA RESIDENTS’ FRIENDSHIPS

1 in 7

residents don’t have a close friend in the neighborhood

10%

say there is no one in the neighborhood to help them if they need it

MANHATTAN PLAZA RESIDENTS’ FAMILY SITUATION

60%

live alone

56%

have no children

50%

of those with children live more than 1 hour from their closest child

“**I am getting older and will need to connect more to the community to get advice about rent, services and activities.**”

—Survey Respondent



Recommendations:

- **Manhattan Plaza should expand the role of the Rodney Kirk Center**, creating new programs and services for seniors to address the specific needs expressed in the Seniors Community Survey. Funding opportunities such as the New York City Department for the Aging’s NORC Supportive Service Programs should be considered.
- **Organize a resident volunteer network program using a website tool** such as Neighborhood Link to connect the Manhattan Plaza community. The program allows neighbors to post requests for assistance, view projects and volunteer to help. This is an opportunity for residents to share their skills, meet neighbors and support each other, creating an overall community that is strengthened by neighbors helping one another.

Sample offerings of the proposed Rodney Kirk Center and NORC services program

- Social work services
- Information and referral
- Recreational opportunities
- Nursing
- Exercise and nutrition programs
- Intergenerational activities
- Improved access to healthcare
- Educational opportunities
- Volunteer opportunities
- Preventive care
- Social events
- Employment training and placement

Survey Results and Recommendations for the Performing Arts Community

HOME AND NEIGHBORHOOD

68%
are very satisfied with their neighborhood

85%
are somewhat or very confident they can remain in their homes as they age

94%
would like to remain in their current home for as long as possible

EMPLOYMENT

33%
consider themselves retired (compared to 73% non-performing arts professionals)

The survey was completed by 472 performing artists aged 60 years and older. For the most part, older performing arts professionals are managing well in the community and report similar concerns to those participants not in the industry.

Despite similarities to the general surveyed population, entertainment professionals differ from their peers in that they possess unique strengths and face different challenges as they age. The greatest variations between performing artists and other respondents were age, health status, level of education and activity in the workforce. The higher percentage of performing artist respondents in lower age ranges may have influenced survey results, especially data related to employment and health status.

Committee member Joan Jeffri recently released the first study to examine the lives of aging performing artists. Entitled “Still Kicking,” the report includes 282 in-depth interviews with performing artists ages 62 to 94 living in New York City and Los Angeles. Corroborating data from Jeffri’s report, the Seniors Community Survey’s findings indicated that individuals in the performing arts industry had higher levels of education, lower incomes, higher rates of living alone and less knowledge about available services than non-performing arts community residents.

Not surprisingly, the retirement age for artists is likely to be much higher than for the general population.⁷ The concept of retirement is something of a conundrum for performing artists—they often wish to remain active in their work past the traditional age of retirement, unlike some other professionals. Furthermore, they often lack the requisite requirements in a particular union to gain the benefits of pension contributions, and may not have been able to amass enough in savings to afford to stop working.

“There is terrible age discrimination against hiring seniors (for those bread-and-butter jobs that performers all need), and I am one of many performers facing serious financial hardship in my declining years. My apartment is not expensive by NY standards and yet I am scraping together funds every month from work (if I get it) or loans from friends.”

In spite of higher education and participation in the workforce, income and assets are low. Work in the performing arts is not consistent, and does not conform to traditional employment patterns; therefore, life is often marked with financial struggle. Pay correlates negatively with educational achievement, unlike many other professions, and work is often episodic, making it difficult to save for retirement. Thus, the majority of performing arts professionals in this study fall within a modest income range, and often face significant difficulties related to paying for housing, healthcare and other basic living necessities.

More than double the number of both performing arts professionals and non-performing arts professionals surveyed live alone, compared to the New York City average of 31%. Performing artist respondents have fewer children to turn to in times of need and two out of three performing artists have no children at all. Furthermore, in every resource category listed on the survey, performing artists were considerably less aware of services and programs available to seniors in the community, making them more vulnerable when the need for support services arises.

“ I am definitely NOT representative of the majority of seniors in the New York community because I am very active in my career. I am always reinventing myself creatively.”

—Survey Respondent



EDUCATION AND SAVINGS

91%
pursued education beyond high school diploma (vs. 69% of non-performing arts professionals)

39%
have annual incomes less than \$20,000

44%
have assets less than \$20,000

“ I cannot afford to retire. Financially I need to work. Emotionally I need to work.”

—Survey Respondent

Older performing arts professionals are more likely to be a member of an entertainment guild or union, with 84% of respondents indicating they belong to at least one: 73% belong to Actors’ Equity Association (AEA); 60% belong to American Federation of Television and Radio Artists (AFTRA); and 69% belong to Screen Actors Guild (SAG) (the Survey was conducted prior to the SAG-AFTRA merger). These strong ties are a mechanism for reaching out to retired professionals to provide assistance, educate them about available resources and encourage involvement in educational, social, employment and volunteer activities. The Actors Fund will explore new collaborations with unions/guilds, hoping to combine resources and leverage impact.

Recommendations for The Actors Fund and others concerned for the Performing Arts Community:

- **Increase social services** that help senior performing arts professionals, their families and caregivers including financial assistance, senior housing, and case management services (assessment, advocacy and referral services, access to entitlements or other benefits, counseling, coordination of health and homecare services).
- **Modify programs as the view of “growing old” evolves.** Performing artist survey participants clearly expressed an interest in finding ways to socially engage, give back and build a sense of community.
- **Expand employment and training services** for older performing arts professionals between the ages of 50 and 75. Through The Actors Fund Work Program (AWP), entertainment industry and performing arts professionals can get assistance identifying and finding sideline work and new careers.
- **Expand education efforts** to inform older professional artists about the resources available to them. Organizations playing a specific role in the lives of aging performing artists can assist in promoting a resource initiative to their retirees by communicating information about housing options, benefits, services and programs available in the community.
- **Develop social engagement initiatives** addressing the special talents and interests of this group, encouraging more cultural and arts-related activities. Involve the entertainment unions and community cultural organizations in planning activities.

COMPANIONS AND SERVICES

65%

live alone

66%

have no children

56%

on average have little knowledge of services (vs. 39% non-performing arts professionals)



A Midsummer Night's Dream rehearsal, The Lillian Booth Actors Home

- **Establish intergenerational programs** for older professionals to teach and mentor children and young adults interested in the performing arts to cultivate mutually beneficial relationships between generations. Include community organizations and city agencies who have been involved in supporting intergenerational programs.
- **Support the development of a Performing Arts Senior Center**, offering culturally and intellectually stimulating activities for people who have worked in or who enjoy the performing arts. Involve senior performing arts professionals to help conceptualize the center.
- **Develop a volunteer program** for performing arts professionals to provide practical support for one another. Volunteering is a win-win situation for all involved.⁸ Many existing organizations may welcome the opportunity to expand their own programs to make use of the talents offered by aging artists.



“Power to the senior citizen!
We are important voices in
the community!”

—Survey Respondent

Conclusion

The Seniors Community Survey Project illustrates positive attributes and barriers to independent living for seniors in the Clinton/Hell’s Kitchen and Chelsea neighborhoods, for those in the performing arts community and for older residents of Manhattan Plaza. The results give us insight into the unique characteristics of community residents and present a challenge to re-envision the role and value of older adults in their retirement years. By assessing survey participants’ perspectives of the areas strengths and deficiencies, these communities have the opportunity to act on identified issues and prepare for the future.

Clinton/Hell’s Kitchen and Chelsea

Although seniors in the Clinton/Hell’s Kitchen and Chelsea neighborhoods report relatively healthy and self-reliant lives, survey data clearly points to prevailing problems in the neighborhoods. However, potential obstacles to living independently, which already exist or lie ahead, can be mitigated by providing opportunities to keep seniors physically active, encouraging preventive healthcare and facilitating social connection. Community organizations should work together to provide services that will help seniors maintain their independence. In addition, the development and distribution of a resource guide with information on how to access benefits, services and programs would help seniors access resources that could help them with daily activities and home maintenance and safety.

Manhattan Plaza

As Manhattan Plaza residents age in place, they will need additional support to remain in their homes. Survey results point to programs and services that can enhance seniors’ lives and help them maintain their independence. The Rodney Kirk Center can meet the needs of the building’s senior population by augmenting its existing service base. The addition of a NORC Supportive Services Program can be a dynamic collaboration between The Actors Fund, Related Companies, the health-care community and Manhattan Plaza residents. Such an expansion of the Rodney Kirk Center will address specific community needs of older residents and enable them to live safely and independently for as long as possible, while at the same time creating a community that encourages their ongoing participation in and contribution to the larger community.

“ **Personal care, food shopping and preparation, providing help with laundry and cleaning if I need it. This will help me stay at home.** ”

—Survey Respondent



The Performing Arts

Overall, older performing artists are vibrant and have a lot to offer as they age, and frequently choose to continue involvement in their work past the traditional age of retirement. Encouraging neighborhood opportunities for employment, volunteer work and continued social interaction with colleagues will keep seniors connected and add value to the community. Better access to information can help them to alleviate financial burden, make their homes safer, locate assistance for household needs or discover ways to become involved in social activities—all of which can lead to improved quality of life and continued independent living. Since many of those in the performing arts do not have traditional family ties, finding ways for seniors to strengthen bonds within the performing arts “family” can become a source of reliable support. The Actors Fund can serve as a vital link between professional and neighborhood communities.



Crosswalk at 43rd Street and 9th Avenue

Community Action has already begun:

The Seniors Community Survey Project brought together a unique consortium of organizations to launch this effort. It has generated discussion among Advisory Committee members and throughout the community as a whole, offering a unique opportunity to bring about meaningful improvements in the neighborhoods to better support their seniors. Individuals and organizations have already stepped forward to become part of the solution and this energy and enthusiasm will continue to grow over time.

- Letters from Community Board 4’s Transportation Planning Committee to the NYC Department of Transportation have resulted in the installation of crosswalk countdown timers, a pedestrian refuge between bike and car lanes, and changes to traffic patterns to improve pedestrian safety.
- The Building Service 32BJ SEIU is in discussion with The Actors Fund to provide training to union building personnel that will facilitate the identification of seniors at risk, and provide resource information when needed.
- Community organizations such as Hartley House are in the planning stages to start new programs as a result of Advisory Committee discussions.
- Older Adults Technology Services (OATS) has committed to developing an online events calendar on its Senior Planet website.

The Advisory Committee will remain active as a group and will continue to foster the community support necessary to develop and implement the solutions proposed in this report, share resources, keep the community informed and address any new challenges that may arise. The Actors Fund is pleased to have spearheaded this study of issues facing aging seniors in these particular neighborhoods. It was especially enlightening to see how eagerly our partners and stakeholders became involved and how they all remain dedicated to enriching lives within the community and to help older adults meet the challenges they face as they age.

Notes

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3. Low-Income Chelsea Residents Fear Threats to Public Housing, The Midtown Gazette, by Annie Zak and Mei-Yu Liu accessed on February 11, 2013 at: <http://themidtowngazette.com/2012/12/low-income-chelsea-residents-fear-threats-to-public-housing/>
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6. Healthy Aging: What Role Does Socialization Play? by Carolina Moore on June 18, 2010, accessed on November 20, 2012 at: <http://www.sooperarticles.com/health-fitness-articles/healthy-aging-what-role-does-socialization-play-85138.html>
7. According to a 2012 survey of a national sample of 2,250 US adults aged 60+, “among respondents, 14% report that they are employed full-time, 10% part-time, and 2% unemployed but looking for work. 63% report that they are retired.” National Council on Aging. (2012). United States of Aging, New York: Penn Schoen Berland, (p. 6) Retrieved from <http://www.ncoa.org/assets/files/pdf/united-states-of-aging/2012-survey/USA-Topline-Results.pdf>
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