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**MAYOR BLOOMBERG, SPEAKER QUINN AND THE NEW YORK ACADEMY OF
MEDICINE UNVEIL BLUEPRINT TO ENHANCE CITY'S LIVABILITY FOR OLDER NEW
YORKERS**

Innovation Grants for Senior Centers; Taxi Voucher Program; Free Legal Assistance in Housing Court; Free Buses to Supermarkets; Discounted Gym Memberships; Resident Artists In Senior Centers; and a Palliative Care Summit in the Fall to Encourage Safe, Active, and Healthy Aging

Initiatives Fulfill 2008 State of the City Promise and Follow Guidelines to Become a World Health Organization Age-Friendly City

Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg, City Council Speaker Christine Quinn and New York Academy of Medicine President Jo Ivey Boufford, MD, today outlined a series of 59 initiatives aimed at making New York a more livable City for its growing senior population. The initiatives in *Age-Friendly NYC: Enhancing Our City's Livability for Older New Yorkers*, which fulfill a promise made by the Mayor in his 2008 State of the City address, are a blueprint for promoting active aging focused on four areas: community and civic participation; housing; public spaces and transportation; and health and social services. Initiatives include innovation grants that will create new models of service for 50 senior centers; the expansion of the City's Assigned Counsel pilot program to provide eviction prevention services for seniors in Housing Court; placing artists in senior centers to provide free art programs; offering free bus transportation to supermarkets to increase access to healthy food options and discounted health club memberships; and holding a palliative care summit in the fall. The Mayor and Speaker also announced the creation of the Age-Friendly NYC Commission charged with engaging the public and private sectors to maximize the health and active participation of New Yorkers of all ages. The Commission will be co-chaired by United Way of New York City President and CEO Gordon Campbell and IBM Vice President of Global Community Affairs Robin Willner and staffed by The New York Academy of Medicine. Joining Mayor Bloomberg for the announcement at the Mark Morris Dance Group, which hosts dance classes for seniors in Brooklyn, were Deputy Mayor for Health and Human Services Linda I. Gibbs, Department for the Aging Commissioner Lilliam Barrios-Paoli and City Council Committee on Aging Chair Councilmember Maria del Carmen Arroyo.

"The initiatives we're launching will go a long way towards helping older New Yorkers live more connected, vibrant, and meaningful lives," said Mayor Bloomberg. "The dynamic growth of our older population demanded that we look for ways to make New York City even more 'age friendly.' Today we are poised to take the next critical step in making New York even more friendly to people of all ages, by providing improved services and addressing the needs of the people who laid our City's foundation."

(more)

“New York City is already a great place to grow older, thanks to everything from convenient public transportation and quality health facilities, to the sense of community you get in our diverse neighborhoods,” said Speaker Quinn. “But with our city expected to add roughly half a million older adults in the next twenty years, we need to take steps to make sure we remain age-friendly. Since the Council first began working with NYAM in 2007, we’ve had conversations with older New Yorkers in all five boroughs about areas we still needed to improve. Today I’m proud to join the Mayor and Doctor Boufford in announcing a concrete plan to keep us age-friendly in the years to come.”

“NYAM is honored to be staffing the Age-friendly NYC Commission, a public-private enterprise that will make recommendations and oversee their implementation,” said Dr. Boufford, New York Academy of Medicine President. “From its inception, the Age-friendly New York City project has been a true partnership between the public and private sectors. In our year long assessment, older New Yorkers made clear their love for the City and offered hundreds of suggestions about how the City could be an even better place to grow old. We are thrilled that the Mayor’s Office, DFTA and the City Council are launching these initiatives to make New York still more age-friendly.”

Investment in Senior Centers

Enhancing senior centers to better serve a larger, more active and diverse senior population is a key part of creating a more age-friendly city. Using public and private funds, the City will provide innovation grants for the creation of new models of service at 50 senior centers across the five boroughs. The 50 centers will offer staff autonomy, attract new talent and entrepreneurial energy and bring a real sense of innovation and competition to the entire senior services system. They will also be held accountable for producing vibrant programs, high participation rates and better health outcomes for older New Yorkers. The centers will continue to provide older adults with healthy meals and the opportunity to socialize with their peers, but they will also become model centers of wellness offering innovative health programs.

Age-Friendly NYC is part of an international effort to ensure the great cities of the world not only support their residents as they age, but also tap the tremendous resources older people can offer. New York City is home to 1.3 million older New Yorkers, a number expected to increase by close to 50 percent by 2030. In 2007, the City Council provided funding to NYAM to begin creating a blueprint to help New York City become a model of an age friendly city. In 2008, the New York Academy of Medicine in conjunction with Speaker Quinn and the Bloomberg Administration released a report, *Toward an Age-Friendly New York City*, which outlined the major themes that emerged from a year-long assessment and conversation with New York’s older residents. Through community forums hosted by the City Council, focus groups, and interviews throughout the five boroughs, more than 1,500 older New Yorkers, caregivers, service providers, and others expressed their opinions on growing older in New York and the opportunities and challenges they face. The initiatives outlined today address many of those issues and aim to ensure that New York continues to be a place older residents want to stay and a destination for retiring seniors and former New Yorkers.

“The Bloomberg administration is leading an ambitious effort to make our City as age friendly as possible so that we can provide older New Yorkers with the services, programs and supports they need to age both healthfully and actively,” said Deputy Mayor for Health and Human Services Linda I. Gibbs. “We are thankful to the many partners who are helping us to build on our City’s existing strengths and identify the new innovations and ideas that will enable us to best prepare for the rapid growth in the number of older New Yorkers over the next 20 years.”

“The Age-Friendly NYC effort is an investment that will not only improve the lives of the City's seniors today, but prepare us for the growing number of seniors tomorrow,” said Department for the Aging Commissioner Lilliam Barrios-Paoli. “None of this could have been accomplished without the dedicated work of all our partners, including the City Council, the New York Academy of Medicine, DFTA’s provider community who deliver these exceptional services everyday, and especially the seniors of New York City.”

“What’s most exciting about these initiatives and this report is that they didn’t just come from government officials or policy experts,” said City Council Aging Committee Chair Maria del Carmen Arroyo. “They came from conversations the Council had with older New Yorkers and their families, caregivers, and health care providers, about their needs and ideas. I’m proud to continue working with NYAM and the Administration, as we begin to make those ideas a reality in New York City.”

“Just as New York City has been preparing for our population to grow larger, we also need to prepare for our population growing older,” said City Council Senior Centers Subcommittee Chair Melissa Mark-Viverito. “The needs of today’s seniors are dramatically different than they were ten years ago, and we’ve been working hard to meet those changing needs. These initiatives will help us make sure that New York City remains a national leader in providing a supportive environment for older adults.”

“The New York City project has been absolutely crucial to the international blossoming of the age-friendly cities movement,” said Dr. John Beard, Director of Aging and Life Course at the World Health Organization in Geneva. “New York has shown that even a large and established city can look to the future to create a better environment for its aging population. The key has been rigorous consultation and the development of such a firm plan of action. Even more importantly, there has been a personal commitment from the Mayor to make this happen, right from the beginning. This approach has been the inspiration for the guidelines we are developing for a Global Network of Age Friendly Cities.”

The *Age-Friendly NYC: Enhancing Our City’s Livability for Older New Yorkers* report outlines 59 long-term initiatives to that will be launched throughout the year. Building upon the World Health Organization’s Global Age-Friendly Cities Project guidelines and the NYAM’s Age-Friendly NYC report, the initiatives are an action plan to address the issues faced by older New Yorkers. They will serve as a model for the way governments supports their residents as they age. These goals are divided into four main areas.

Recommendation: Housing – Increase Availability and Affordability of Safe, Appropriate Housing

Example Initiative – Expansion of the Assigned Counsel Pilot Program. Older adults involved in Housing Court cases are an especially vulnerable population, and for many, navigating an eviction proceeding in Housing Court can be very challenging. The Department of the Aging will expand its partnership with the New York City Housing Court to offer legal assistance and crisis intervention to older New Yorkers living in the Bronx and Staten Island who are at risk of eviction. The pilot program began in Brooklyn and Manhattan and was recently expanded to Housing Court in Queens with the help of Deputy Chief Administrative Judge for New York City Courts Fern Fisher. The City will provide not only free legal representation, but also social services to address the root causes of financial distress that may have contributed to the pending eviction.

Recommendation: Public Spaces and Transportation – Provide Age-Friendly Public Spaces and a Safe Means of Reaching Them

Example Initiative – Taxi Vouchers for Seniors. In order to ensure that residents are able to maintain mobility, the Taxi and Limousine Commission (TLC), the Mayor’s Office for People with Disabilities, and Department for the Aging will work jointly with the MTA and Access-A-Ride to offer taxi and livery cab vouchers for seniors who use Access-A-Ride vehicles. This program will focus on Access-A-Ride users to provide them with a better, cost-effective, more efficient way to travel the city by using the taxi fleet as an alternative to the current Access-A-Ride vehicles.

Recommendation: Civic and Community Participation – Improve Social Inclusion, Civic Participation and Employment Opportunities for Older Adults

Example Initiative -Establish Artist Residencies in Senior Centers. The Departments of Aging and Cultural Affairs are launching a pilot initiative in senior centers to offer work space for visual artists in return for services such as teaching art classes to senior center members or organizing exhibitions in the senior centers. The City will work with the five borough arts councils to identify artists young and old to participate in the program as a way to enrich programming in senior centers and tap into the City’s vast artistic and other cultural resources. NYC Performing Arts Spaces, with support from ConEdison, will also place two musicians in residence at a senior center using a similar model. This program will initially begin in select senior centers in each borough and may expand in the future.

Recommendation: Health and Social Services – Ensure Access to Health and Social Services to Support Independent Living

Example Initiatives – Providing Free Buses to Healthy Food Options and Discounts on Gym Memberships. Continuing its efforts to ensure that all New Yorkers have access to healthy and fresh foods, the City will provide transportation for older adults from senior centers and naturally occurring retirement communities (NORCs) to supermarkets throughout the five boroughs. Department of Education school buses, when they are not needed to transport students, will be available to older New Yorkers at no charge. The initiative began with a pilot in Brooklyn, where senior centers and NORCs have transported an estimated 1,800 older New Yorkers to supermarkets and other food-related venues.

In partnership with New York Sports Club, New Yorkers over the age of 65 can receive a 25 percent discount on memberships at all 54 locations in the five boroughs to promote and maintain healthy lifestyles through regular exercise. As part of this partnership, New York Sports Clubs will also be providing pro-bono fitness classes in senior centers in underserved communities, helping seniors all over the City experience the benefits of exercise close to home.

Palliative Care Summit

In the fall of 2009, the City will host a citywide summit on palliative care. Advances in medicine, combined with a growing older adult population, have resulted in a dramatic increase in the number of older adults living with chronic illness. Palliative care is an interdisciplinary medical

specialty that focuses on improving the quality of life for individuals with advanced illness and their families. The City is planning a number of initiatives to educate New Yorkers about palliative care and promote its use. The summit will focus on and make policy recommendations in a variety of areas in order to advance palliative care and health care planning.

Age-Friendly NYC Commission

An Age-Friendly NYC Commission has been established to bring together the public, private, academic and philanthropic sectors to build on the initiatives and recommendations of the Age-Friendly NYC assessment to advance New York City's position as one of the most livable cities in the world. Commission members will be charged with exploring, creating and leveraging new opportunities in the corporate, non-profit, cultural, health care, labor, faith-based, service, and academic sectors to support a rapidly increasing population of older New Yorkers. The Commission will be co-chaired by United Way of New York City President and CEO Gordon Campbell and IBM Vice President of Global Community Affairs Robin Willner.

Age-Friendly NYC Initiatives

Focusing on four main areas, the full list of *Age-Friendly NYC: Enhancing Our City's Livability for Older New Yorkers* initiatives includes:

COMMUNITY & CIVIC PARTICIPATION

Employment & Economic Security

- *Provide job training and search assistance to older New Yorkers*
- *Increase number of paid job opportunities for older New Yorkers*
- *Assist older New Yorkers short of work histories to obtain employment allowing them to be eligible for Social Security*

Volunteerism

- *Promote intergenerational volunteering and learning through partnerships with schools and nonprofit organizations*
- *Provide new volunteer opportunities and expand resources for older New Yorkers through timebanking and other initiatives*

Cultural & Recreational Activities

- *Establish citywide partnership between senior centers and libraries*
- *Recruit artists to conduct programs in senior centers*
- *Provide a guide of discounted arts/cultural events for older New Yorkers*

Information & Planning

- *Publicize citywide opportunities for older New Yorkers through new older adult-focused section of NYC & Co. website*
- *Redesign DFTA's website to be more user-friendly and provide greater information about services*
- *Conduct local community assessments of neighborhoods to determine age friendliness*
- *Conduct cultural competency trainings on LGBT issues with the City's senior service providers*

HOUSING

Affordable Housing Development

- *Target housing funds and streamline process of building low income housing for older New Yorkers*
- *Examine parking requirements for affordable senior housing and amend the zoning code as necessary to facilitate construction of senior housing*
- *Provide loans for rehabilitation and new construction of affordable housing*

Homeowner & Renter Assistance

- *Provide loan assistance to older New Yorkers for home repairs*
- *Engage NYC home improvement contractors in best practices for the older adult market*
- *Improve access to SCRIE through transfer to Department of Finance*
- *Expand eviction prevention legal services for older New Yorkers*

Aging in Place

- *Provide additional supportive services to NORCs*
- *Target Section 8 vouchers to vulnerable older adults at risk of eviction*
- *Promote development of and access to new models of housing that support aging in place*

PUBLIC SPACES & TRANSPORTATION

Accessible & Affordable Transportation

- *Improve elevator and escalator service and enhance accessibility of subway stations*
- *Improve efficiency of Access-A-Ride by equipping vehicles with GPS devices and implementing phone notification system*
- *Match accessible taxis with users who need them*
- *Develop model accessible taxi*
- *Develop taxi voucher program for older New Yorkers who are unable to use public transportation*

Safe & Age-Friendly Public Spaces

- *Increase seating in bus shelters*
- *Install public restrooms at key locations citywide*
- *Create new, pedestrian friendly public spaces while calming traffic*
- *Redesign street intersections at key locations citywide to improve safety for older New Yorkers*
- *Identify age-friendly parks and encourage older adults to utilize them*

Planning for the Future

- *Provide environmental stewardship workshops and engage older New Yorkers in planting trees as part of PlaNYC and MillionTreesNYC*
- *Conduct study to better address the mobility needs of older New Yorkers*
- *Promote use of Universal Design Guidelines through education and awareness efforts*

HEALTH & SOCIAL SERVICES

Wellness & Healthcare Planning

- *Increase HIV awareness and health literacy among older New Yorkers*
- *Redesign senior centers to focus on wellness and develop health outcomes*
- *Establish fitness club discount for older New Yorkers*
- *Increase awareness about health insurance options through DFTA's Health Insurance Information Counseling and Assistance Program (HIICAP)*

Assistance to At-Risk Older Adults

- *Implement citywide falls prevention initiative*

- *Provide free air conditioners to at-risk older New Yorkers*
- *Conduct outreach to older New Yorkers at risk of social isolation*
- *Add Silver Alert to Notify NYC*
- *Expand "Savvy Seniors" campaign to educate older New Yorkers about identity theft and fraud*

Access to Nutritious Food

- *Improve older New Yorkers' access to food stamps by implementing telephone application process and outreach campaign*
- *Implement NYC Green Cart program and form supermarket commission to address needs of neighborhoods underserved by supermarkets*
- *Provide bus service for older New Yorkers to access grocery stores*
- *Increase efficiency in City's case management and home delivered meals programs*

Caregiving & Long-Term Care

- *Provide counseling and support services to grandparents raising grandchildren*
- *Expand educational materials and supports available to family caregivers*
- *Explore policies that would allow more New Yorkers to take family leave when needed*
- *Conduct outreach and workshops on long-term care and caregiving resources for employers in NYC*
- *Increase access to community-based care*
- *Expand training opportunities and other supports for paid caregivers*
- *Promote awareness and education about long-term care insurance*

Palliative Care & Advance Directives

- *Promote palliative care*
- *Expand existing HHC palliative care programs*
- *Promote advance directives*
- *Advocate for State legislation authorizing family members or domestic partners to act as surrogates to make health care decisions on behalf of an incapacitated adult*

- 30 -

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