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**Age-friendly New York City Community Forum Notes
City Hall Senior Center
Council Member Alan Gerson
May 7, 2008**

Approximate number of attendees: 150

Note: The forum was translated into both Cantonese and Mandarin.

What do you like about NYC?

- Convenience of having everything nearby
- Good weather

Four major issues emerged during the discussion:

- Affordability and the City's high cost of living
 - Over half of the attendees indicated issues with Medicare and prescription drug prices
 - The seniors overwhelmingly pushed the notion that public transportation should be free for older people. "It's free in China, why not here?" one older man asked.
- Language barriers
 - Seniors indicated a high reliance on the City Hall Senior Center because it is one of only a few that speak Chinese and are welcoming. Many seniors travel from other neighborhoods because of the void of such services in their local area. The cost associated with is high for many. One couple said that they earn \$200 per month and spend \$40 per month traveling by bus from their homes to the City Hall Senior Center each day.

- “I’m an older woman who speaks only Chinese said she feels as if she were blind, mute and deaf, “I’m blind because I cannot read documents written in English. I’m deaf because people speak to me in English and I don’t understand. And I’m mute because I cannot communicate with anyone who does not know my language.”
- Housing
 - Over half indicated that they are facing harassment and are being pushed out because of gentrification
 - Many indicated not having enough money to qualify for low-income housing, which often requires an income of at least \$18,000
 - Many seniors indicated being on wait lists for Section 202 housing for 7 or 8 years
 - One woman indicated that she has an income of \$300 per month because she rents out the living room in her one bedroom apartment (the rent is \$250 so she pockets just \$50 per month)
 - Another woman (87 years old and frail) was crying as she spoke. She has no income and was forced to double-up with three other people in a small apartment. Even though she needs a home health aide and is eligible to have one at little or no cost, her apartment was deemed unlivable and she cannot get a home health aide unless she moves. She doesn’t know what to do.
- Safety (generally defined)
 - When asked, nearly all attendees raised their hands to indicate that they do not feel safe in their communities. When pressed farther, only a handful indicated that they had personally been the victim of crime “in the last few years.” Even fewer people raised their hands to indicate that a friend or someone they knew had been such a victim.
 - Need more street lights
 - Need stronger penalties for elder abuse
 - Need to educate young people better so they will “do right” and we can feel safer
- Misc.
 - Need better snow removal on the sidewalks

- Traffic lights are too fast in Chinatown (many raised hands to indicate agreement)