

## **The Senior Advocacy Leadership Team Embarks on the Age-Friendly District Initiative**

On Wednesday, January 24, 2018, The Senior Advocacy Leadership Team (SALT) held an initial forum to discuss the establishment of the Age-Friendly District Initiative in the Lower East Side of Manhattan. The meeting was held at the Manny Cantor Center of the Educational Alliance and brought together a wide assembly of community and political leaders along with members of fraternal organizations and individuals. Among those present were representatives from Manhattan Community Board 3, Democratic Party District Leaders, the Jewish Association Serving the Aging (JASA), Co-op Village NORC, Henry Street Settlement, NYPD 7<sup>th</sup> Precinct, New York Public Library Seward Park Branch, and the fraternal Radical Age Movement. Ms. Ahsia Basi, Senior Policy Associate for the New York Academy of Medicine gave the key-note presentation introducing the Age-Friendly Initiative concept. Mr. William Hamer, Chairman of the fraternal Harlem Advocates for Seniors, shared their experience and history in establishing the Age-Friendly District Initiative in Harlem providing guidelines and encouragement to SALT in its undertaking. The discussion period was guided by Mr. Terry Kaelber, Director of Community Engagement Projects for United Neighborhood Houses.

The discussion period brought about a lively exchange that addressed the challenges ahead and guidelines on how to proceed to assure the success of the Initiative. Among the challenges raised facing the work are (among others mentioned): a) the multi-cultural and multi-lingual nature of the Lower East Side making it one of the most diverse neighborhoods even nationally, b) to the current transformation of the Lower East Side, physically through the many construction projects that contribute to difficulties for the walkability of the streets

for seniors, and of the gentrification that redefine the concept of affordability in housing. To properly address these issues SALT needs to get a better understanding of the needs of the community that include income disparities, and the social and age needs of the aged and disabled. In this work SALT should be guided by the "8 Domains of Livability": ●Outdoor spaces and buildings; ●Transportation; ●Housing; ●Social Participation; ●Respect and social inclusion; ●Civic participation and employment; ●Communication and information; and ●Community and health services.

It was pointed out that a major partner for SALT in its work is the Community Board. SALT can make a contribution documenting irregularities in the community and then providing input to the budget proposal process that would finally be presented to the City Council for approval. For this work SALT can reach out to the New York Academy of Medicine, Community Board 3, and the United Neighborhood Houses for studies already performed, and provide public information sessions to educate the senior population of the state of the community. In so doing SALT should also reach out to NYCHA to get a true picture of the needs of the community.

During the discussion period a question was raised as to what are the age parameters to participate and contribute to the Senior Advocacy Leadership Team. While SALT is primarily comprised of seniors (ages 60+), it is not solely identified by the age of its members but by the issues it addresses in the interests of senior citizens. In this challenge SALT welcomes the broad participation of interested persons wanting to contribute to the improvement of the living and social condition of seniors, many of whom would be family members. ■