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Golden Oldies
By Zachary Kussin

From amenity-filled wonderlands to affordable buildings, developments for NYC’s senior citizens are on the rise

By ZACHARY KUSSIN

FORTHCOMING rental building on the Upper West Side has undeniable luxurious extras, including a library lounge, a chairlift to a movie theater. There’s just one catch: You have to be a senior citizen to live there.

305 West End Residences, near 78th Street, will be a sleek and allergy-assisted living facility with a memory care wing that’s specially designed for individuals with dementia or Alzheimer’s. And there are more河西-focused developments like it on the way.

Dubbed the “Vineyard,” some 32 residential projects catering solely to seniors are breaking through New York City’s pipeline, bringing brand-new digs to those in their golden years that are a far cry from institutional nursing homes. The wave of construction is largely thanks to surging baby boomers who prefer aging in urban settings, so new developments are sprouting up like mushrooms in the memory care niche. And while some are pricey, others are more affordable.

305 West End will overlook Central Park and provide a daily dose of nature and wellness center for visiting medical professionals, which “makes it easier for our residents, so they don’t have to travel outside of the building,” says Steven Rabinowitz of Birdie Berman Group, which is developing the property alongside Northeastern Group.

In addition to beautifully designed communal spaces and those meals a day, lucky residents at 305 West End Ave. will also get a cinema. Monthly costs will start at around $1,000 per month.
families would reply, "We had no place to put Mom or Dad in the city. We realized we had to deliver that in Manhattan."

Turns out Mom and Dad want to stay in the city, too. A 2017 study commissioned by real estate investment trust Welltower showed that 3,000 adults of all ages living in 10 large North American cities, including New York, found that 70 percent of respondents want to stay put after turning 80. Cities have high-quality health care and improved mobility thanks to public transportation. It’s easier to meet people, which means better opportunities for making new friends, even forging second-act romances.

"We have a generation thinking of their later years much more actively...because they’re living longer," says Mercedes Karp of Welltower, which, alongside Hines, is behind Sunrise at East 50th. This 10-story, 15-unit Midtown rental at 677 Lexington Ave., which will include assisted-living and memory-care components, is slated for completion in 2020. (Monthly rates are not yet available.) Designed by architecture and design heavyweights SLCF and Champalimaud, upscale features include air purification, circadian lighting to regulate sleep cycles, large formal dining room for communal dining, a salon and outdoor area for lounging and events. "The goal here is to provide a care model where seniors can live in a community," says Sarah Hawkins of Hines.

Other upscale projects are on the rise across town. A 23-story senior-living facility called Inspir, which will reportedly have a spa and "sky park" with a flower-lined walking path, is underway on the Upper East Side. At 21 Clark St. in Brooklyn Heights, Kayne Anderson Real Estate and Watermark Retirement Communities are redeveloping a former Jehovah’s Witness property into an assisted-living and memory-care rental. The 380,000-plus-square-foot building will have approximately 275 units and more than 7,000 square feet of amenities. Homes will be ready for occupancy in 2020.

But not all senior housing in the pipeline is for deep pockets. The Frances Goldin Senior Apartments at 175 Delancy St., part of the Essex Crossing megaproject, opened in January to residents over 55 in need of affordable housing. One of them is David Santiago, 57, who rents a one-bedroom for $900 per month. Two years ago, the retired chef suffered his second heart attack; the building’s under-construction 55,000-square-foot NYU Langone Medical Center outpost was appealing. "It gives you a sense of security knowing there are people downstairs who can assist you,

Santiago says. Fully occupied, 175 Delancy received over 6,500 applications for 99 units. "The supply of senior housing...hasn’t been developed at the same level as [condo and rental] housing," says Isaac Henderson, director of Delancy Street Associates, the joint venture that developed the building.

On Staten Island, Douglasdale Development is nearing completion of an affordable senior community on the campus of Seaview Hospital. Made up of two five-story wings, the building will house a total of 160 homes — 82 studios and 78 one-bedrooms — for folks over 62 with a maximum annual income of $38,200 for a household of two.

"You have a large presence of union and municipal workers living on Staten Island," says Douglasdale’s Jeff Levine. "While they are aging in place, they would like to stay in close proximity to their families."

Then there’s the Hebrew Home at Riverdale, which is planning River’s Edge, the city’s first continuing care retirement community — a state-regulated facility with independent living, assisted-living and nursing components — for middle-income seniors on its Bronx campus. Residency would require a projected ‘annuity fee’ between $50,000 and $85,000 (up to 85 percent of which would be refunded upon move-out or death). And monthly maintenance, from $60,000 per unit, would go toward nursing care. One- and two-bedroom homes would be laid out with aging in place in mind, including bathrooms with lower sinks and handy Below-counter cabinets. These elements ‘won’t be noticeable,’ says Daniel Reingold, president and CEO of the Hebrew Home’s nonprofit parent River Spring Health, “but it will be very comfortable and adaptive.”

Of course, designing for an aging population requires considerations for safety and easy use. But experts say the overall objective is to make these special features blend in. "Sometimes people hear ‘senior housing’ and they have a certain image," says Dattner Architects’ Daniel Herzberger, who led design efforts at 175 Delancy. "This is... not at all true."

Take the just-renovated Morning-side Retirement & Health Services community center at the Morning-side Gardens co-op apartments in upper Manhattan. Outfitted by Holzworth Krieger and Wagner Interior Design & Consulting, its light-filled interiors with wood paneling and brightly colored curtains might appeal like any other residential lounge. Look closer and there’s a built-in handrail along the millwork for standing support.

One beneficiary is resident Sydney Weinberg, 79, who visits the center every week. Thanks to better lighting, visually impaired Weinberg has an easier time navigating the revamped space. The community center also has communal tables for gatherings. Because she lost her husband two years ago, Weinberg says the biggest perk is the extra 2,900 square-foot for mingling.

"It’s really like a big community," she says.