



For Immediate Release

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**SELFHELP RELEASES FINDINGS FROM 34TH AVENUE OPEN STREET
WALK AUDIT TO IMPROVE SAFETY AND ACCESSIBILITY FOR OLDER
ADULTS**

The five-month audit, funded by an AARP grant, assessed conditions along the city's first permanent Open Street, identifying improvements to enhance safety, accessibility, and overall walkability for aging residents

QUEENS, NY (December 5, 2025) – Selfhelp's Northridge/Brulene/Southridge Neighborhood Naturally Occurring Retirement Community (NR NORC) Program released the results of a comprehensive five-month Walk Audit examining safety, accessibility, and walkability along 34th Avenue in Queens, the city's first permanent Open Street.

Supported by an AARP Community Challenge Grant, the project engaged dozens of older adults who embarked on five walk audits and evaluated the corridor at different times of day and across multiple blocks between July and November 2025.

"Our older adults rely on 34th Avenue every day, and they know better than anyone what helps them feel safe and supported," said **Stuart Kaplan, CEO of Selfhelp**. "This walk audit gave them a real voice in shaping the future of their neighborhood. Their observations make it clear that improving signage, enforcing speed limits, and adding basic amenities like seating and trash bins will go a long way toward making this Open Street work for everyone."

"Walkable, safe streets are essential for people of every age, and they're especially critical for older adults who rely on their neighborhoods to stay healthy, independent, and connected," said **Beth Finkel, State Director of AARP New York**. "AARP is proud to support Selfhelp's 34th Avenue walk audit through our Community Challenge Grant. By using older residents' day-to-day experiences, this report offers practical, achievable recommendations to make this Open Street safer, more accessible, and more welcoming for everyone who uses it."

"I am so thankful for the dozens of residents at the NORC who participated in this survey. Constituent engagement and input are what make public park spaces like Paseo Park so vital to the community," said **New York State Assembly Member Jessica González-Rojas**. "The residents of the NORC want to age in place in an environment that is safe, accessible, and respectful of their needs. Through this walk audit, they identified simple but important changes that would help them navigate Paseo Park with confidence. I hope the City will take these recommendations to create a more accessible space for our older adult community members. I want to thank Selfhelp Community Services, AARP, and our neighborhood volunteers for this study."

"The residents of our NORC want to age in a community that is safe, accessible, and respectful of their needs. This walk audit identified simple and important changes to help them navigate 34th Avenue with confidence. I'm dedicated to listening to the community and am thankful to Selfhelp Community Services, AARP, and our neighborhood volunteers for this vital study," said **Council Member Shekar Krishnan, District 25**.

"Paseo Park / 34th Avenue Open Street is a beloved community space, but it's not finished. It's going to take all of us working together with the City to create the world-class linear park Jackson Heights deserves," said **Dawn Siff, Executive Director of Alliance for Paseo Park**. "We applaud Selfhelp Neighborhood NORC for spearheading this community walk audit and report with AARP, which reinforces a top priority we heard in our own [outreach](#) – people want Paseo Park to be a safe space for pedestrians."

"Community walks are a fabulous way to help residents understand conditions and work for solutions. And, to know the solutions available! Selfhelp NORC brought the stakeholders to the street and created a series of workshops that any community would be honored to host. Most traffic injuries are preventable and programs like Selfhelp NORC's walk audit work towards that goal in a fun, healthy and engaging way. These activities also encourage seniors to enjoy the open street and be more active, safe and healthy," said **Cristina Furlong, Project Director of New York Coalition for Transportation Safety**.

While walkers highlighted the value of 34th Avenue as a vibrant community space that encourages socializing, exercise, and outdoor activity for people of all ages, the audit also surfaced several issues that limit its accessibility and safety for older adults. Participants noted that certain design elements and maintenance gaps can make the corridor difficult to navigate, especially for those who rely on predictable signage, smooth surfaces, and places to rest.

Key findings from the walk audit include:

- Confusing and inconsistent signage for pedestrian and bicycle lanes, which changed from block to block or was missing entirely.
- Frequent speeding by electric bikes and scooters, with many riders exceeding posted limits.
- A lack of trash receptacles along most of the corridor, contributing to litter.
- Dog waste bag dispensers that were regularly empty.

- Cracked pavement, potholes, and uneven sidewalks, especially between 89th and 86th Streets, posing tripping hazards.
- Limited seating options for older adults who need opportunities to rest while walking.

Building on the strengths of 34th Avenue as a well-used and well-loved community space, participants identified several practical steps that would make the Open Street safer, more predictable, and more age-friendly for older adults who rely on it daily.

Key recommendations from the walk audit include:

- Standardize and clearly mark pedestrian and bicycle lanes consistently across the full 1.3-mile corridor.
- Increase monitoring and enforcement of speeding by motorized bikes and scooters, including the use of additional cameras and greater police visibility.
- Add trash receptacles along the Avenue and ensure that the Department of Sanitation incorporates them into regular collection routes.
- Improve landscaping on the 34th Avenue median, especially between 86th Street and Junction Boulevard.
Repair deteriorated roadway and sidewalk surfaces, with priority given to the blocks between 89th and 86th Streets.
- Provide additional seating to support older adults and others who need rest areas while walking.

The Selfhelp Northridge/Brulene/Southridge Neighborhood NORC, established in 1998, encompasses eight co-ops with 2,600 apartments and serves roughly 550 older adults. Residents receive social work and nursing support, subsidized transportation to medical appointments, health promotion and exercise programs, and a range of educational and recreational activities. The co-ops are located primarily along 34th Avenue.

To read the full report, please visit: <https://selfhelp.net/wp-content/uploads/2025/12/2025-Walk-Audit-Report-NR-NORC.pdf>.

About Selfhelp Community Services

Selfhelp is dedicated to providing care that is compassionate, trusted, and innovative, always respecting the life experiences of those they serve. Selfhelp's unique approach is rooted in their longstanding work with Holocaust survivors. Each year, they support 25,000 individuals through affordable housing, home care, and community-based services, supporting aging with dignity and independence. www.selfhelp.net

About AARP

AARP is the nation's largest nonprofit, nonpartisan organization dedicated to empowering Americans 50 and older to choose how they live as they age. With a nationwide presence, AARP strengthens communities and advocates for what matters most to the more than 100

million Americans 50-plus and their families: health security, financial stability and personal fulfillment. AARP also works for individuals in the marketplace by sparking new solutions and allowing carefully chosen, high-quality products and services to carry the AARP name. As a trusted source for news and information, AARP produces the nation's largest circulation publications, AARP The Magazine and AARP Bulletin. To learn more, visit www.aarp.org/about-aarp/, www.aarp.org/español or follow @AARP, @AARPenEspañol and @AARPadvocates on social media.

The [AARP Community Challenge](#) is a grant program to make tangible improvements in communities that jump-start long-term change. It is part of AARP's nationwide Livable Communities initiative, which supports the efforts of cities, towns, neighborhoods and rural areas to become great places to live for people of all ages. To learn more, visit AARP.org/Livable.

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