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Town & Village

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Self-driving car maker starts mapping NYC streets

Self-driving cars have hit New York City Streets.

Alphabet's self-driving car division Waymo has begun mapping the city as

it moves towards a future of electric and autonomous vehicles.

"Autonomous vehicles hold the promise to dramati-

cally improve traffic flow and expand access to convenient and affordable transportation for millions of New Yorkers," said Mayor-elect Eric Adams.

"I'm excited to welcome Waymo to New York so that one day we can have safe autonomous technology on our streets."

Tech:NYC Executive Director Julie Samuels added: "The more information we gather about the way our city moves, the closer we get to creating a more efficient, sustainable, and safe mobility network. Tech:NYC is excited to welcome Waymo to New York to help us learn how our streets — from bike and bus lanes to highways and walkways — really work."

New Yorkers will see Waymo vehicles driving in Manhattan, primarily south of Central Park and down through the city to the Financial District and also out to a small section of New Jersey through the Lincoln Tunnel.

Specialist Waymo teams are manually driving five hybrid Chrysler Pacificas on the street during daylight. Later, they will manually drive several of the company's zero-emission Jaguar I-PACEs equipped with the latest technology on the same streets in Manhattan.

"The insights we'll gain will help the Waymo Driver improve its ability to perceive and predict the actions of other road users in dense urban



The autonomous vehicles will be manually driven by specialist teams during the mapping.

areas," said the company in a statement.

New York City is the most densely populated city in the country, with bustling avenues, unusual road geometries, complex intersections, and constantly evolving layouts.

Waymo said its vehicles have been designed to handle these types of activities that define city driving but stressed the vehicles will be manually operated by autonomous specialists at all times, to help scale and advance its technology in support of our mission to make roads safer.

The company added, "The heavy rain and dense snowfall that we expect to encounter will build on the driving we've completed to date in the snow and rain, giving us

more opportunities to assess the way our sensors perform in wet, cold conditions beyond our data augmentation and simulation testing."

Jose Hernandez, Advocacy Coordinator and President of United Spinal Association's New York City Chapter said: "We appreciate Waymo's commitment to strengthening access to autonomous vehicles for the masses, including individuals with disabilities. These are the first steps in bringing New York City into the future of transportation that we can all utilize.

"We are grateful for their support in our shared belief in improving mobility for more people and making it safer and easier to get people and things where they are going.

Waymo is the only com-

pany currently operating a public car-hailing service with nobody behind the wheel. Its main service area is Chandler, Arizona, a flat suburb of Phoenix.

The company recently expanded to San Francisco, where it is now running a ride-hailing service for the public under an NDA-constrained "Trusted Tester" program with a safety driver behind the wheel.

Waymo's New York City testing doesn't mean the company will offer a self-driving service there soon. Waymo says it has "tested in dozens of cities spanning a diverse range of climates and topographies," but it still only offers ride-hailing in small areas in San Francisco and Chandler.



Map of the area the Waymo vehicles will cover during the mapping of NYC city streets.

Local writer publishes her COVID memoir

Kate Walter loved her life as a single gay woman living in Westbeth Artists Housing in Greenwich Village.

She was recently retired from a long teaching career, but hardly retired. Finally, her time was her own, a chance to expand and explore.

She was embedded in a vibrant artistic community, a published writer, met friends for lunch, went to museums, concerts and readings. She took yoga classes and belonged to a writing workshop, a singing group, a church. She celebrated all the holidays with her family in New Jersey.

In early 2020, the lively community of Westbeth Artists Housing was gearing up to celebrate its 50th anniversary.

But when New York City went into Covid 19 pandemic lockdown, Westbeth turned into a ghost town. Kate's carefully constructed social life crashed. Suddenly, she was trapped at home, living in the pandemic epicenter.

Brief conversations with masked neighbors in the hallway or on the sidewalk became her lifeline. Her life moved onto Zoom and she took comfort watching worship services streamed every Sunday. Then the unimaginable happened. Her church burned down in a six-alarm fire. Now there literally would be no sanctuary left to return to after the pandemic — whenever that would be.

Kate was lonely and scared. But she picked herself up and called upon her resilience and spiritual practices to stay safe and get through the isolation.

She started penning columns for The Village Sun, a local community publication. Writing became her salvation and she produced a memoir in essays detailing her life from March 2020 to May 2021.

Called Behind the Mask Living Alone in the Epicenter was published by Heliotrope Books

More than a year later, as Westbeth and New York City reawakened, Kate said she emerged with a deeper appreciation for her home and felt forever changed.



KATE WALTER

**DON'T MISS OUT
SHOW US
YOUR
VAX**

You have the Key to NYC. Being vaccinated is the best way to protect our city and each other. People 12 and older must provide proof to enter.

Proof of vaccination includes:

- CDC Vaccine Card
- NYC COVID Safe App
- NYS Excelsior Pass
- Other Official Vaccine Record

PROOF OF VACCINATION IS NOW REQUIRED TO ENJOY INDOOR:


RESTAURANTS


BARS


GYMS


MOVIE THEATERS


MUSEUMS


OTHER INDOOR VENUES

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For more information on COVID-19 vaccines, including where to get vaccinated, visit nyc.gov/covidvaccine.

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