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**CULTURAL AFFAIRS COMMISSIONER KATE D. LEVIN CUTS THE RIBBON ON
DRAMATICALLY EXPANDED MATERIALS FOR THE ARTS**

10,000 square feet of new space for New York City's oldest and largest municipal reuse program will help meet rising demand from nonprofits and schools for free supplies

New classrooms will enhance reuse and arts education programs for teachers and students

Cultural Affairs Commissioner Kate D. Levin and Materials for the Arts Executive Director Harriet Taub tonight cut the ribbon on a 10,000 square foot expansion of New York City's oldest and largest reuse program, Materials for the Arts (MFTA).

MFTA is a program of the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs, with support from the Departments of Sanitation and Education. MFTA collects a wide variety of reusable materials from both business and individual donors, and makes them available at no cost whatsoever to schools and nonprofit organizations with significant arts programs. The largest provider of arts supplies to the City's public schools, last year alone MFTA collected 1.3 million pounds of materials worth more than \$6 million to support more than 1,800 groups. The expansion comes at a time when MFTA is experiencing rising demand for its services – 10% in the last year alone, as schools and arts groups work to navigate the economic downturn.

Cultural Affairs Advisory Commission Chair Agnes Gund, Friends of Materials for the Arts Chair Bonnie Weissblatt Weill, and officials from the Department of Education were also present at the ribboncutting, which took place at MFTA's Long Island City warehouse, during the annual "Masked Marvelous" event.

"The Materials for the Arts program helps us meet our *PlaNYC* goals for a greener New York City, while ensuring that thousands of cultural groups and schoolteachers get the supplies they need for arts projects," said Mayor Bloomberg. "The expanded facility provides new classrooms, and provides new capacity for this widely-used program."

Building on Mayor Bloomberg's five borough economic opportunity plan to bring New York City through the current economic downturn, this City-funded expansion allows MFTA to increase its ability to provide free materials to the more than 4,000 nonprofits and public schools in its database, and enhance its reuse and arts education programs for teachers, students and artists.

“MFTA is essential to the Department of Cultural Affairs’ mission to support New York City’s cultural community,” said Commissioner Levin. “This project enables MFTA to expand its donation and education services to this vital sector. We look forward to continuing this important work with the help of Friends of Materials for the Arts.”

“The expansion of Materials for the Arts’ warehouse to include dedicated classroom space is a dream come true,” said Harriet Taub, Director of MFTA. “We now can train our members about the importance of reuse and waste reduction and educate the next generation of arts professionals in NYC.”

The expansion brings MFTA’s footprint to 35,000 square feet. Previously, growth in MFTA’s education programs, as well as rising new membership levels, led to competing use for the warehouse’s only conference room and convergence center. An increase in goods donations of more than 35% since 2000 required more warehouse floor space.

Funded by the Department of Cultural Affairs, this \$980,000 project includes larger warehouse and processing area, to help MFTA meet the demand for its services. There is now dedicated space for paper goods and books, and an expanded fabric, trim and notion section. The project also dramatically enhances the quality of MFTA’s educational services, thanks to two new state of the art dedicated classroom/workshop spaces. The new facility also includes expanded office space, and a lunchroom that can accommodate larger groups for meetings.

Project architects Jeff Vandeberg and Jon Waller of Vandeberg Architects, whose prior experience with MFTA included design of the original warehouse, said: “Having been architectural midwives to Materials for the Arts from its birth and baby steps in the Chelsea Market, to leaving Manhattan for space and independence in Long Island City, we take great pleasure in this latest growth spurt and wish Harriet Taub and her staff continued success in supporting New York’s art community.”

Since 2000, MFTA has achieved dramatic productivity increases due in part to support from Friends of Materials for the Arts (FOMA). This private support has enabled MFTA to pilot new reuse education programs, offer extended “shopping hours” for recipients, and develop an interactive website and database, recently upgraded to facilitate direct donations.

“The public private partnership between New York City and Friends of Materials for the Arts (FOMA) ensures that materials collected by MFTA will be reused to their fullest and most creative potential,” said Bonnie Weissblatt Weill, Chairman, FOMA. “In these city-built, state of the art classrooms, FOMA-funded workshops will teach thousands of education professionals how to take something that was destined for a landfill and turn it into art.”

“The items found at MFTA’s warehouse inspire teachers and artists from across New York City. It’s the place that instructors turn when they need ideas for their classes, and where producers look for inspiration for their sets. Congratulations to Kate Levin, Harriet Taub and Bonnie Weill, whose commitment and vision makes New York City a great place to be green, and make art.”

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