

## NEWS FROM NYC MAYOR'S OFFICE OF OPERATIONS

### NYC Customer Service Newsletter

Volume 5 Issue 3 - May 2013

#### Consumer Affairs Serves more than 2,500 Customers on the City's First Live Chat

As a part of its "Good for Customers, Great for Business" public awareness and educational outreach campaign at the end of December, the Department of Consumer Affairs (DCA) launched the City's first Live Chat opportunity exclusively for businesses to get answers to their questions without having to visit DCA's Licensing Center or take time away from their customers to call in a question. Live Chat is available every week day from 9:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. to make it easier than ever for businesses to understand the law, do right by their customers, and avoid violations.

Businesses ask about a range of issues including how to avoid violations, what to do about Administrative Tribunal hearings or court decisions, how to find out about new laws and rules, how to pay fines, where to get legally required signs and forms and more. Nearly 80 percent of callers ask about applying for or renewing a license in one of DCA's 55 different licensed industries. Recently, for example, a business owner logged on to find out how to renew his electronic service dealer license and the Live Chat operator immediately sent him the link to the online license renewal form. He replied, "OMG that was easy."

Businesses can access Live Chat through DCA's Business Toolbox at [nyc.gov/BusinessToolbox](http://nyc.gov/BusinessToolbox). (See story below for more information on the Business Toolbox.)



Fred Riley, Senior Community Relations Coordinator from DCA's External Affairs Department chats online with a customer.

## Consumer Affairs' 10th Annual Business Education Day Informs More Than 2,000 Businesses about How to Avoid Violations

On April 4, 2013, DCA conducted its tenth annual *Business Education Day*, going door-to-door in 34 neighborhoods in all five boroughs to inform businesses about how to avoid fines and comply with the City's Consumer Protection and Licensing Laws, all **without issuing violations**. More than 100 DCA staff, joined by elected officials and representatives from City agencies, business improvement districts and local community associations, visited over 2,000 businesses, a record-setter!

DCA Commissioner Jonathan Mintz kicked off the event in Corona with Council Member Julissa Ferreras, and representatives from Small Business Services and New York State Senator Jose Peralta's office.



DCA staff enters business wearing Business Education Day button: "Know the City's Business Laws? Ask Us!"

"Business education is a key component to ensuring compliance with the City's strong consumer protection laws, so that businesses can know what's expected of them and how to get it right in the first place, doing right by their customers and avoiding violations," said DCA Commissioner Jonathan Mintz. "That's why for the last ten years, DCA has conducted these Citywide Business Education Days, and also why we recently launched both the City's first online business Live Chat and put our inspectors' checklists online so businesses would know exactly what the law required of them."

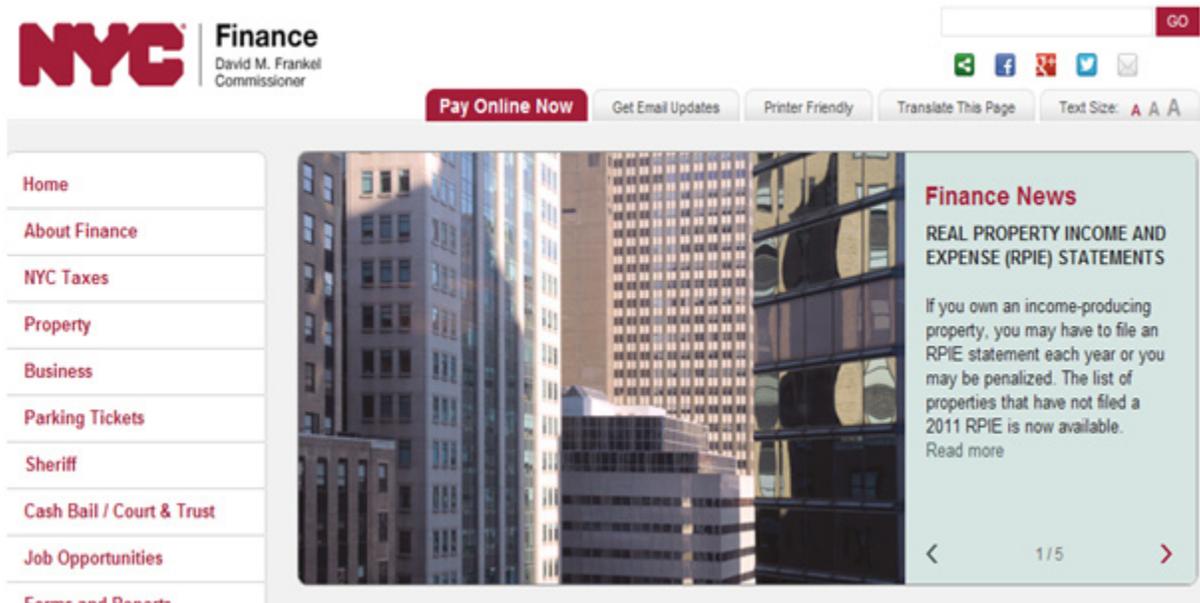
This year, DCA informed businesses about its new resources to help them comply with the law and avoid fines, including its online Live Chat option (see story above) where business owners can get their questions answered by DCA staff experts in real time and its newly expanded online Business Toolbox, where businesses can apply for or renew a license, update business information, pay fines, download signs and more. DCA distributed, for the first time ever, its inspection [checklists](#), which let businesses know exactly what inspectors look for when conducting inspections and its revised comprehensive guide, [10 Things Every Business Should Know](#), available in English, Spanish, Chinese, Korean, Russian, Haitian Creole and Bengali online at [nyc.gov/consumers](http://nyc.gov/consumers) or by calling 311.

## The Department of Finance's New Website Improves User Access and Experience

On January 11, 2013, the Department of Finance launched its new website. Re-designed from the ground up, it offers customers a cleaner design with easier navigation. Text is now in "Plain Language," pages are shorter and more concise, and they are organized into specific topics — making the new website easier for the 3.4 million unique users who visit it each month.

DOF's most frequently visited pages now can be accessed by clicking user-friendly drop-down menus: "I would like to.." and "I am a...". The "Translate This Page" feature allows any page to be translated into any of 56 languages. Users can select from 3 text sizes for easier reading. The new "Pay Online Now" page allows users to choose a payment type and takes users directly to the appropriate payment screen. Social Networking icons enable visitors to share any page on more than 50 social networking websites. Finance has also included instructional videos on key topics to make learning a little more entertaining. And, the Department has added a new "NYC Taxes" page as a one-stop shop for information on all of the taxes that Finance administers.

From property owners, to businesses, to customers, to City employees, everyone benefits from the new Finance website. Visit it today at [www.nyc.gov/finance](http://www.nyc.gov/finance).



## Department of Finance Launches New Webpage to Make Payments Easier

From tennis permits to marriage licenses, property taxes to parking meters, New York City's customers pay for a wide variety of goods, services, fines, and fees. The Citywide Payments and Receivables Services Division (CPRS) at the Department of Finance has embarked on a Citywide mission to provide customers with more payment options and more convenient ways to pay. Electronic payments have gained popularity in recent years, as they allow customers to pay from the comfort of their homes and offices. To meet this growing demand, CPRS launched the [CityPay](#) website (see screenshot below) in October 2012 to provide a central portal from which customers can quickly locate an invoice or service and make a payment. Through invoice search pages, customers can search for outstanding bills to view how much is owed and select which items they wish to pay for. CPRS is also providing payment services for items where a customer must submit information to an agency website first before making a payment, for example to the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene for dog licenses and the Health Academy, to the Department of Environmental Protection for

Right to Know permits, and to the Department of Housing Preservation and Development for heat and hot water violations.



**YOU CAN...** [Show All](#)

<p><b>PAY A VIOLATION</b></p>	<p><b>PAY NYC PROPERTY AND BUSINESS TAXES</b></p>	<p><b>PAY FOR A PERMIT OR LICENSE</b></p>
<p><b>PAY AN INSPECTION FEE</b></p>	<p><b>PAY FOR A COURSE / CERTIFICATE</b></p>	<p><b>PAY FOR OTHER BILLS AND SERVICES</b></p>

Over the last year, CPRS launched 11 payment websites for more than 120 types of transactions for which online payments were not previously accepted (see screenshot below). In addition to providing an alternative to mailing a check or traveling to an agency business center to make a payment, all payment websites offer two different payment methods, credit and debit card as well as eCheck. eChecks allow customers to make a payment electronically from their checking account. While a processing fee is charged for payments made by credit and debit cards, eCheck payments are accepted with no charge. For all payments made through CityPay there is always a no-fee way to pay.

**SEARCH RESULTS FOR "INSPECTIONS"**

Category:	Inspections
Agency:	Department of Buildings (DOB)
Payment Types:	Electrical Firm Permits
Description:	Electrical firms can make account payments for inspection and completion fees associated with electrical work through this site.
<a href="#">Pay Now</a>	

Category:	Inspections
Agency:	Fire Department (FDNY)
Payment Types:	Fire Prevention Permit or Inspection Fees
Description:	The Fire Department conducts various required fire prevention inspections. Fees for permits and/or inspections may be paid through this site.
<a href="#">Pay Now</a>	

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CPRS has seen a rapid and significant adoption of online payments. The Fire Department, for example, launched a payment website for Permits and Inspections in October 2012. Their online payment volume has increased more than forty-fold since October, with more than 1,000 customers paying online during March compared to 23 customers in their first month of accepting web payments, for a transaction that had never before been payable online. In the first month of offering a new, free eCheck payment option for online property tax payments, more than twice as many customers chose to pay by eCheck than by credit card, saving customers more than \$100,000 in processing fees.

It continues to get easier to pay the City as CPRS puts more transaction types online. CPRS is committed to providing customers with the simplest, fastest, and most secure ways to pay, as well as access to the latest trends in payment services. Visit [CityPay](#) today to view all available online payment types.

## NYC Parks Improves Summer Day Camp Registration and Tennis Court Reservation Systems

For many years, the NYC Parks Summer Day Camp registration process was on a first-come, first-serve basis, requiring parents to wait in long lines on a specific day. Then in 2011, NYC Parks changed to an online lottery registration system to address some of the issues with the old process, including the long lines and offering only one day to register. With the new online system, parents can register from home, work or anywhere they have access to a computer, as long as they do so within the new three-day period. Moreover, the lottery system makes registration equitable for everyone since slots are chosen at random through a computer-generated list. Payment is not required to enter the lottery, though parents have two weeks to submit payment. In 2013, more than 1,700 children registered for the summer camp program during the initial lottery window, allowing the agency to better reach target registration numbers. Further information about the NYC Parks Summer Day Camp program can be found at <https://www.nycgovparks.org/registration/summercamp>. (see screenshot below).

<a href="#">Bronx</a> <a href="#">Brooklyn</a> <a href="#">Manhattan</a> <a href="#">Queens</a> <a href="#">Staten Island</a>		
Name	Program Dates	Registration Dates
<a href="#">Hunts Point Summer Camp</a> <b>Location:</b> Hunts Point Recreation Center <b>Age:</b> 6 – 13 years old <b>Phone:</b> (718) 430-1847	7/8/2013 - 8/23/2013	<a href="#">Sign up for waitlist</a>
<a href="#">St. James Summer Camp</a> <b>Location:</b> St. James Recreation Center <b>Age:</b> 6 – 13 years old <b>Phone:</b> (718) 430-1847	7/8/2013 - 8/23/2013	<a href="#">Sign up for waitlist</a>
<a href="#">St. Mary's Summer Camp</a> <b>Location:</b> St. Mary's Recreation Center <b>Age:</b> 6 – 13 years old <b>Phone:</b> (718) 430-1847	7/8/2013 - 8/23/2013	<a href="#">Sign up for waitlist</a>

NYC Parks' online tennis reservation system is now in its third year. This system allows players to make online reservations at 10 courts throughout the city. Previously, all municipal tennis courts would take walk-in registration only, requiring participants to line up in the morning at popular courts to add their names to daily lists. While that procedure still takes place, players may also apply online for some courts that have been set aside for online reservation. At these courts during tennis season, customers can check availability and pay a reservation fee to book courts for singles or doubles play using their tennis permit or by purchasing a single-play ticket. During the 2012 season, 1,814 single play tickets were purchased and 5,745 reservations were made via the online tennis reservation system. The 2013 season began on April 6, 2013, and so far 118 reservations have been booked through the system. Last year, many tennis players voiced their desire to change their reservation time, which is a feature that was added to the system this season. More information about NYC Parks' online tennis reservation system can be found at <https://www.nycgovparks.org/tennisreservation>.



Tennis players at Forest Park tennis courts, Queens

## Mayor Bloomberg Signs Four Business Customer Service Bills into Law

On April 23, 2013, Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg signed into law four customer service bills intended to improve interactions between inspectors and business customers as well as reduce the regulatory burden on small businesses. These four bills provide for:

- Customer service training for inspectors
- Publication and distribution of a Business Owner's Bill of Rights
- Agency liaisons within each regulatory agency their regulated communities
- Review of cure periods for current violations

### Customer Service Training for Inspectors

This law was an outcome of the [Regulatory Review Panel's recommendations](#). The panel was a joint City Council/City Hall effort that studied ways to improve the relationship between the City and the businesses it regulates, particularly small businesses. One recommendation from the panel was to require customer service training for inspectors. In collaboration with eight agencies that conduct inspections - the Departments of Consumer Affairs, Environmental Protection, Buildings, Health and Mental Hygiene, Transportation and

Sanitation, as well as the Fire Department and the Taxi & Limousine Commission - and with the assistance of NYC-311 and DCAS, the Mayor's Office of Operations designed the new customer service training curriculum. The new curriculum incorporates elements of Great Service, Great City (the citywide effort to promote customer service), traditional customer service training modules, and training modules specifically designed to address business customer service needs. Input for the training was received from focus groups comprised of inspectors and supervising inspectors from the above agencies.



Inspector focus group at the Mayor's Office of Operations. From left to right: Devon Williams (TLC), Manuel Ortiz (TLC); Mark Ransom (DOB), Crystal Carr (DOHMH); Cicelia Acevedo (DOHMH), Tiffany Bennett (DCA); Vitaliy Zaprometov (DCA); Dennis Lin (DOB); Eric Lippacher (DEP), Joseph Acosta (DEP)

In January 2013, agencies began training inspectors using the new curriculum, with DOHMH providing training on the new business-specific modules to 225 of its inspectors. By the end of April, DCA, DEP, DOB, DOHMH, DOT and TLC had provided full or partial training using the new curriculum to a combined total of 474 inspectors. DOHMH will provide the rest of the new training in the fall.

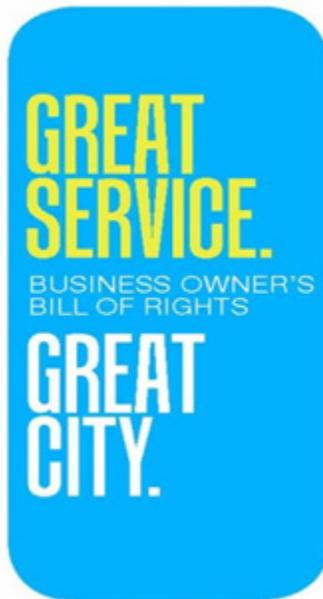
Staff from the Mayor's Office of Operations (OPS) has sat in on selected training sessions. OPS will review with the agencies how training went, including both positive and negative feedback, and will revise the curriculum as necessary. The new law requires the City to deliver the customer service training curriculum to the Speaker of the City Council on July 1, 2013.

### **The Business Owner's Bill of Rights**

To address the customer service needs of business owners, in 2010 the Mayor's Office issued the Business Owner's Bill of Rights, which was also a recommendation of the Regulatory Review Panel. The Bill of Rights identifies 10 "rights" that business owners have in relation to the City. Owners have the right to:

1. Courteous and professional treatment by our employees
2. Inspectors who are polite, professionally dressed, and properly identified
3. Information about how long inspections will take and the cost of all related fees
4. Knowledgeable inspectors who enforce agency rules consistently
5. Receive information about agency rules from inspectors or other employees
6. Contest a violation through a hearing, trial or other relevant process
7. Request a review of inspection results or re-inspection as soon as possible
8. Receive explanation from inspectors (if requested) on violation details and instructions for viewing inspection results
9. Access information in languages other than English
10. Comment, anonymously and without fear of retribution, on the performance or conduct of our employees

These rights were created to ensure the highest level of customer service and satisfaction for business owners. The Bill of Rights is included as a training module in the new customer service for inspectors curriculum.



**AS A BUSINESS OWNER, YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO:**

1. Courteous and professional treatment by our employees
2. Inspectors who are polite, professionally dressed and properly identified
3. Information about how long inspections will take and the cost of all related fees
4. Knowledgeable inspectors who enforce agency rules uniformly
5. Receive information about agency rules from inspectors or other employees
6. Contest a violation through a hearing, trial or other relevant process
7. Request a review of inspection results or re-inspection as soon as possible
8. Receive explanation from inspectors (if requested) on violation details and instructions for viewing inspection results
9. Access information in languages other than English
10. Comment, anonymously and without fear of retribution, on the performance or conduct of our employees

New York City is committed to providing New Yorkers with excellent customer service. We want to hear from you. To provide feedback and comments, please visit [www.nyc.gov/customer survey](http://www.nyc.gov/customer survey).



During summer 2012, inspectors began handing out a Bill of Rights palm card to business owners at the conclusion of inspections. Each palm card includes a link to a [customer survey](#) form that allows customers to rate the service received and to provide additional comments, including complaints and commendations. As of April 2013, business customers have submitted 21 survey forms. Submissions are received by the Mayor's Office of Operations and forwarded to the appropriate agency for response.

### **Agency Liaisons for Regulated Communities**

Although agencies have always had someone on staff assigned to deal with communities they regulate, the new bill introduced by the City Council institutionalizes this role and gives it the status it needs as an important communications channel between business owners and other regulated groups, and the City. In particular, the bill requires agency liaisons to meet regularly with the agency's regulated community or communities, including relevant chambers of commerce and industry groups. By meeting regularly with these groups, regulatory agencies will be in a better position to understand their needs and the impact of regulation on them.

### **Review of Cure Periods for Current Violations**

When inspectors issue a violation, that violation sometimes comes with what is known as a cure period, or a set amount of time to allow the customer to correct the violation and avoid paying a fine. Not all violations can be cured. For example, if a taxi driver refuses service to a passenger, after a complaint has been filed and a violation issued, it is too late to correct the violation. In addition, sometimes the potential danger is so immediate - for some building code or health violations, for example - that a violation must be issued without a cure period.

Local Law 35 of 2013 requires the Mayor's Office of Operations to review existing violations at seven different City Agencies and determine whether cure periods should be included, and if not, why. In those cases where cure periods are added, customers will be given the chance to correct the situation rather than facing the burden of an immediate fine. Cure periods will only be offered for first offenses.

## Department of Transportation Conducts Extensive Customer Outreach to Help Launch New York City's Bike Share Program

In preparation for New York City's bike share system, DOT embarked on one of the most expansive public outreach programs in City history. In addition to holding nearly 400 public meetings about station citing, the agency launched a special web portal, [nyc.gov/bikeshare](http://nyc.gov/bikeshare), which allowed the public to nominate and support station location suggestions. Participating in system planning was both easy and fun -- New Yorkers submitted more than 10,000 suggestions and 55,000 support clicks for nominations – and the website dramatically increased DOT's ability to conduct outreach citywide. These suggestions, combined with feedback received at public meetings, contributed to the final system plan..



Local residents help select Bike Share station-locations at community planning workshop

### **About Citi Bike (from NYC.gov/dot)**

New York City's next public transportation system, Citi Bike, is coming in May 2013. The new bike share system won't use any taxpayer money, and is even expected to create income for the city. Citi Bike will bring durable bicycles and docking stations to provide convenient and inexpensive mobility twenty-four hours a day, 365 days a year.

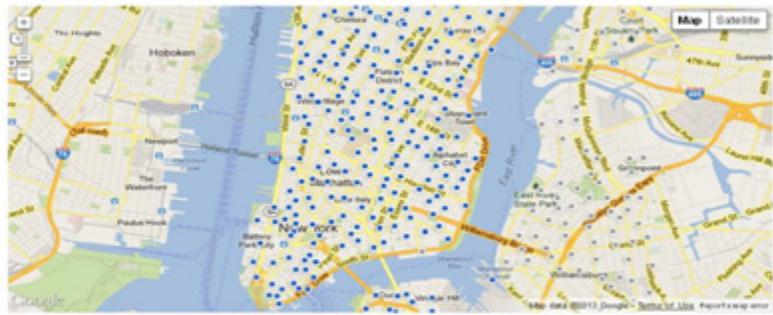
Citi Bike will be the largest bike share system in North America, with 600 stations and 10,000 bikes. DOT invited New Yorkers to help shape the system, and we received tens of thousands of ideas on our [online suggestion map](#), and many more in community workshops throughout the service area.

New York City is introducing Citi Bike to provide New Yorkers with more options for getting around the city. Most trips (54%) that New Yorkers make are less than two miles, a perfect distance for riding a bike. Citi Bike will give New Yorkers a cheap, easy, efficient and fast option for these short trips by providing ready access to a bike, without having to worry about storage or maintenance.

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# New York City Bike Share

NYC's new transit option



## Citi Bike Station Map

This map shows Citi Bike station locations. New Yorkers picked these sites, submitting their ideas in the tens of thousands on the [online suggestion map](#), in community workshops held throughout the service area, in community board feedback sessions and in hundreds of meetings that neighborhood and other organizations held directly with NYC DOT.

DOT will continue to work with New Yorkers to refine these station locations. Detailed site selection and planning work continues for Park Slope, Cobble Hill, Prospect Heights and Crown Heights (Brooklyn community districts 6, 8 and 9), the Upper West and East Sides (Manhattan districts 6 and 7) and Sunnyside (Queens district 2).

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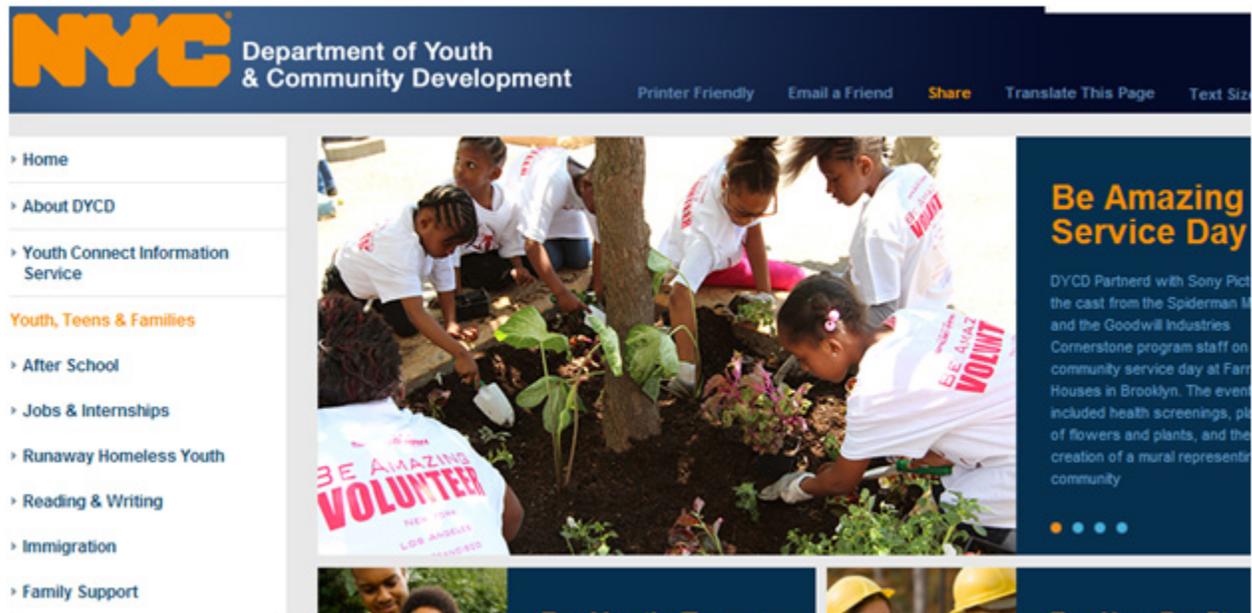
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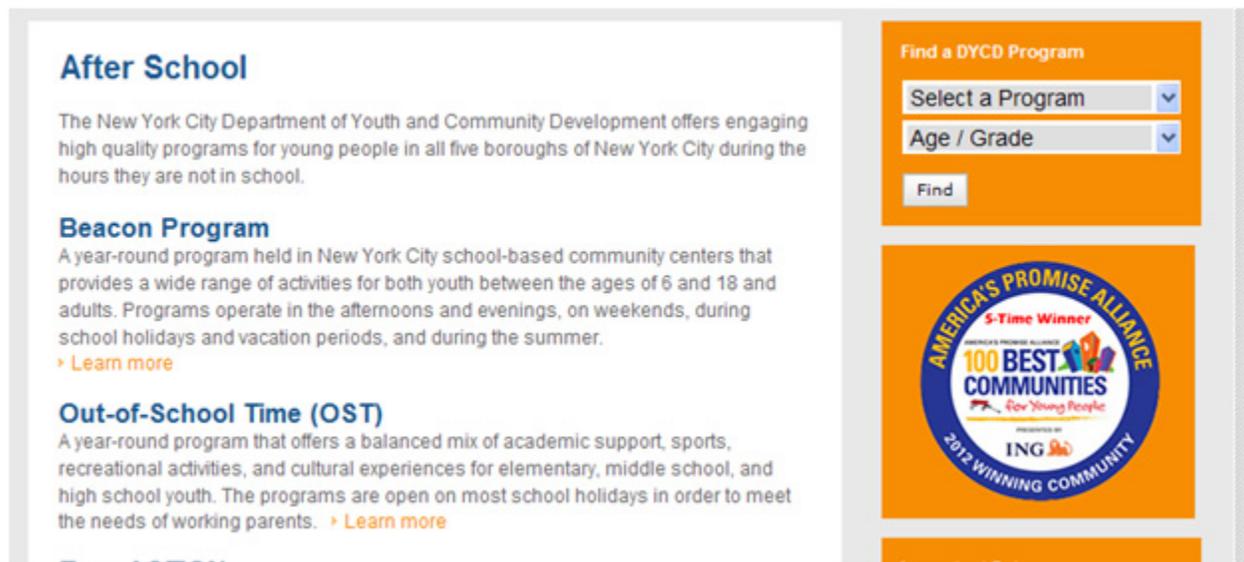
Citi Bike will give New Yorkers access to sturdy, safe bikes at self-service docking stations around the city. People can use the bikes by becoming long- or short-term members. Annual members enroll online and receive a touch pass for unlocking bikes. For one- or seven-day memberships, users can sign up at any station kiosk with a credit card. The bikes can be returned to any station in the system, creating an efficient network with many possible points and combinations of departure and arrival. With membership, users can take an unlimited number of trips. For annual members, the first 45 minutes of every trip comes at no additional charge. Short term (24 hr & 7 day) members get the first 30 minutes of every trip at no extra charge.

## The Department of Youth and Community Development Launches New Website

The NYC Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD) is excited to announce the launch of its new website ([www.nyc.gov/dycd](http://www.nyc.gov/dycd)).



In addition to visual enhancements and improved navigation, the new site has specialized information for community-based organizations, and allows users to easily identify local DYCD services and activities, and provides contact and location information for program sites. Added features include an as-it-happens Twitter feed, and a "share" button for social media sites such as Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn.



DYCD invites you to explore the enhanced site to learn more about the wide array of youth and community development initiatives that DYCD supports. DYCY also welcomes your feedback – simply click [Contact DYCD](#) from the homepage.

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