

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

October 12, 2011

CONTACTS:

Stu Loeser / Julie Wood (Mayor's Office) - (212) 788-2958

Tony Sclafani/Jen Gilbert (Buildings) - (212) 566-3473

Rachaele Raynoff / Jovana Rizzo (City Planning) – (212) 720-3471

MAYOR BLOOMBERG AND BUILDINGS COMMISSIONER LIMANDRI ANNOUNCE OPENING OF DEVELOPMENT HUB TO ACCELERATE CONSTRUCTION APPROVAL PROCESS AND SPEED UP JOB CREATION

State-of-the-Art Facility Will Allow for Electronic Submission of Digital Construction Plans, Virtual Plan Reviews and Interagency Collaboration

New Plan Review Center Builds Upon Success of the Get It Done. Together. Program, Which Generated More Than \$1 Billion in Economic Activity This Year

Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg and Buildings Commissioner Robert LiMandri today announced the opening of the NYC Development Hub, a state-of-the-art plan review center that will accelerate the approval process for construction projects throughout the City and speed up job creation. Licensed architects and engineers can submit digital construction plans to the Department of Buildings at the Development Hub and resolve any issues with City officials in a virtual environment – without ever meeting in person. Equipped with large television screens, smart boards, webcams and desktop computer tablets, the Development Hub will allow Buildings plan examiners to review thousands of building designs easier, faster – and without the use of paper for the first time in New York City. Representatives from six other City agencies involved in the project approval process are creating their own mini-hubs at their offices to participate in video conferences while reviewing plans in a digital format. New York City is among the first cities in the country to receive and review digital plans for proposed construction projects. The Mayor was joined by Deputy Mayor for Operations Cas Holloway, Landmarks Preservation Commissioner Robert B. Tierney, Steve Spinola of the Real Estate Board of New York and Bruce Beal of Related Companies.

“Using the latest technology to speed up the approval of construction projects is exactly what New York City needs to build upon the economic progress we’ve made and help us prepare for the future,” said Mayor Bloomberg. “More construction projects mean more jobs for New Yorkers, and the NYC Development Hub simplifies the way building plans are received and reviewed so those jobs can be created as soon as possible – without sacrificing public safety.”

“One of the biggest ways the City Council has been working to create jobs is by making sure unnecessary government regulation isn’t standing in the way of growth,” said Council Speaker Christine Quinn. “The NYC Development Hub will help get construction applications reviewed and approved more quickly, so we can put New Yorkers to work and speed up business development. The Hub builds on other partnerships between the Council and the Bloomberg Administration – like the New Business Acceleration Team and NYC Business Link – to coordinate multiple city agencies, cut through red tape, and make New York City even more business friendly.”

Digital construction plans for any new building or major alteration must be electronically submitted to the Development Hub, located at 80 Centre St., where Department of Buildings employees have been relocated to support the new facility. After digital plans are filed, they will be uploaded to a secure website where plan examiners, applicants and representatives from the Fire Department, the Department of Environmental Protection, the Landmarks Preservation Commission, the Department of Transportation, City Planning and the Department of Parks and Recreation can view them together, identify problem areas and mark them up – digitally – in real time. Objections can be discussed by telephone, email and/or video conference, and applicants can submit the revised plans electronically instead of visiting the Department of Buildings. This paperless procedure is expected to reduce the overall number of in-person appointments, provide plan examiners with the ability to review multiple sets of plans simultaneously and speed up the entire project approval process.

“The burden should be on City agencies to make it easier for developers and contractors to do business, not the other way around,” said Deputy Mayor Holloway. “Using the latest technology to receive and mark-up plans digitally, and bring multiple agencies together to resolve problems on the spot, we’re cutting through a decades-old bureaucracy to serve New Yorkers faster and better than ever before.”

“When New York’s businesses and developers decide to invest in the City’s future, the City should make it as easy as possible for them to comply with critical safety and regulatory protections,” said Deputy Mayor for Economic Development Robert K. Steel. “By using technology to break down barriers and improve our internal processes, the Development Hub will create jobs and accelerate New York City’s economic growth.”

“The definition of a hub is the focus of activity, authority and commerce, and that’s exactly what our new development

center is," said Commissioner LiMandri. "By harnessing the latest in technology, we're bringing together seasoned plan examiners to work with industry members and other agencies to approve construction projects more efficiently than at any other time in our history. That means fewer appointments, shorter lines and more construction projects jobs for New York City. Simply put, this is no longer your father's Buildings Department."

"The Hub is a win-win for everyone: faster customer service for New Yorkers looking to build or improve their properties; a more collaborative and productive system for city workers reviewing plans, and – most importantly for the FDNY – a process that will maintain the city's high standards for public safety," said Fire Commissioner Salvatore Cassano.

"We are thrilled to work with our partnering agencies to speed up the approval process through the NYC Development Hub, the latest way in which the City is harnessing technology to enhance business," Planning Commissioner Amanda Burden said. "The Department of City Planning is committed to improving customer service through technology."

"Improved coordination among city agencies will save time and cut costs," said Environmental Protection Commissioner Carter Strickland. "Instead of requiring developers to go from one agency to another and to wait for papers and plans to be sent to multiple locations, the NYC Development Hub will provide a seamless format for approvals, including DEP's water and sewer connections."

"With the Hub, our applicants stand to save time and energy on complicated projects and gain an even better understanding of the importance of preserving the character of New York City's historic neighborhoods and buildings," said Landmarks Preservation Commission Chair Robert B. Tierney. "We're looking forward to offering better and faster service and working more effectively with other City agencies."

"The launch of a streamlined system utilizing 21st Century technology to put agencies in touch with planners and builders at the earliest stages of construction is efficient and innovative," said Parks Commissioner Adrian Benepe. "It will help Parks share important ideas and objectives, including how to take care of existing trees and add beautiful new ones for a cleaner, greener New York."

"Reducing barriers to permitting and streamlining the plan approval process will get sites into construction faster, will get people working, and will bring new business to New York," said Steven Spinola, President of the Real Estate Board of New York. "With programs like the Hub and Get It Done. Together, the Mayor and Commissioner LiMandri are minimizing bureaucratic delays, which is a strategy that is good for real estate, good for the city, and good for the economy."

"The creation of the NYC Development Hub is just another example of the ingenuity of the Bloomberg Administration and their consistent focus on cutting through the red tape and making the city more business-friendly," Bruce A. Beal Jr., Executive Vice President of Related Companies said. "This new initiative will streamline and expedite the comprehensive building approvals process and allow developers to move forward with projects, critical employment opportunities and new residential and commercial amenities even more quickly. We commend the Mayor and Commissioner LiMandri on their vision and are thrilled to serve as a pilot project for the program."

"The Hub uses technology to bring people together in virtual co-location," said Rick Bell, Executive Director of the American Institute of Architects New York. "Getting architects face-to-face in real time with inter-agency review staff will definitely accelerate projects and improve the quality of what we design and build. The American Institute of Architects New York Chapter commends the Buildings Department for this important initiative."

Digital plans filed at the Development Hub will be reviewed by teams of Buildings plan examiners and in collaboration with the other City agencies. This is part of a new process to streamline permitting requirements and resolve regulatory conflicts adopted after the success of the *Get It Done. Together.* pilot program which launched in May. Under the innovative program, the agencies formed a working group and met with industry members after normal business hours to approve proposed construction projects. As a result, project approvals increased by 52 percent per hour in the first month. Since May, the program has led to more than 1,400 approved projects and generated more than \$1 billion worth of economic activity.

To encourage industry participation at the Development Hub, letters were mailed to 450 licensed professionals whose projects have been disapproved multiple times due to various objections by Buildings plan examiners. However, any property owner or licensed professional with outstanding construction objections can request to have their plans reviewed at the Development Hub. All new construction plans proposing solar panel installations and green roofs for tax abatements will be reviewed and approved at the Development Hub.

In 2010, Buildings plan examiners reviewed 457,000 construction plans submitted by architects and engineers licensed by New York State. During the project approval process, plan examiners typically raise objections when the plans fail to comply with the New York City Construction Codes and the Zoning Resolution, and it is the responsibility of the industry professional to resolve those objections and submit revised plans. Objections can range from safety-related requirements, such as the width of a stairwell and the number of exits, to missing required documents, such as a permit from the Landmarks Preservation Commission that allows the renovation of a landmarked building.

For more information or to submit your digital plans, please visit www.nyc.gov or email nycdevelopmenthub@buildings.nyc.gov to correspond with the Department of Buildings.

Department of City Planning

The Department of City Planning (DCP) promotes strategic growth, transit-oriented development, and sustainable communities in the City, in part by initiating comprehensive, consensus-based planning and zoning changes for individual neighborhoods and business districts, as well as establishing policies and zoning regulations applicable citywide. It supports the City Planning Commission and each year reviews more than 500 land use applications for actions such as zoning changes and disposition of City property. The Department assists both government agencies and the public by providing policy analysis and technical assistance relating to housing, transportation, community facilities, demography, waterfront and public space.