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MAYOR BLOOMBERG AND SMALL BUSINESS SERVICES COMMISSIONER WALSH ANNOUNCE FIRST STEPS TO CREATE "BUSINESS EXPRESS" WEBSITE – A ONE-STOP SHOP FOR BUSINESSES INTERACTING WITH GOVERNMENT

**Since 2004, 15,000 Small Businesses Have Received Assistance and Access to \$12 Million
through City's NYC Business Solutions Initiative**

***Mayor's State of the City Promised Expansion and New Services Including Individual
Internet Accounts to Speed Through Permitting Processes Across Agencies***

Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg and Department of Small Business Services (SBS) Commissioner Robert Walsh today announced the first steps to dramatically expand the online capacity of NYC Business Solutions, the City's comprehensive business assistance program. The "Business Express" website, now under development, will allow small business owners to set up personal accounts and get the help they need to start and grow their businesses, access incentives as well as secure necessary permits or licenses from multiple agencies at the same time. The Mayor and Commissioner Walsh also released new data showing that the NYC Business Solutions program has served more than 15,000 businesses since its launch in September 2004, and announced that the program will undertake major new initiatives in 2006. The program will expand services to 17 new locations and help 12,000 more businesses in the year ahead, connecting them to \$13 million in financing. Business operators from all five boroughs attended the announcement at the Lower Manhattan Business Solutions Center located at 79 John Street.

"Since day one, we have worked tirelessly to make the City of New York the most business-friendly city in the nation," said Mayor Bloomberg. "The City's Department of Small Business Services has become the premier point of contact for small businesses and entrepreneurs looking for help. Since launching NYC Business Solutions in September 2004, SBS has opened Business Solutions Centers in all five boroughs and helped more than 15,000 businesses, connecting them to over \$12 million in financing. This year, we're expanding NYC Business Solutions to 17 areas to help retain and grow the City's manufacturing and industrial sector. We will also launch Business Express - an innovative new online resource to help small businesses obtain the City, State and federal permits they need to operate."

"Building on the gains of the past four years, we are now poised to do even more, and the development of Business Express will be a huge step forward in our goal to have a single place where businesses can get everything they need from government," said Commissioner Walsh. "Creating Business Express will enable businesses to save significant time and money in obtaining the permits they need to start and operate in New York City. They'll save time up-front by not needing to literally go to dozens of different agencies, and they'll save money by averting fines for permits they didn't know they needed. Today, there is no single place where business owners can go to find all this information."

NYC Business Solutions was launched in September 2004 as part of the Mayor's 2001 campaign promise to establish satellite business service centers in each of the five boroughs. To date, seven NYC Business Solutions Centers have opened citywide in Downtown Brooklyn; Jamaica, Queens; the Hub in the South Bronx; North Shore, Staten Island; West Shore, Staten Island; Upper Manhattan;

and Lower Manhattan. Collectively, they have handled 24,812 service requests, assisted 15,358 unique businesses or entrepreneurs, and helped 90 businesses access financing totaling \$12.2 million.

"After going to several other places for assistance, I was struck by the fact that the people at NYC Business Solutions were so eager to help, and this meant a lot," said Aliyyah Baylor, owner of Make My Cake, a bakery in Harlem. "As a business owner, I can't tell you how satisfying and helpful it is to make a phone call and have someone out there who's just as concerned as I am about my business. From start to finish, NYC Business Solutions has helped me not only get a loan, but also helped me find employees. This has been a huge relief, and I cannot imagine going anywhere else for assistance."

"Going to NYC Business Solutions made all the difference in the world for our company," said Laura Stevens, co-founder of the nonprofit Manhattan Children's Theatre, which received both financing assistance and help finding a new space from the Lower Manhattan Solutions Center. "As a small firm, we weren't aware of the types of financing options that the counselors presented to us. I can honestly say that without the specific help and encouragement we received, we would not have been able to grow. We were committed to staying in Lower Manhattan, and NYC Business Solutions helped make that a reality. We have served more than 25,000 children and families, and our new space will allow us to serve even more."

NYC Business Solutions provides free assistance in nine major service categories: Starting a Business; Navigating Government Regulations; Securing Financing; Accessing Incentives; Hiring and Training Employees; Finding Real Estate; Selling to the Government; Obtaining Minority- and Women-Owned Business Certification; and Coping with Emergencies. Businesses can access these services by calling 311, logging on to www.nyc.gov/smallbiz, or visiting one of the Centers.

In 2006, NYC Business Solutions, in addition to its goals of serving 12,000 more businesses and connecting firms to \$13 million in financing, will undertake the following new initiatives:

- Establish NYC Business Solution Centers in 17 new locations citywide in coordination with the Mayor's Office of Industrial and Manufacturing Businesses.
- Launch the first phase of "Business Express," in coordination with the Department of Information Technology and Telecommunications. Business Express will be an Internet-based service center that will allow small businesses to apply for permits, licenses, make payments, find ways to cut costs and receive technical assistance all in one place.
- Launch a new real-estate selector tool as the City's only no-cost website where businesses can find a comprehensive inventory of available industrial and retail spaces within all five boroughs, along with demographic, business, mapping and incentives data. Using this new site, businesses will be able to list and locate available properties, as well as find demographic and incentive information specifically by neighborhood or property.

Business operators who joined the Mayor for the announcement included Aliyyah Baylor, owner of Make My Cake Bakery of Harlem; manufacturer Gerry Gorman, President of Karp Associates of Maspeth; Vigdis Eriksen, president of Eriksen Translations of Downtown Brooklyn; **KY Chow, owner of GM Printing in Lower Manhattan**; Manuel Burgos, Manager of LRS Communications of Sunset Park; Laura Stevens, Co-founder and Executive Director of Manhattan Children's Theatre of Lower Manhattan; and JT Leshner and Mari Aldin, owners of Astarte Cosmetics in Long Island City, Queens.
