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MAYOR BLOOMBERG, CHIEF INFORMATION & INNOVATION OFFICER MERCHANT AND CHIEF DIGITAL OFFICER HAOT LAUNCH REINVENT PAYPHONES DESIGN CHALLENGE

Winning Ideas Will Help Shape the City's Future Payphone Designs

Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg, Department of Information Technology and Telecommunications Commissioner Rahul N. Merchant and Chief Digital Officer Rachel Haot today launched the *Reinvent Payphones Design Challenge*, a competition to rally urban designers, planners, technologists and policy experts to create physical and virtual prototypes that imagine the future of New York City's public pay telephones. The goal of *Reinvent Payphones* is to foster innovative, data and design-driven ideas that will help modernize payphone infrastructure across the five boroughs and optimize use of public space once the City's current payphone contracts expire in 2014. The Mayor announced the challenge through a video message this evening at the New York Tech Meetup.

"From Wi-Fi in public spaces to the High Line, our Administration has continuously reinvented City infrastructure by matching innovative concepts with extraordinary designs," said Mayor Bloomberg. "Now we're doing the same for the thousands of public pay telephones across the five boroughs, and we're challenging our dynamic and ever-growing tech community to 'Re-Own the Phone' and provide their ideas on what the future of payphones could entail."

"To thrive in technology, we need to see things as they are and then imagine them as they might best be," said Commissioner Merchant. "Payphones have been an iconic part of the city's streetscape for decades, and can be vital lifelines for communication in times of emergency. But to thrive, the payphone of the future needs to offer valuable services at all times, and with various pilot programs already underway, we're evaluating how some of those amenities are publicly received. Now, with the *Reinvent Payphones Design Challenge*, we're asking our tech community for new takes on older technology, and inviting designs about how they might enhance the vitality of our public spaces."

"New York City is the most innovative city on earth – and constantly reinventing itself," said Rachel Haot, Chief Digital Officer. "With the *Reinvent Payphones Design Challenge*, we're enlisting the thriving technology and academic communities to help shape the future of communications in New York City. This challenge is the first of its kind

in the world, and provides a unique opportunity to set the bar for forward-thinking communications infrastructure. Together, we can build a brighter future for our city, and I encourage students, technologists and designers to help Reinvent Payphones in New York."

Today, there are more than 11,000 payphones on City sidewalks, down from a high of approximately 35,000 in the late 1990s. Once a primary means of communication for the public, the role of payphones has changed significantly over the last decade. While the widespread adoption of mobile devices reduces the overall need for payphones, not everyone owns a mobile phone and not everyone has connectivity at all times. Payphone availability remains critical in times of emergency, as seen by an increase in their usage after Hurricane Sandy, and *Reinvent Payphones* is an opportunity to shape the future design and functionality of payphones and their surrounding enclosures. In addition to the *Reinvent Payphones Design Challenge*, various pilot programs are currently underway to test new services using extant payphone infrastructure, including digital advertising on phone kiosks around Times Square, interactive touchscreens around Union Square and free public Wi-Fi at 13 locations across the city.

To enter the *Reinvent Payphones Design Challenge*, participants should visit www.nyc.gov to review competition rules, sign up for important updates and submit their prototype application for consideration by February 18, 2013. Participants are invited to an information session on January 23, 2013, where they will have an opportunity to ask questions about the challenge and the City's payphone infrastructure. Participants are also invited to inform their designs with datasets related to City's public pay telephones – including their locations and related 311 complaint data – available on the Reinvent Payphones website.

After all submissions are received, up to 15 semi-finalists will be selected to demonstrate their ideas at the *Reinvent Payphones* Demo Day on March 5, 2013. Quirky, a social product development company that brings new product ideas to life through its online collaborative platform, will partner with the City to host the Demo Day at its Chelsea headquarters. Two additional New York City-based startups are partnering with the City to facilitate the Design Challenge: Splashthat.com, a set of online planning tools, has helped the City design a custom website for the event; and CollabFinder, an online network connecting people to projects, has created a customized *Reinvent Payphones* project page for individual participants to sync with collaborators on building prototypes.

Reinvent Payphones is the third public innovation challenge to launch as part of the City's pioneering *Reinvent* program and builds on the success of the Reinvent *NYC.gov* and Reinvent Green hackathons. The City is extending an invite to the technology and academic communities, as well as the public, to share their creative and innovative ideas by submitting prototypes for the challenge. The City is also working to promote the *Reinvent Payphones Design Challenge* to a wide range of talented and forward-thinking students and faculty in a number of local universities, including:

- Columbia University: Technological Change Lab at the Graduate School of Architecture, Planning and Preservation.

- New York University: Tisch School of the Arts and Robert F. Wagner Graduate School of Public Service
- New York Law School
- Parsons The New School for Design
- School of Visual Arts: Design for Social Innovation and Interaction Design Programs

Judges of the Reinvent Payphones Demo Day include John Borthwick, founder and CEO of Betaworks; Majora Carter, founder of Startup Box; Jason Goodman, CEO and co-founder of 3rd Ward; Nancy Lublin, CEO of DoSomething.org; and former United States Deputy Chief Technology Officer Beth Noveck. The *Reinvent Payphones* design submissions will be judged by the following criteria:

- Connectivity: Ability to connect New Yorkers and enable communication, including for safety and emergency purposes;
- Creativity: Originality, innovation and quality of idea;
- Visual Design: Including visual appeal and user experience;
- Functionality: Flexibility, versatility, scalability, accessibility and sustainability; and
- Community Impact: Support of local residents, businesses and cultural institutions.

In 1999, the City entered into a number of franchise contracts for the installation, maintenance and operation of public payphones on City sidewalks. These agreements expire on October 15, 2014. Successful *Reinvent Payphones* design submissions will be used to help shape the City's ongoing efforts to assess the future of the more than 11,000 public pay telephones that still exist today.

Last July, the Department of Information Technology and Telecommunications issued a Request for Information to foster public feedback in evaluating the future of payphones in New York City sidewalks. The Department received 21 responses from current franchisees, community boards, business improvement districts and other companies and organizations, which are available on *NYC.gov*.

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