

SBS IN THE NEWS



NYC rolling out new technology projects

Mayor Michael Bloomberg unveils an iPhone application and upgraded Web sites as IBM plans a new Manhattan facility for analyzing government and financial data.

By Kira Bindrim
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Mayor Michael Bloomberg outlined a series of technology initiatives for the city Thursday, including everything from a new iPhone application to increased broadband access for low-income residents.

The new plan, dubbed the Connected City Initiative, is part of a broader attempt by the Bloomberg administration to increase transparency and efficiency when it comes to government services.

"Often, when it comes to adopting new technology, governments lag behind the private sector and even the casual consumer because they are unwilling or unable to try something new and change the way things have always been done," Mr. Bloomberg said, in a statement. "That's small-minded thinking."

The Connected City Initiative was announced at an IBM SmarterCities forum in Manhattan.

As part of the plan, beginning Thursday, the city's iPhone users will be able to submit select quality-of-life complaints, with a photo, to 311, which will be able to identify the location of the complaint based on the iPhone's GPS capabilities. The application was developed in conjunction with additions to the 311 Web site. Additionally, the city will establish a Web site that will allow users to customize a "dashboard" of the city's Web sites with their preferences. Residents will also be able to contribute technology ideas on collaborative neighborhood-based Web sites called "wikis."

Also included in the initiative are plans to update the city's Notify NYC service, which currently e-mails and text messages subscribers with updates on traffic, utility, public health and other topics. The service will add "Silver Alerts" about missing senior citizens.

The mayor promised Thursday to continue growing the city's Primary Care Information Project, which helps area physicians convert paper medical charts to electronic records. The Connected City Initiative also includes plans to consolidate the city's data centers, manage parking availability through mobile sites and alerts and launch a pilot program to begin delivering more city mailings electronically.

Finally, the city will establish an NYC Business Express

Web site as a one-stop shop for people looking to start or grow small businesses. The site will feature information, updates and instructions for entrepreneurs, as well as eligibility estimates for 44 city, state and federal initiatives and applications for more than 30 licenses, permits and certificates.

Mr. Bloomberg's plan was outlined in conjunction with news from IBM, which announced plans Thursday to develop a New York Business Analytics Solution Center to address what it calls the growing demand for analytics expertise in developing financial and government solutions.

The center, to be located at IBM's 590 Madison Ave. office, will be supported by some 450 employees, and the company anticipates hiring another 100 consultants, researchers and experts in the next 18 months.

The Manhattan center will be IBM's fourth after Berlin, Beijing and Tokyo; Washington, D.C., and London are also slated to get analytics centers.

In the Big Apple, the IBM center will focus on harnessing analytics for financial services and government with specific studies in public safety, transportation and traffic, water and energy optimization. IBM has already made strides: the company worked with the city's fire department to digitize building and inspection records and with the police department to electronically categorize evidence.

"We're seeing an incredible opportunity for businesses, institutions and governments to elevate the performance of all existing systems to another level via the application of advanced analytics," said Phil Guido, general manager of the eastern U.S. for IBM, in a statement.

The center will also work with area universities like City University of New York and New York University, as well as with commercial clients, specifically in the financial services industry.

"What we see happening is a growing demand for analytics and analytics technology," said Fred Balboni, IBM's global leader in business analytics and optimization. "We probably could have predicted the economic collapse with the right tools and technologies. As companies operate on thinner profit margins, you can't hide a bad decision anymore. Your batting average needs to go up."