



THE CITY OF NEW YORK  
OFFICE OF THE MAYOR  
NEW YORK, NY 10007

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:** October 14, 2015  
**CONTACT:** [pressoffice@cityhall.nyc.gov](mailto:pressoffice@cityhall.nyc.gov), (212) 788-2958

**RUSH TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO DELIVERS REMARKS, HOLDS Q&A AT  
FACEBOOK'S NEW YORK OFFICE**

**Mayor Bill de Blasio:** I have a very New York, patriotic feeling about what I'm seeing here today. I'm thrilled that so much is happening in New York now [inaudible] growth of this company and the larger tech community in this city. I had a chance to talk to a few of you about why you're here. It was obviously tremendous [inaudible] being part of this company, but there's also – I could hear very distinctly – a lot of belief in the tech community and its potential here in New York City and where it's going. And I heard something that particularly gives me joy – which is love of the New York lifestyle and all that this city has to offer.

So, I want to thank you because you are building an ever more vibrant tech community here in this city. And I can only imagine how exciting it is to be here and now, and part of all of the creativity happening in this building. So I want to just thank you for the chance to experience, even a little of it, and I'd love to hear what's on your mind – questions, comments? Let's open it up.

**Serkan Piantino:** Great, okay. So we have questions submitted that I will read from our employers. The first one – or employees – the first one is from –

[Laughter]

**Mayor:** There's been a coup d'état.

[Laughter]

**Serkan Piantino:** So, our first one is from Kathy Williamson, who is a communications manager on our comms team. Why do you think computer science is an important investment for all students? And what type of impact will it have on New York City?

**Mayor:** Yeah, we're so excited. We have a Computer Science for All initiative. And this is going to be the biggest, by far, in the entire country. Obviously, we have the biggest school system – over 1.1 million kids. Our commitment over the next 10 years – it's a wonderful public-private partnership – is that every student in our school system at every grade level is getting substantial exposure throughout the curriculum to computer science. Look, I'll state the easy, obvious point. This is where so much of the economy and the world is going, and so our young people need exposure, and acclimation, and comfort and they need to build their capacity. That's a given. The fact that it's taken this long in so many parts of the country to truly integrate computer science into the curriculum obviously shows, as a country, we have a long way to go to catch up [inaudible] other competitor nations that are thinking in a little more advanced fashion about the kind of educational platform we have to give our young people. But the second part of this incredibly exciting [inaudible] is the way – the thought pattern. I think I probably have a lot of witnesses and people who would validate this point. Where the world is today is about critical thinking. It's about problem solving. It is about everything but what was a lot of the basis of education in the past, which was – at its worst – sort of memorization and learning facts onto themselves, but not necessarily a thought process of what to do with those facts. One of the things I love

about computer science education is it builds a whole set of skills that are usable far beyond technology, and just improve the thought process of young people and make it, I think, more appropriate to the world we're in. So, we think this is just going to uplift the whole school system now. This is a great chance for me to make my first plug, which is – for this all to work the way we envision it, we're going to need companies involved, but we're also going to need a lot of individuals involved because we have so many young people in this city, in our public schools, a lot of whom have not had a lot of opportunity and come from families that have not had a lot of opportunity. My hope and vision is that the tech community grows intensely in this city, but also becomes a place where more and more people from all the neighborhoods in New York City get opportunity. And part of that is going to be acclimating young people to this community. That means things like internships. That means mentorship efforts. So, we really are going to – in addition to what we're doing formally through the public schools, we're going to be turning to you as individuals and certainly to this company to say, we need you to have as many interns as possible from our public schools. We need you to take on the opportunity to really show the next generation the way by being mentors. That will make a huge impact for us.

**Serkan Piantino:** Okay. Excellent, we're very excited. Next question is from Amy Hudson, who is on the Partnerships Team – “I agree, and think computer science is such an important investment, but I also feel strongly that sports and music programs are equally as important in shaping the youth. What are your thoughts and feelings about helping to keep extracurricular activities such as these from becoming extinct?”

**Mayor:** So, I think the – what we see more and more, in terms of what really creates a positive trajectory in someone's life is, what captures their imagination? What captures their energies and gives them a sense of what's possible in their lives? And I think it's fair to say that a lot of young people over the years got a negative message about their own potential, and that that cut along economic, and class, racial lines in ways that don't, obviously, conform with my values, I think the values of most New Yorkers, I imagine the values of people in this room. And one of the ways to overcome that – now, again, doing universal things, like computer science for all, or – something I'm very passionate about – pre-k for all, which we're very, very proud of – that every child in New York City now has access to full-day, high quality pre-k. One of the ways you change the trajectory is to really open up opportunity across the board. But another way is to go at what – what sparks that imagination, what sparks that sense of belonging and possibility. For a lot of kids, of course, it is technology. And you see the kids involved in robotics competitions and so many other opportunities – that's what gives them that sense of limitless possibility, and they found the thing they [inaudible]. But for other kids, it may be sports, it may be the arts, it may be dance. And so we're trying to push those buttons everywhere we can, because, by the way, that also is what connects that young person back to the rest of the education process – if they find one thing that captures their imagination, gives them energy, and gives them sort of a North Star, it also helps focus them on a whole lot of other areas they need to study. So, we've added a lot more to the sports programs around the city, because we had schools that didn't have sports. We've now changed that trajectory so all schools have access to sports. We've added very aggressive – a new approach to after-school programs, particularly at the middle school level. Now in this city, any child in middle school, grade six through eight, has access to free after-school programs, a lot of which have a very strong cultural and recreation component. And we've put over \$20 million dollars into arts education in our schools, because that's one of the things that got cut – every time there was a bad budget situation, one of the first things to go was arts, even though it was one of the things that tended to energize and focus kids most positively. So we're [inaudible].

**Serkan Piantino:** Excellent, thank you. Alright – the next question's from Lindsay Hegleman, from the Events Marketing Team: “We know that homelessness is a decades-old problem in New York City. It's noticeably gotten worse over the past few years. So how is the billion dollars that we've committed over the next four years to fight homelessness being put into play?”

**Mayor:** Yeah, the – the challenge now – homelessness now is more and more an economic reality. So, I'm sure everyone in this room is familiar with the high cost of housing in New York City.

[Laughter]

Can I get an amen?

[Laughter]

So – so, it's affecting everyone, but let's face it – what happened is, we had the Great Recession. Hundreds of thousands of people in this city were set back very [inaudible] – set back economically by it. And then the cost of housing, in the meantime, has kept going up and up. And – and on one level, we're victims of our own success, because the city is more appealing to be in than ever. But, on the other hand, that combination – you know, economic downturn that – that stuck with people more than most previous downturns have, and then the ever-increasing cost of housing, has created a structural dynamic where more and more people, more and more families, more and more families with working members of the family are becoming homeless. Our approach to it is to focus on stopping people from becoming homeless in the first place. People – a lot of people have been evicted illegally – we have a big new legal aid effort to stop that from happening. A lot of folks could stay in their apartment if they got a little bit of economic help – a little bit of subsidy. We're doing a lot more of that effectively. We are focused on getting people out of shelter into permanent housing. We have a huge affordable housing effort – the biggest in the history of this country at the local level – 200,000 units that we're building or preserving over the next ten years. So a host of strategies, but I want to be clear, it's still a very tough fight because it's structural. It's not – what a lot of used to have – the stereotypes of homelessness were folks who had mental health problems or substance abuse problems, and single men – that was kind of the assumption about homelessness. It's changed profoundly. And as it's more and more of an economic challenge and a family challenge, its forcing us to constantly find new ways to create housing, and to help people stay in the housing that they have. So far, we are finding progress, but we also have a very big challenge on our hands.

**Serkan Piantino:** Great, thanks. Going back to computer science – the next question is from Benjamin Jaeger who's one of our software engineers on our Android team. What has been and what will be the toughest parts of getting computer science onto the core curriculum?

**Mayor:** So, one part, again, is it will succeed even more if there's a lot of involvement from people of this community because it's not just the narrow question of the curriculum, it's also [inaudible]. But one of the toughest challenges is we have to train lots and lots of teachers. Now, I believe there is a willingness – a lot of our teachers love the notion of gaining the skills and being able to pass them on, but the challenge in the middle of everything else we're trying to do with 1.1 million kids – finding the teacher ready to train, and training them and making that happen while everything else is going on. That's our challenge. We're putting real resources into it, but that's still, sort of, an equation we have to work through.

**Serkan Piantino:** Yes. So [inaudible] has to be our last question.

**Mayor:** Well, I'm going to veto you for a minute.

[Laughter]

And you can – that question then I'll take two from the audience.

[Laughter]

**Serkan Piantino:** So, the next question just following up on [inaudible].

**Mayor:** If anyone asks what my spirit animal is, I will not take that question.

[Laughter]

**Serkan Piantino:** The follow-up question, – given that the last question was from an engineer on our Android team – are you an Android or iPhone, sort of, cellphone user?

**Mayor:** I am super old school, limited, narrow – Blackberry and proud.

[Laughter]

**Mayor:** Okay, I'll go into the lion's den and say it.

[Laughter]

**Serkan Piantino:** Okay, let's try to do this in an organized way, but who would like to ask the mayor a question? Right here in front.

**Question:** I'm really glad you bought up the teacher point about training teachers in computer science because as enthusiastic as we all can be about young people, we're not teachers [inaudible]. Have you put any thought into how you're going to go about training the teachers to [inaudible] because like I got into CS through my high school teacher in New York City, and I know he's kind of frustrated that he cannot get the program he's built spread through New York.

**Mayor:** We – here's the good news. I think we have an architecture. We still have to [inaudible] at how to do it for 1.1 million kids. We have a concept. We, you know, borrowing from places like San Francisco that have had success, but, obviously, on a much smaller scale – much smaller scale [inaudible].

[Laughter]

So, we've got some models that work. We've got – from everything we can tell – a very willing teaching core that wants – that sees it as value added for them professionally as well as part of their mission. They know how much it will help their kids. Figuring out how to recruit those who are ready, willing, and able – and, again, carving out that training time while we're trying to train them on a lot of other fronts because one of the big things we're doing now is constant retraining and upgrading of our teachers. So there's an equation we have not solved, but the early returns, if you will – as we've talked to people about this – is a lot of folks want it. One of the things we have to figure out with this community is some of the best ways to teach it, beyond the models we have now. I mean, this is a good interactive thing, this – help us figure out some of the things that will be most effective for kids to experience throughout their curriculum. You have a [inaudible] grimace on your face.

**Question:** We're not teachers.

**Mayor:** No, but the thing is I – one of the things we find is, if you can help us figure out where it leads, it can help us inform the teaching approach and the training, right? So there is very much a role for those in this community to help us design – like this is where it has to get to and then what professionals can do – you're right about professional teachers – they can reverse engineer in their own way. If you say, here's what a kid at, you know, four years old or five years old would be – benefit from, it helps them to think through how to get it there. So, again we have models we can work from but I think there are exciting ways for people in this community to be a part of it. Let's go farther back.

**Question:** So, one of the big news recently is that the city is now going to fund the MTA Capital Plan. Also, you're a big proponent of Vision Zero for pedestrian safety. Where is the future, for I guess, transit and not cars to travel in New York City?

**Mayor:** For not cars? I like that.

[Laughter]

**Mayor:** What is the future for not cars, sir?

[Laughter]

**Mayor:** I'm being playful.

[Laughter]

**Mayor:** The future is bright. What we did with the MTA, was we established a very good paradigm. The city was willing to invest more if we could get some of the checks and balances on the reforms that we thought were necessary – to really make sure the MTA would be safer going forward, funding would be protected, etcetera. And that's to me, part one – it's a much bigger discussion that has to be had, not just in the city and state, but the whole metropolitan area about how we make the MTA even more robust for the future because it is one of the keys to everything we do and it can be much better still, if we can figure out a common approach – approach the region and where real resources will come from. So, that's the next phase of this discussion. But meanwhile, the other elements of the equation, whether it is Citi Bike, which has been fantastic and successful and we're spreading farther out through the boroughs, our ferry plan – I am very, very excited about this. I spent a life going – you know, I have a brother in Seattle, which has a wonderful ferry system. I have travelled to Venice, which has a wonderful ferry system. Though I've seen this and wondered why one of the great coastal cities of the Earth didn't really have a comprehensive ferry system. In 2017, we're starting a five-borough ferry system. That is a great, great value added to our transportation system. And then things like Select Bus Service, you know, buses that have dedicated lanes and limited stops that can go much faster – encourage a lot more people onto the buses. So, I think the future is bright. I think there is actually a lot more build-out we're going to do that I think it's crucial to having an effective five-borough city. And my favorite statistic – okay I want to do a little show of hands. How many people are from the New York metropolitan area? Raise your hands. From here – how many people are not from here? That's kind of the opposite, okay, very good. The – the history of our subway system has always kind of been a marvel in terms of what it has achieved. But once upon a time, it was really dirty, really hot during the summer with no air conditioning and very crime ridden. Today, we are pushing about 6 million riders a day and we have about six crime incidents a day, meaning you literally have a one in a million chance of being a victim of crime in the New York City subway. That is a massive change from 20 or 30 years ago, so another reason why the future is bright. I'm going to do one more bonus round in the far back but it has to be far back, far back. Someone doesn't – people in the far back don't want to participate, that's quite obvious. Alright, I'm going to go to the middle, if no one in the far back – okay, there's someone. Go ahead.

**Question:** [Inaudible]

[Laughter]

**Mayor:** That's great – they were pretending to have a question to make the people back there seem legitimate.

**Question:** Just to piggy-back onto that –

**Mayor:** All right, hold on. Go ahead.

**Question:** I'd just like to continue on that, but like what did you have planned for bike lanes and biking in New York? Like the Citi Bike extension.

**Mayor:** Yeah, look. Bike lanes – Citi Bike, we're going to keep expanding, it's going to be much more of a five-borough thing over the next few years, and we were able to stabilize it financially, and put it on a better footing for the future. Bike lanes – also we intend to keep augmenting. Bike lanes have been very positive both in terms of transportation, and in terms of safety. It fits with Vision Zero. And Vision Zero – I'm going to take a minute to plug this – I happened to have the exact figures in front of me. Ok, now last year – this is stunning – so Vision Zero, we stole from Sweden and other places – the idea – has put in bike lanes and other physical improvements in the roadways, and it's lower speed limits, and it's speed cameras and more enforcement. That's sort of the quick snapshot. So we started it last year, part-way into the year, but we applied it very intensely. As a result, last year was the fewest pedestrian fatalities in New York City since 1910. Think about – think about, just as a sort of a public policy matter and a design matter, those basic tools haven't been employed

together. Once you employ them together, you go back basically to when you first had automobiles in any large numbers in New York City, right? It's over a century. The numbers were so good, that they were better than any time in over a century. This year, as we've applied more of those same tools, we are down in terms of pedestrian fatalities 30 percent fewer than last year, which was the best years since 1910. So, it is working.

**Serkan Piantino:** Can we give a huge round of applause? [Inaudible]

[Applause]

**Mayor:** Thank you, everyone.

###