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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:** October 1, 2015

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**CITY TASK FORCE ON TIMES SQUARE ANNOUNCES RECOMMENDATIONS**

**NEW YORK** – The de Blasio administration announced today a series of recommendations to improve traffic, pedestrian plazas, the solicitation of tips, and a number of other issues in and around the Times Square area.

Over the past two months, a multiagency task force co-chaired by Police Commissioner William Bratton and City Planning Commissioner Carl Weisbrod, regularly spoke and met with Times Square business owners, advocates, elected officials, and others to create a series of comprehensive recommendations. The Task Force also included external stakeholders from the Times Square community and local elected officials. The task force also included representatives from the New York City Police Department, the Manhattan District Attorney’s Office, the Department of Transportation, the Parks Department, the Law Department, the Department of Consumer Affairs, the Department of City Planning, Mayor’s Office of Criminal Justice, NYC & Company, and Deputy Mayor for Housing and Economic Development Alicia Glen.

The recommendations include: increasing the police presence in Times Square with a dedicated unit that will develop familiarity with recurring issues; giving the City – through legislation to be developed in collaboration with the City Council – the ability to make rules regarding the time, place, and manner of soliciting tips and other activities in Times Square and in pedestrian plazas citywide; completing construction of the Times Square plazas and evaluating after its completion whether any further improvements can be made; and, mitigating traffic and crowding during construction by limiting street fairs and adding traffic agents in the area.

“Times Square is the Crossroads the World, and our task force has created recommendations that will ensure Times Square is a great experience for the millions of New Yorkers, families and tourists that make it such a popular destination.” said **Mayor Bill de Blasio**. “These are a positive and constructive set of recommendations and we look forward to working with the City Council moving forward.”

**Action Items Recommended by the Times Square Task Force**

**Now – Immediate, through the end of construction:**

- **The NYPD is deploying a dedicated NYPD officer detail in Times Square.** This dedicated group of officers will be able to familiarize themselves with the unique challenges in Times Square and provide continuous deterrence of illegal behavior. [Underway]
- **Give visitors information on how to safely enjoy Times Square.** The Department of Consumer Affairs (DCA), in partnership with the Times Square community, will provide information to tourists and visitors to protect them from unwanted solicitation, pickpocketing and other problematic behavior. [Within 1 month]
- **The administration will complete capital construction of the plazas.** Many current issues with congestion and pedestrian flow are a result of the ongoing construction of the Broadway plazas and the reconstruction of 7th Avenue.

*While the construction is ongoing, the City will:*

- **Add traffic enforcement agents and crossing guards, where appropriate, during peak times.** These agents will keep both pedestrian and vehicular traffic moving smoothly. [Within 1 month]
- **Limit street-permitted activity (such as street fairs) in the area.** Street fairs, and other uses of the streets permitted by the Mayor’s Office of Citywide Event Coordination and Management/Street Activity Permit Office (CECM/SAPO) serve an important civic and community function. However, they also contribute to traffic congestion, which is already negatively impacted by the ongoing construction activity in Times Square. CECM/SAPO will, until construction in Times Square is complete, (i) ban SAPO-permitted activity on side streets in the area (42nd Street to 50th Street; from 6th Avenue to 7th Avenue and Broadway to 8th Avenue), and, (ii) in partnership with the NYPD and the Times Square community, take steps to limit permitted activity in other areas, including the plazas and avenues. [Within 1 month]
- **Evaluate other short-term measures to improve congestion and traffic flow.** The New York City Department of Transportation will undertake a short-term analysis to determine what immediate changes can be made to improve mobility and safety during the construction. [2 months]
- **Eliminate unnecessary obstructions** across the area, such as construction materials and equipment, unneeded and duplicate signs, and, where possible, unused news kiosks, and telephone booths. [Within 1 month]
- **Create a stakeholder working group.** This group, composed of representatives from relevant implementation agencies and local stakeholders, will see these recommendations through and monitor emergent issues in Times Square. [Ongoing]

*Even as the City takes these immediate steps, we will work together to create new regulatory tools to ensure a vibrant, safe, and functional public space in the Times Square area:*

**Soon – Beginning within 12 months, after the completion of the construction, or requiring legislative action.**

- **Empower NYC DOT with rulemaking authority to develop common sense time, place, and manner regulations in public plazas, including, but not limited to, Times Square.** There is currently no entity empowered to develop rules to manage commercial and civic activities in pedestrian plazas. Working with the City Council, the administration will empower the NYC DOT to step into this role. Once empowered, in Times Square, working with local stakeholders, NYC DOT will develop regulations to bring order to the times, places, and manners in which solicitation, expressive activity, and performance may occur, such as through designated areas. [2 months for legislation, 4 months for rules]
- **Codify the significance and uniqueness of Times Square through a “public place” designation.** The Department of City Planning (DCP) will work with the Borough President, the City Council, and Community Board 5 to initiate a Uniform Land Use Review Process to designate the Times Square “Bowtie” as a public place. [9-12 months]
- **Remodel NYPD substation to make more visible, functional, and attractive.** NYPD’s substation in Times Square will serve as a base for the newly created Times Square Unit and will be utilized as a recruitment center. [1 year]
- **Explore the creation of a designated special enforcement unit with responsibility for vending.** Vending rules are currently not enforced by a dedicated set of inspectors. Instead, enforcement

responsibility is diffused and largely sits with the NYPD. Vending regulations are complicated and could benefit from enforcers with specialized expertise. The City will explore the creation of a dedicated set of inspectors, detailed initially to Times Square, to enforce the City's vending laws.

- **Local law to create a new category of vendors to include ticket sellers (particularly theater and tour busses).** Ticket sellers, particularly for performance events and tour busses, currently overwhelm areas of Times Square. Due to a recent court case, sellers of tickets are not subject to vending restrictions that regulate the sellers of other goods and services on streets and sidewalks. A new local law would subject these vendors to the vending regulations of the Department of Consumer Affairs. [3 months]
- **Regulate vending on 42nd Street between 7th and 8th avenues.** Current vending rules allow late-night vending along 42nd Street that crowds sidewalks and forces pedestrians into traffic, contributing to a chaotic and potentially unsafe environment. Working with the City Council, the City will pursue additional limitations on vending activity along 42nd Street and in other problematic areas in the Times Square area. [3 months]
- **Undertake area-wide transportation study after construction is completed in order to consider improvements to the plaza space, reduce congestion, and improve safety.** NYC DOT and DCP will undertake a comprehensive study following the completion of the construction. This study will include recommendations to improve safety and pedestrian and vehicular flow through the broader Times Square area. This study will evaluate the relocation of tour bus locations (which currently contribute to crowding and traffic congestion), and the current signalization and traffic restrictions (i.e., left turns) governing vehicular and pedestrian movement in the area. [12-15 months after the completion of construction]
- **Recommend further physical improvements to the plazas after the construction is complete.** In addition, in the wake of the completion of the construction, NYC DOT and DCP will conduct a study with regard to activities, pedestrian mobility, attractiveness other amenities and recommend design changes to the plazas as appropriate. [12-15 months after the completion of construction]
- **Bring more place-making programming to the pedestrian plazas.** NYC DOT, the Mayor's Office of Citywide Event Coordination and Management and Street Activity Permit Office, the Department of Cultural Affairs, and the Times Square community will work together to encourage positive, community-based activities in Times Square. [3 months]

"Today's plan is a first step toward the framework that Council Member Garodnick, Councilmember Johnson, and I all agree is the best path forward," said **Manhattan Borough President Gale A. Brewer**. "The Times Square Alliance's smart planning and diligent research made this process possible. I look forward to working with the Mayor's administration, my colleagues, and this neighborhood's business community to build on what we're announcing today and develop rules that make sense and a real vision for this critically important public space in the beating heart of our city."

**Manhattan District Attorney Cyrus R. Vance, Jr.**, said, "I commend the Mayor's Task Force for seeking a just and constitutional solution to a complex situation, which will respect the rights of the individuals soliciting money with those of pedestrians and local business owners."

"The action items recommended by this task force will help address the issues facing Times Square while respecting first amendment rights," said **Council Member Corey Johnson**. "We must enact thoughtful, constitutionally robust solutions that are the right fit for this location. Times Square is one of the most visited locations in the world, it's important that we get this right. I want to thank the de Blasio Administration, Borough President Gale Brewer, Council Member Dan Garodnick, Community Board 5 and the Times Square Alliance for their partnership on this important issue."

“Moving forward with Times Square Commons will help us bring a little order to the chaos, while preserving the edginess of this unique part of the city,” said **Council Member Dan Garodnick**. “This is an important first step and I look forward to continuing conversations about regulating this important public space.

“I commend the de Blasio administration for quickly coming together and bringing together a diverse group of leaders who truly care about Times Square and about our City’s plaza program. The recommendations brought forth will serve as a crucial frame work as our city works to reform and transform the plazas in Time Square. As Chair of the NYC Council Transportation Committee, I strongly believe public plazas are a crucial tool in street redesign and play an important role in keeping our pedestrians safe. I am proud to see such emphasis placed on the preservation and betterment of them,” said **Council Member Ydanis Rodriguez**.

“The Task Force Mayor de Blasio convened had a thoughtful, level-headed discussion that New Yorkers should be proud of. City agencies, elected officials, and community representatives quickly got on the same page and produced sensible recommendations to improve Times Square for New Yorkers and visitors. The Times Square Alliance did a great job of bringing its members together and building the consensus,” said **Assembly Member Richard Gottfried**.

“I’m grateful to Mayor de Blasio for convening the multi-agency Times Square Task Force. I also want to thank my colleagues Congresswoman Carolyn Maloney, Manhattan Borough President Gale Brewer, Assembly Member Richard Gottfried, and Council Members Dan Garodnick and Corey Johnson, as well as Community Board 5 and the Times Square Alliance for their collaboration in this effort. I look forward to working with the Task Force, which has created a useful roadmap to address our problems in a manner that satisfies the need to balance the interests of local residents, businesses, and visitors while continuing to respect the rights of assembly and free expression,” said **Senator Brad Hoylman**.

“We are pleased with the initial findings of the Mayor’s Task Force and look forward to addressing the details in the coming months. We are confident that, with all the area stakeholders, positive solutions will be found for the Times Square Bowtie, as well as all the pedestrian plazas,” said **Vikki Barbero, Chair of Community Board 5**.

**Tim Tompkins, President of the Times Square Alliance, and Robert Kafin, Chairman of the Times Square Alliance** said, “We are pleased that the administration has endorsed and supported the key elements of the community’s plan, and we look forward to working with them and our elected officials to hammer out the specifics of implementation so that Times Square can continue to be the economic and job growth engine that it has been in recent years.”

“We have strongly advocated for the institution of measures that ensure a safe and enjoyable environment for our many theatregoers and the families who frequent our Times Square neighborhood. We are thankful for Council Member Dan Garodnick and Council Member Corey Johnson’s support and the collaboration of this task force in addressing the issues and continuing to work towards necessary solutions. We look forward to continuing our work with the Mayor’s Office to maintain our status as the world’s premier cultural attraction,” said **Charlotte St. Martin, President, The Broadway League**.

“Companies located in Times Square are ready for changes that make the area more hospitable to business,” said **Mike Simas, Executive Vice President of the Partnership for New York City**. “The preliminary proposal laid out by City Hall is an excellent first step that incorporates many of the priorities of nearby businesses, including an increased law enforcement presence to address quality-of-life concerns.”

“Well-designed public spaces like the Times Square pedestrian plaza are a tremendous asset for large cities, transforming overcrowded and sometimes unhealthful areas into safer, navigable and welcoming places for residents and visitors. The latest proposals will help address issues facing pedestrians and motorists while preserving the vitality of this great public space at the heart of the city,” said **Tom Wright, President, Regional Plan Association**.

“We appreciate that the Task Force has taken seriously the well-being of all pedestrian plazas with these recommendations. We fully support the proposal to empower DOT to manage these amenities through new legislation, and look forward to working with the administration and City Council to develop a set of rules befitting the unique contributions that plazas are making to a more equitable city,” said **Laura Hansen, Managing Director of the Neighborhood Plaza Partnership, a program of The Horticultural Society.**

“I believe the task force has done a good job working to find a solution to this complicated issue. I think having the additional police presence and the same officers policing the square will make a big difference and working with the Mayor and his team I am convinced we will make Times Square safe and desirable as a place to work and visit,” said **Jeff Gural, Chairman of Newmark Grubb Knight Frank.**

“We truly appreciate the Mayor’s collaborative efforts with the Task Force to resolve Times Square’s governance and enforcement challenges. The Administration’s commitment to continue to develop necessary and workable solutions will result in a model for vibrant and dynamic public spaces in every neighborhood,” said **Susan Chin, FAIA, Executive Director of Design Trust for Public Space.**

“We are excited about the future for Times Square and the larger Plaza Program. The Mayor and City agencies, with NYC DOT taking the lead, have come up with a solid plan to transition the Plaza Program into a much more community building agenda, especially for communities outside of midtown in the outer boroughs where they could help drive a collaborative effort to create neighborhood ‘hubs,’” said **Fred Kent, President of Project for Public Spaces.**

“By calling attention to the safety issues on the overflowing 42nd Street sidewalks caused in great measure by vestigial vending regulations, we are extremely pleased that the administration is recommending eliminating vending on our block. The Mayor’s team has quickly and intelligently given informed consideration to the myriad issues that are singular to the reinvented 42nd Street and Times Square,” said **Cora Cahan, President of The New 42nd Street.**

“This is a solid first step in the management of the public space in Times Square,” said **Douglas Durst, Chairman of The Durst Organization.** “We look forward to continuing working with the City and our fellow stakeholders to ensure that the Cross Roads of the World works for everyone.”

“I’m grateful to the task force members and to Mayor de Blasio for recognizing the factors impacting Times Square and for instituting a number of common sense measures that will help restore it to a place where New York City residents, businesses, visitors, people of all ages and backgrounds, feel comfortable and welcome. A conversation has begun about Times Square and, as the plazas are completed and the recommendations implemented, New Yorkers will continue to watch over our greatest public space,” said **Mary Ann Tighe, CEO of the New York Tri-State Region of CBRE.**

“As the dominant owner of retail at the Bowtie – the ‘Crossroads of the World’ – Vornado believes the task force’s recommendations provide a roadmap for ensuring that Times Square and other pedestrian plazas continue to thrive in New York City. I commend the Administration for leading this important effort,” said **Marc Ricks, Senior Vice President of Vornado Realty Trust.**

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