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MAYOR DE BLASIO ANNOUNCES UP TO \$10 MILLION INVESTMENT IN FREE BROADBAND SERVICE FOR FIVE NYCHA DEVELOPMENTS

NEW YORK—Mayor Bill de Blasio and Counsel to the Mayor Maya Wiley announced today a first-of-its kind investment by the administration to bring free, high-speed broadband service to over 16,000 New Yorkers living in five public housing developments in Queens, Brooklyn and the Bronx.

The initiative, led by the Office of the Mayor’s Counsel in partnership with DoITT and NYCHA, will invest up to \$10 million dollars for the five developments, starting with a demonstration project that will bring wireless access to the 7,000 residents of NYCHA’s Queensbridge North and Queensbridge South Houses, which together make up the largest public housing development in the nation.

The announcement comes in conjunction with ConnectHome, a bold new initiative by President Obama to bring together internet service providers, non-profits and the private sector to offer broadband access, technical training, digital literacy programs, and devices for residents in HUD-assisted housing units. New York City – one of 27 cities which won HUD’s competition to participate in ConnectHome – has been recognized for its commitment to aggressively expand affordable access to broadband, including the wireless corridors.

“President Obama has been a tireless leader for universal broadband,” said **Mayor Bill de Blasio**. “And Secretary Castro, a former mayor himself, knows firsthand the importance of solving income inequality. HUD has long been a critical partner, supporting the City’s ability to survive disaster and serve low-income residents. Through ConnectHome, my administration will be able to deepen our private partnerships and leverage our public investment in universal, affordable Broadband for hard working New Yorkers who struggle to support their families and desperately need broadband.”

“No child should worry about whether or not she can finish her homework because her family can’t afford broadband at home,” said **Maya Wiley, Counsel to the Mayor**. “Every parent should be able to go online to see if their child has completed that homework, no matter the size of their paycheck. Getting high speed internet access to low-income New Yorkers is a game changer for families and for the city that needs all our residents to be able to use 21st Century technologies to improve their lives and to build their communities.”

“NYCHA’s vision for the families who live in our communities is one that is safe, clean and connected. Our residents, who include more than 100,000 children, have lacked access to the benefits that the wireless broadband Internet provides,” said **NYCHA Chair and CEO Shola Olatoye**. “Today, thanks to the vision of our President and our Mayor and the commitment of our partners to equal opportunity for all New Yorkers, the digital divide between NYCHA and the rest of our City begins to close. The ConnectHome initiative will help guarantee safe, clean and connected communities for all New Yorkers.

“Technology has long been a means for many to lead more fulfilling lives, to advance their careers, and to make a difference,” said **Department of Information Technology and Telecommunications Commissioner Anne Roest**. “In our digital age the technology baseline is access to high-speed Internet service, and DoITT is

honored to partner with the Mayor's Office and NYCHA to continue advancing broadband deployment as part of a more connected, equitable city for all."

The ConnectHome program will bring affordable, residential broadband access within reach of more NYCHA households, complementing the wireless networks the administration is building in Queensbridge, Red Hook and Mott Haven. Both initiatives are part of the City's broader strategy for getting to universal affordable broadband by 2025. Using a model similar to the libraries "mi-fi" program that launched in NYC last year, Sprint, with support from HUD, will make mobile Wi-Fi devices available to over 15,000 NYCHA households in the Bronx that include k-12 students. The program is expected to benefit some 28,000 children in the borough.

According to an analysis by the Center for Economic Opportunity, 22 percent of New York City households do not have internet service at home and 36 percent of households below the poverty line do not have internet access at home. Recent data on smartphone use by the Pew Research Center shows that one in five American adults rely on smartphones as their primary source for Internet access. According to Pew, half of all people with no or limited home Internet have had to cancel or suspend their phone service because of financial constraints.

Recognizing these challenges, earlier this year the administration committed \$70 million in capital investment over the next 10 years for free or low-cost wireless service for low-income communities. These investments are part of the administration's aggressive approach to expanding broadband access, which recognizes that high-speed internet is no longer a luxury but a critical service that must be affordable to all city residents.

Following Queensbridge, the administration will create a second network to serve the 6,500 residents of Red Hook East Houses and Red Hook West Houses in Brooklyn. The third network will be built at Mott Haven Houses in the South Bronx, which houses over 2,500 residents. The wireless networks will provide internet service of at least 25 Mbps for all residents, meeting the aggressive federal standards aimed at increasing baseline broadband speeds.

In OneNYC, the Mayor committed to universal broadband in New York City by 2025. These networks will be the first of a series of corridors in underserved communities in the five boroughs, as part of a larger administration strategy to close the digital divide by expanding universal access to the internet and driving down the cost of broadband across all five boroughs.

The investments at Queensbridge will complement NYCEDC's recent announcement that \$5.3M in public and private funding will support expansion of high-speed service to businesses in former industrial areas, including areas close to the Queensbridge Houses. Together, these investments mark a significant escalation of the administration's actions to address access and affordability challenges for residents and businesses.

These actions mark the latest escalation in the de Blasio administration's ongoing work to close the technology divide in New York City and make New York the most connected and equitable city in the world. Previously announced steps include the formation of a Broadband Taskforce; the development of LinkNYC, the world's largest and fastest municipal Wi-Fi network; expansion of the City's library hotspot program to lend Wi-Fi devices to New Yorkers; and ongoing leadership by the Mayor to promote a free and open internet through protection of net neutrality and competition in the telecommunications market.

"Whether you're a parent looking for a job, a child working on a school project, or a family looking for information on services, broadband access is no longer a luxury – it's a necessity. This effort helps close the digital divide and addresses the needs of the nearly 3 million New Yorkers who do not have access to broadband internet at home. I thank Secretary Castro and Mayor de Blasio for their leadership and look forward to bringing the internet to more New Yorkers," said **Council Speaker Melissa Mark-Viverito**.

“I am excited to see my vision for a fully connected Brooklyn take one more step toward realization with free broadband service at Red Hook Houses. High-speed Internet access is a necessary component to living and working in our Digital Age city, yet many public housing residents have felt like they have been left back in the Stone Age,” said **Brooklyn Borough President Eric Adams**. “The commitment of President Obama, Secretary Castro, Mayor de Blasio, as well as the coordinated leadership on multiple levels of the public and private sectors will connect New Yorkers, literally and figuratively, across the digital divide and income inequality gap alike.”

“My office has been a leader in the fight for broadband equity in the five boroughs, and this announcement is a great step forward towards bridging the digital divide, not just in The Bronx but across the city. I thank NYCHA, HUD and this administration for their efforts to invest in the infrastructure needed to provide the crucial necessity of broadband internet to those who need it the most,” said **Bronx Borough President Ruben Diaz Jr.**

“I'm thrilled that new to broadband services are being delivered to Queensbridge houses,” said **Congresswoman Carolyn B. Maloney**. “Broadband is needed for everything from completing homework to searching for a job to starting and running a small business. I am proud to support Mayor de Blasio’s initiative.”

“Having access to high speed broadband internet at home is no longer a luxury. It has become a necessity for families and children to be able to complete chores and homework effectively on a daily basis. This investment, the first of its kind in New York City, will lead the way in closing the broadband access gap in low income communities throughout the city to ensure everyone has a fair chance in the economy of the 21st century. This small change will be life changing for thousands of New York families, helping them access a better quality of life,” said **Congressman José E. Serrano**.

“Bringing high-speed broadband into all our communities can unlock a whole new world of economic and educational opportunity. I’m pleased to see these resources dedicated to expanding Internet service in previously underserved communities,” said **Congresswoman Nydia M. Velázquez**.

“Bridging the digital divide is crucial to ensure everyone has a chance to succeed in the 21st century. It is encouraging to see this commitment to fairness from President Obama and Mayor de Blasio that will enhance the ability of all New Yorkers to participate in the modern economy,” said **State Senator Michael Gianaris**.

“I am very grateful to Mayor de Blasio and the Mayor's Counsel for including the residents of Red Hook West and Red Hook East in this expansion of broadband service. Internet access is not a luxury today; if you're a citizen of New York you have to be on the net or be left behind!! Equal access is necessary to equal opportunity. Thank you again!” said **State Senator Velmanette Montgomery**.

“I want to thank Mayor de Blasio for his commitment to bring broadband services to underserved communities in need of better communication and especially in the Red Hook Houses where access for our K through 12th grade students can help insure that these students can excel in school and in the workforce as adults. Access to the latest technologies available is critical for our young people to succeed,” said **Assistant Assembly Speaker Felix W. Ortiz**.

“The Queensbridge community needs broadband wireless to fully embrace the new technology for education and jobs,” said **Assembly Member Catherine Nolan, Education Committee Chair**. “My thanks to Mayor de Blasio and his team for this important technology development.”

“The truth is that internet access is not a luxury of the rich, but a necessity of the many. In a world that is evolving on the front lines of technological advancement, it is imperative that residents have access to the internet, including our NYCHA residents. Low-income residents should not be paying premium prices for this important service. In our own district, the need for broadband access on NYCHA property was highlighted as a

necessary move, and helped inform today's announcement. This move expresses that today we are closer to a world that is more equitable--more accessible. I applaud Mayor de Blasio and NYCHA for this transformative commitment," said Council Member Carlos Menchaca.

"For New York City and its citizens to thrive in the future, it is crucial that all New Yorkers have access to high-speed internet. Internet access is essential for connection, education, entrepreneurship, and civic engagement, and the initiative announced today is an important step towards making that access a reality for more New Yorkers," said **Jessica Lawrence, Executive Director of NY Tech Meetup**.

"The Mayor's initiative to bring free wireless high-capacity Internet access to public housing units in New York City marks a crucial step towards addressing one of the most important social justice issues of our time. Without a persistent data connection, you cannot thrive in the 21st century; with one, you are on your way towards achieving the dignity and autonomy every human being deserves," said **Susan Crawford, Professor at Harvard Law School**.

"This visionary initiative addresses several important policy objectives including enhanced educational opportunities, economic growth as well as taking a significant step in bridging the digital divide. The Mayor and his team deserve a lot of credit for their foresight and hard work," said **John J. Gilbert III, COO/EVP of Rudin Management**.

"Connecting every New Yorker to the Internet is a prerequisite for the city's success in the 21st Century," said **Andrew Rasiej, Founder of Civic Hall and MOUSE.org**. "By focusing on low income residents particularly with children in public schools, this program levels the playing field for those most in need of access to the educational and vocational resources we now know the Internet provides."

"We are excited to support the de Blasio administration's effort to empower families in public housing through free home broadband access. Through our collaboration with high-need school communities across New York City, we have seen the transformative power of extending learning beyond the school walls so students can learn and grow with the help of their families and teachers. Unfortunately, very low-income families are often unable to maintain monthly broadband service because of the expense, so this free access will be essential for families in supporting their child's learning throughout the year," said **Elisabeth Stock, CEO and co-Founder of CFY**.

"The Red Hook Initiative is excited by the Mayor's announcement of the new NYCHA wireless networks and his pledge of universal access for all New Yorkers. During the recovery period after Hurricane Sandy we saw firsthand the importance of resilient communication systems for all NYC residents when our community WIFI network, Red Hook WIFI, provided communication access for hundreds of public housing residents. Since then the RHI Digital Stewards, young adult residents of the NYCHA Red Hook Houses, have continued to expand our network. The Mayor's leadership in the broadband sector will strengthen the work of our young adults in Red Hook, enhancing their ability to bring online resources, tools and opportunities to our community," said **Tony Schloss, Red Hook Initiative Director of Technology**.

"When Per Scholas was founded in the mid-nineties, we were on a mission to bridge the digital divide in our most disconnected communities. Bringing free high-speed wi-fi and future-forward public technology to New Yorkers in public housing addresses the divide head-on. Per Scholas supports new solutions and services to empower the Bronx for the 21st century as we continue to ready local residents for family-sustaining careers in tech," said **Angie Kamath, Executive Director of New York Operations, Per Scholas**.

"This partnership with HUD, and Mayor DiBlasio's broader efforts to expand internet access to low-income residents, provides New Yorkers with much needed resources, household-by-household – to search for jobs, do homework or access health services. These networks will give communities the tools and resources they need to prosper and forge holistic solutions to long-standing challenges. It is a powerful example of Mayor de Blasio's

commitment to build community resilience and expand economic opportunity,” said **Pamela Puchalski, Director of Resilient Communities Program at New America.**

“I applaud Mayor de Blasio’s initiative to deploy wireless networks in our public housing communities, which are home to a significant portion of the citizens in NYC who don't have broadband access in their homes. Wireless broadband for all citizens of New York City is critical to the future of our city,” said **Fred Wilson, Union Square Ventures.**

"The Mayor's plan for high-speed residential wireless networks is a giant leap towards universal, affordable broadband in New York City. These kinds of smart investments in broadband infrastructure are precisely what the city needs to remain a global leader,” said **Jared Kushner, Kushner Companies.**

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