



## **PWC Developers Forum finds billion dollar budgets to stimulate public and private sectors**

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"New York City is still open for business," said an upbeat David Burney, FAIA, commissioner of the NYC Department of Design & Construction (DDC), signaling the encouraging tone at the latest breakfast Developers Forum presented by Professional Women in Construction (PWC) National at The Yale Club. The January 27 event drew a packed crowd including many small to mid-sized business owners and professionals in fields as diverse as architecture to construction law, eager to learn of opportunities at "Stimulating Development - Public & Private Developers Activate the Economy." New York Post columnist and real estate maven Lois Weiss, who reprised her role as moderator, praised the "mind-boggling number of projects" outlined.

Burney discussed a \$3.5 billion portfolio for 423 active projects in the design and procurement stages and noted that the DDC manages capital work for approximately 20 city agencies including extensive infrastructure work in all five boroughs with many water main and street reconstruction projects; over 40 cultural projects; and 47 library upgrades and additions. Two of the largest projects are new construction: the 911 Call Center in the Bronx and a Police Academy in Queens. "All DDC work is LEED Certified Silver," said Burney.

Ashley Cohen, regional recovery executive with the U.S. General Services Administration spoke of the half a billion allocated for projects in 21 federal facilities, ranging from new construction to modernizations and green building projects including the modernizations of the Thurgood Marshall U.S. Courthouse in lower Manhattan; Peter Rodino Federal Building in Newark, N.J.; and Conrad Duberstein GPO and U.S. Courthouse in Brooklyn, N.Y.; plus the plaza repair and energy work at the Jacob K. Javits Federal Building.

Jonna Carmona-Graf, chief of capital program management with the NYC Parks & Recreation Department said, "We've seen a renewed commitment from elected officials" allowing for "enormous growth" and a capital budget that quadrupled over five years to \$1.4 billion for FY 2010. Opportunities for work on about 150 designs, all geared to greening NYC, include new and reconstructed parks; improvements to beaches, outdoor pools, skating rinks, and basketball courts; landscaping; and tree-planting - upwards of 250,000 a year. Larger projects, part of Mayor Bloomberg's PlaNYC initiative, will soon begin in Far Rockaway Queens; Soundview Park in the Bronx; Highland Park at the former Ridgewood Reservoir site; and Fort Washington Park.

Kimberly Hardy, special counsel for regulatory compliance with the NYC Department of Housing Preservation & Development (HPD), noted that her agency is "nearing the 100,000 mark in building and preserving affordable homes" with 65,000 still to be financed. Preservation of existing affordable housing is a key component of the Mayor's New Housing Marketplace Plan - more preservation opportunities will arise, with work ranging from moderate to substantial rehabilitation GC work to subcontracts for painting and lead abatement.

Les Bluestone, partner with Blue Sea Development, whom Hardy applauded for his "collaboration on green and sustainable affordable housing" and whom Weiss cited as an example of "how private developers can work with public agencies", said that Blue Sea Development partners have constructed over 3,000 units with 700 units in the pipeline thanks largely to the City's affordable housing and financing programs plus state funding. He praised HPD's design standards which have elevated the quality of affordable housing. Bluestone said that the demand for such housing remains constant as "there are always people in need of leaving substandard housing and getting a first home."

The event attracted enormous attention. Heidi Blau, AIA, partner with FXFOWLE Architects LLP, said, "We want to find out what the pulse of the industry is in this challenging economy."

Similarly, Donna Walcavage, ASLA, vice president & principal Design + Planning with AECOM wished "to see what's happening so we can plan for the future."

Michael Levine, P.E., COO and executive vice president with Dagher Engineering was anxious to learn "what's new on the horizon."

And Laurie Stanziale, esq., with Greenberg, Trager & Herbst, represents public and private developers and attended to gain "insights into development in this economy."

For more information on PWC visit [www.pwcusa.org](http://www.pwcusa.org). Al Kensek, Plaza Construction Corp.; and Barbara Armand, Armand Corporation, hosted the event.

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