



March 12, 2010

Dept. of Innovation & Technology
(312) 744-0667

City of Chicago
Richard M. Daley, Mayor

Department of Innovation and
Technology

Hardik Bhatt
Chief Information Officer

Suite 2700
50 West Washington Street
Chicago, Illinois 60602
(312) 744-5844
(312) 744-9004 (FAX)
<http://www.cityofchicago.org>

CITY OF CHICAGO LAUNCHES FASTER, EASIER, MORE TRANSPARENT WEBSITE

The City of Chicago unveiled a new and improved City website today that provides easier, faster, more reliable and more convenient information to residents, businesses and visitors. The new site, located at www.cityofchicago.org, contains more than 3,500 pages and brings – apart from City information – unique online services to the fingertips of Chicago residents and businesses. This is the first update to the City's website in nine years.

"We knew that our job was to use the most up-to-date technology to create a website that makes it a simple task for Chicagoans to connect with their government online and find the information they need to help them with their every day lives," said City Chief Information Officer Hardik Bhatt during a website demonstration at the Daley Center. "And we believe the improvements we are making in this website also represent another important step toward our goal of making Chicago government more accountable, open and transparent."

Bhatt explained that one of the many reasons for the update was that aging infrastructure could no longer support this site's rapid increase in demand. For example:

- Today the website has more than one million visitors a month;
- Over the last three years, the number of payment transactions made online has grown from 240,000 to more than 600,000; and
- In 2006, eight percent of city sticker purchases were made online. Last year, that number was up to 20 percent.

As a result, some of the new website features include:

- **"People-centric" Rather than "Department-centric" Design** – allows both individuals and businesses to find information conveniently and more quickly.
- **Enhanced Visual Organization** – a Google search engine is embedded in the site, allowing for more targeted searches for services and information.
- **Faster and More Reliable Service** – supports more users, more information, more services and more transactions.



- **Seamless Interaction with Other Government Websites** – searching for government benefits no longer requires “government know how” if looking for vital records services provided by the County Clerk’s office or Driver’s license services from the Secretary of State.
- **Added Multimedia Functions** – lets residents be more interactive by offering video options, automatic electronic updates and social media tools such as Facebook, Twitter and others.

“We know that people want information in the many different formats available today and it’s our job to make it as easy for our users as possible to interact with city government,” said Bhatt.

Bhatt noted that the website improvements also represent another important step toward the City’s goal making Chicago government more accountable, open and transparent. The updated site enhances the transparency of government in a number of ways, such as making it easy to find information about such things as city contracts and payments, budgets, Freedom of Information Act requests, Tax Increment Financing (TIF) and other kinds of other city data.

Bhatt reminded everyone that the website is a work in progress and encouraged all Chicagoans to be patient if they experience early glitches in the system and to provide the city with lots of feedback.

“Our goal is to make online interaction with city government fast, efficient and even enjoyable,” said Bhatt.

The city’s website was modeled after the Explore Chicago tourism site, www.explorechicago.org, launched early last year. Last week, Explore Chicago was named “Best Destination Website” by the North American Travel Journalists Association.

The City’s technology team worked with Crowe Horwath to design and develop the site.

###