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Social media platform invites New Yorkers to make a change

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All New Yorkers can now try their hands at crowd-sourcing.

On Thursday, July 7, Deputy Mayor for Operations Stephen Goldsmith announced the official launch of Change By Us NYC, a social media platform that will allow New Yorkers to share and develop their ideas into team projects to make the city more environmentally sustainable.

Created by Local Projects, an award-winning media design firm based in Manhattan that creates websites and digital installations for museums and public spaces, the interactive website will provide those who submit ideas with the potential opportunity to collaborate and receive funding from

city agencies and community-based organizations.

Already, the city's Department of Environmental Protection has awarded 15 Green Infrastructure Grants, valued at \$3.8 million, to qualified applicants for projects that would reduce sewer overflows and improve water quality for New York Harbor. And a second round of grants, valued at \$4 million, will soon be dished out.

"New York Harbor has been cleaner than it's been in 100 years," said Goldsmith, who forecast that the website would rapidly grow into "a social network for grassroots leaders."

Goldsmith was joined at the event, which was held at the Church of St. Luke and St. Matthew in Clinton Hill, by other key figures and proponents who have been instrumental in pushing forward the development of the website, the city's most recent digital innovation.

"We're launching [this website] for communities like this one because we know NYC has a commitment to be better and more sustainable," said Peter Kostmayer, who is the CEO of Citizens Committee for New York City, an organization that supports self-help and civic action to improve the quality of life for New Yorkers.

The website's homepage, which features an interactive board of ideas on multicolored post-its, already includes ideas from city agencies and community-based organizations submitted only a few months ago when the beta site was just released.

Since its launch, the list of over 500 ideas has grown, ranging from harnessing wind and solar energy to more composting and concerns about bike lanes and speed bumps.

Reverend Michael Sniffen, the rector of the Episcopal church, became the second member of a project featured on Change By Us NYC. The project entails growing a vegetable garden within the church's property to nourish both residents of the neighborhood and the homeless who reside in the church's winter shelter.

"A previous generation built the church on a corn field," he said. "We want to make sure that it is surrounded by natural beauty for years to come."

For Jake Barton, the founder and principal of Local Projects, the website is more than just a way to share and develop ideas. It fundamentally revolutionizes the role of New Yorkers, moving them "from customers of NYC into partners."

Barton, who grew up in Brooklyn and currently resides in Harlem, added, "The city is no longer a provider of services, it becomes a platform."

With the participation of city residents, Goldsmith is confident that the city will one day become a green capital.

"The results will truly be a transformed landscape of the city," he said.

to try your hand at making a change, visit [the website](#).

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