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Peering into Lower Manhattan's future

BY JOHN BAYLES

The fourth dimension is time and the Lower Manhattan Construction Command Center has harnessed the technology to allow visitors to its website the ability to see into the future, just by clicking a mouse.

The L.M.C.C.C. is in charge of overseeing all construction projects over \$25 million below Canal Street. Their new 4D map lets users zoom in on Lower Manhattan and click on buildings either currently under construction or slated to be developed in the near future. The map uses Google Earth technology to give users a bird's eye view of the area as it looks today and then by sliding a time scale, they can see what, for example, the World Trade Center site will look like in four years.

But that is not the only use of the hi-tech toy. Users can click on certain buildings and find out the construction status, the anticipated completion date and even who is doing the work.

"It was everyone's first time at bringing all of this type of information together," said David Ortega, the website's administrator.

The information is culled from numerous sources, primarily daily, weekly and monthly meetings the organization holds with various stakeholders. Ortega said his team also pulls

a lot of information from the Department of Buildings' database. He said the process was very organic.

"As things happen, we update it," said Ortega.

President of the L.M.C.C.C. Robert Harvey called the undertaking "Herculean."

"I think this map serves as a functional tool for all the different stakeholders in the community — whether a real estate developer or community board member, or school districts," said Ortega.

The map is not yet complete either. In the coming weeks Ortega said users would be able to zoom down to street level to see whether lanes are shut down due to the construction.

"We will have each lane highlighted — so if Broadway is closing a lane, it will be updated weekly," said Ortega. "We'll actually go out and take pictures of the streets."

Also soon to come will be two-dozen new renderings of buildings slated for construction. Again, this aspect involves lots of man-hours. The L.M.C.C.C. contracts with animators who will cull images from architectural firms and then use software to render the buildings so they can appear on the map if a user wants to see what Lower Manhattan will look like five years from now.