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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
May 20, 2015

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***Jersey City and Hudson County Announce STEM Middle School Expansion at Jersey City Community Education and Recreation Center on Ninth Street as JCRA Enters Lease with Hudson County Schools of Technology***

***Explore 2000 Middle School to Grow by 200 Students at New Facility; As Part of Agreement, County Will Offer Adult Education and Career Programs and Community Groups Will Continue to Utilize Center***

JERSEY CITY –**Mayor Steven M. Fulop** announced today that the Jersey City Redevelopment Agency (JCRA) has entered into an agreement with the Hudson County Schools of Technology to develop the Community Education and Recreation Center (CERC) located at 180 Ninth Street as **an innovative, STEM-focused middle school**, helping build a stronger pipeline for Jersey City students to pursue the advanced education in the science and technology fields necessary to succeed in STEM careers.

**Explore 2000 Middle School**, which serves students in grades six through eight at its location on Montgomery Street, will relocate to the CERC for the 2015-16 school year, enabling it to expand its enrollment by nearly 200 students and develop new, hands-on lab space. With a special focus on experiential project-based learning, the school will continue its strong-track record of preparing students for entry into competitive local high schools, including High Tech High School’s new, innovative mechatronics program developed in collaboration with local industry leaders and higher education partners. In addition to the Explore 2000, the County will offer a wide-range of adult career and educational programming at the facility, including industry-aligned coursework in advanced manufacturing, previously available only at the County’s North Bergen campus. At the same time, Jersey City community groups will continue to enjoy access to CERC’s gymnasium.

“Every educational study and report highlights our nation’s need to close the gap with other countries in how we prepare students in math and science so they can succeed in today’s global economy,” said **Mayor Fulop**. “By providing middle school students with a rigorous curriculum based in the STEM fields of science, math, engineering and technology, we are growing their interest in these subjects and giving them the tools necessary to succeed in high school, college and beyond.”

According to the United States Department of Commerce, our country is estimated to have 1.2 million unfilled jobs in the science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) fields by 2018 because the workforce will not possess the necessary skills or interest to fill those positions.

The JCRA board approved last night by a vote of 5-0 a five-year lease agreement that provides a renewal clause as well as an option to purchase the facility.

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“STEM education isn’t a buzzword – it’s the watchword today for young people in Hudson County dreaming of a brighter future,” said **Hudson County Executive Tom DeGise**. “So we couldn’t be more pleased to enter this partnership with Mayor Fulop to expand our Explore 2000 Program to create a truly STEM-focused middle school program in the 9th Street Center that will prepare students for advanced programs like our mechatronics manufacturing sciences course of study at the high school level.”

Explore 2000 will open at its new location this fall with approximately 80 students in grades 6th through 8th, but plans to expand to serve approximately 240 students by the 2019-2020 school year. The middle school enjoys strong partnerships with state and local organizations, and nearly a third of the students participate in high school level courses. The County will also offer robust adult career education programs at the school, including advanced manufacturing classes, and educational classes, such as English as a Second Language (ESL) and GED programs.

**All media inquiries should be directed to Jennifer Morrill, Press Secretary to Mayor Steven M. Fulop at [201-547-4836](tel:201-547-4836) or [201-376-0699](tel:201-376-0699). ////**