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# De Blasio Administration Releases Progress Report on Sandy Recovery and Resiliency

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***After Mayor's overhaul, Build it Back has now made an offer to nearly every homeowner, with majority already reimbursed or in construction***

***NYC is safer now than before Sandy as comprehensive \$20 billion resiliency plan is being implemented across five boroughs, with many measures in place***

**NEW YORK**—Today, the de Blasio Administration released a progress report on housing and business recovery and citywide climate resiliency in the aftermath of Hurricane Sandy. Read the progress report [here](#).

"Nearly three years ago, Sandy provided a stark picture of the risks of climate change – and New York City has been working to protect our communities, infrastructure, and coastlines ever since," said **Mayor Bill de Blasio**. "When we took office, Build it Back was simply not delivering for homeowners. As a result of our overhaul, houses are being built back stronger and more resiliently and families are finally returning home. At the same time, we're aggressively implementing a \$20 billion climate resiliency plan that's already ensured we're safer, and that will continue to move forward each day. We'll continue to push forward as we build a stronger, more resilient New York City for all."

As a result of Mayor de Blasio's 2014 Build it Back overhaul, nearly every homeowner has been made an offer, and the majority have received reimbursement or started or completed construction – with nearly 5,300 reimbursement checks totaling well over \$100 million, nearly 1,900 construction starts, and nearly 1,200 construction completions to date, compared to none in all categories in early 2014. Earlier this year, Build it Back quadrupled capacity, ensuring that these numbers will continue to exponentially increase in the coming months.

The administration also announced the successful completion of the Hurricane Sandy Business Loan and Grant Program, which has awarded over \$54 million in support to nearly 350 businesses across the city. The program is still accepting appeals.

These recovery initiatives complement the \$20 billion climate resiliency plan underway across the five boroughs, ensuring that the city is already safer than it was when Sandy hit. With dozens of short-term measures already in place, large-scale, long-term measures are now being built to further strengthen coastal defenses, protect infrastructure, strengthen communities, and adapt buildings.

"Before Mayor de Blasio overhauled Build it Back last spring, homeowners and entire neighborhoods were stuck – weighed down by bureaucracy and unsure how to move forward. Within months of the overhaul, relief was being felt across the city, with construction finally underway and money moving to homeowners in need. Now one and half years later, the momentum is stronger than ever: Build it Back has quadrupled its design and construction capacity and accelerated its construction process, so that

nearly 6,000 homeowners have now started work or received reimbursement," said **Amy Peterson, Director of the Mayor's Office of Housing Recovery Operations**. "There is still more work to do. Building on the progress of the last year and our collaboration with Sandy impacted communities, we are ready to elevate and rebuild more and more homes across the city."

"Nearly three years ago, Hurricane Sandy devastated New York City, highlighting the city's growing vulnerability to coastal storms and the impacts of climate change," said **Daniel Zarrilli, Director of the Mayor's Office of Recovery and Resiliency**. "Today, we are safer than we were before Sandy thanks to improvements in emergency preparation, investments in our coastal defenses, and the launch of a comprehensive \$20 billion resiliency program. And we have more to do before we'll be satisfied. The City remains committed to delivering on this program and making our neighborhoods, economy, and public services ready to withstand and emerge stronger from the impacts of climate change and other 21st century threats. We will do this by collaborating with many public and private partners as we continue to build a stronger, more resilient New York."

"Under this administration we have worked tirelessly to help small businesses impacted by Hurricane Sandy get back on their feet by making it easier and faster to get grants and loans for recovery, and as a result, today we are announcing that we have completed processing all applications, and have awarded nearly 350 businesses more than \$54 million," said **Andrew Schwartz, Acting Commissioner of the NYC Department of Small Business Services**. "We have helped get more money out the door to our city's small businesses by working with partners to make the approval guidelines more flexible, award more grants instead of loans, and provide one-on-one assistance to help business owners apply."

**NYC Parks Commissioner Mitchell J. Silver, FAICP stated:** "Hurricane Sandy painfully demonstrated that New York City's first line of defense against the impacts of climate change is our nearly 160 miles of Parks coastline. With Mayor de Blasio, we continue to work to meet the needs of our open space, recreational, and natural resource objectives for long-term resiliency, ensuring strengthened coastal defenses that make our neighborhoods safer."

## Housing & Business Recovery

In spring 2014, Mayor de Blasio overhauled Build It Back, taking a program weighed down by bureaucracy and implementing creative solutions to get much-needed relief to homeowners. The City took over direct management of Build It Back centers, while expanding eligibility, dramatically increasing its community presence, and aggressively moving relief dollars to homeowners. By the second anniversary of the storm in October 2014, the effects of the overhaul were already being felt, with hundreds of homes in construction and over 1,000 reimbursed.

One year later, the pace of recovery is stronger than ever. Build It Back has made an offer to nearly every one of its 10,000 active applicants, and moved the vast majority of them into construction or reimbursement with:

- 5,272 reimbursement checks – compared to none at the start of 2014 – valued at over \$100 million
- 1,837 construction starts – compared to none at the start of 2014.

Build it Back completed its 1,000th construction project on September 14, and has now completed 1,139 projects.

Under the de Blasio administration, the Department for Small Business Services also worked to turn around the Hurricane Sandy Business Loan and Grant Program to award more grants (rather than loans), make guidelines more flexible, and increase disbursements from just seven approvals in January

2014 to nearly 350 today. The administration is marking the successful completion of the program, which has now awarded over \$54 million in support to nearly 350 businesses across the city.

## Climate Resiliency

The City, through the Mayor's Office of Recovery and Resiliency and in collaboration with its public and private partners, is implementing a comprehensive \$20 billion resiliency program, informed by the best available climate science, that is continuing to build a stronger, more resilient New York by strengthening coastal defenses, protecting infrastructure, strengthening communities, and adapting buildings.

The five boroughs are already much safer than they were three years ago when Sandy hit, as a result of short-term measures that have already been put in place, including:

- 4.2 million cubic yards of sand in Coney Island and on the Rockaway peninsula
- 9.8 miles of dunes across the Rockaway peninsula and in Staten Island
- 10,500 linear feet of bulkheads across the city
- 16 new improvements to the City's building code to address new climate threats

This includes such notable projects as:

- On the Lower East Side, ORR has undertaken a year of public engagement and is now moving into final design and environmental review on the \$335 million East Side Coastal Resiliency project funded through the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's Rebuild by Design competition.
- In Hunts Point, the City's food distribution hub, \$45 million is being invested in resiliency measures and long-term planning to ensure the long-term viability of the city's food supply.
- In Staten Island, the City is restoring 68 acres of degraded wetlands and piloting an innovative mitigation banking proposal at Saw Mill Creek led by the New York City Economic Development Corporation.
- In Lower Manhattan, the City recently committed an additional \$100 million of City funds, on top of a prior \$15 million to launch design work, and is working to secure additional federal investment for Lower Manhattan: Protect and Connect through HUD's National Disaster Resilience Competition.
- The City has secured \$3 billion for NYCHA resiliency investments to move forward the design and implementation of this program across its 33 impacted developments, a game-changing investment in the City's public housing stock.
- The City and Health and Hospitals Corporation secured \$1.8 billion from FEMA for resiliency investments at Bellevue Hospital Center, Coney Island Hospital, Coler Rehabilitation and Nursing Care Center, and Metropolitan Hospital.
- The City is working in partnership with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to advance significant investments in Sea Gate, the Rockaway peninsula, Jamaica Bay, and the East Shore of Staten Island.
- The City is leading additional investments in coastal protection for Breezy Point, Red Hook, and vulnerable shorelines across the city.
- The New York City Office of Emergency Management released new hurricane evacuation maps to better guide hurricane planning, and expanded NotifyNYC, ReadyNY, and Know Your Zone campaigns for better public risk awareness.
- The City released new climate projections with the New York City Panel on Climate Change to better plan for adaptive climate resiliency measures.
- The City reconvened the Climate Change Adaptation Task Force, a regional group of public and private infrastructure operators.

- And the City expanded focus on social and economic resiliency, including new urban heat island mitigation efforts.

Significant progress is underway all over the city on these projects and much more. In addition, today ORR is announcing the launch of new resiliency measures and making important milestones, including:

- Providing new funds to evaluate and develop plans for the installation of dunes in Coney Island
- Starting design of integrated flood protection, with full community participation, in Red Hook
- Releasing a Request for Proposals for a food supply chain resiliency study
- Kicking off a critical task force for non-profits and houses of worship resiliency planning
- Releasing a Resilient Art Spaces Guide through the Department of City Planning

## **Coney Island Dunes**

The City's comprehensive coastal protection plan highlighted the need for additional measures, such as dunes, on the Coney Island peninsula. The City, with the Department of Parks and Recreation and New York City Economic Development Corporation, is allocating funds to develop design concepts and cost estimates for reinforced structured dune systems on the public beaches in Coney Island and Brighton Beach, a vital first step to getting dunes on those beaches, with an eye toward integrating those investments with other work planned in Coney Island Creek and Jamaica Bay.

## **Red Hook**

The City and State have committed \$100 million to the study, design, and construction of an integrated flood protection system (IFPS) in Red Hook Brooklyn. The project is led by the New York City Economic Development Corporation and aims to make the waterfront community more resilient and better protected from future storms. A design contract has now been signed and will start, with public engagement meetings to get underway this year.

## **Food Supply Chain Resiliency Study**

The City is also initiating a first-ever, comprehensive regional resiliency analysis of New York City's food supply chain network. The Request for Proposals for this study is being released by the New York City Economic Development Corporation on October 23rd.

## **Non Profit and Houses of Worship Resiliency Task Force**

Earlier this year, the Mayor signed into law a bill that creates the Hurricane Sandy Charitable Organizations and Houses of Worship Recovery Taskforce. In partnership with City Council, the City will launch this 19-person Task Force in November. The Task Force, which will be led by ORR and NYC Emergency Management, is tasked with producing a report that will describe the role played by organizations in the aftermath of Hurricane Sandy, and provide recommendations on how the City can best engage with these organizations to improve their resiliency against future threats.

## **Resilient Art Space Guide**

The Department of City Planning is releasing the Resilient Art Spaces Guide, which will provide guidance on making art spaces more resilient. The Guide is a product of the Department's work with the arts community in West Chelsea through its Resilient Neighborhoods Study.

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