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OFFICE OF THE MAYOR
NEW YORK, NY 10007

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CONTACT: pressoffice@cityhall.nyc.gov, (212) 788-2958

MAYOR DE BLASIO OPENS FIRST FULL SECTION OF NEW RESILIENT ROCKAWAY BEACH BOARDWALK, KICKS OFF BEACH SEASON

De Blasio Administration Commits Full \$480 Million in FEMA Funds to Rockaways; Any Remaining Dollars Will Fund Additional Resiliency Measures Once Boardwalk is Complete

Push by de Blasio Administration Will Ensure a Continuous Boardwalk by Summer 2016

NEW YORK—Today, Mayor Bill de Blasio, NYC Parks Commissioner Mitchell J. Silver, FAICP, New York City Economic Development Corporation President Kyle Kimball, and local leaders opened the first full section of the newly constructed Rockaway Boardwalk, from Beach 86th Street to Beach 97th Street, and announced a commitment to keep all \$480 million in Federal Emergency Management Administration funding obligated for the project in the Rockaways if dollars remain once the boardwalk is complete. All New York City public beaches will be open for swimming starting tomorrow, Saturday, May 23.

When Hurricane Sandy hit, significant parts of the boardwalk and its surrounding amenities were destroyed or severely damaged.

As a result of the de Blasio administration's push, the Rockaway Boardwalk will be continuously complete by Memorial Day 2016, with intact sections of the old boardwalk and new sections linked together. The boardwalk will be entirely completed as new construction by Memorial Day 2017.

When combined with intact and previously restored sections, the first phase of reconstructed boardwalk opened today means that there are 2.2 miles of the boardwalk currently accessible to the public. The second section of new boardwalk, from Beach 97th Street to Beach 107th Street, is expected to open on July 4 of this year, representing a total of 2.6 miles, or 55 percent of the boardwalk that will be accessible.

The boardwalk will rival the best in the world with respect to resiliency to extreme weather and the effects of climate change – featuring multiple layers of protection that include sand retaining walls and planted dunes, more resilient planking, coated steel support piles, plant-stabilized berms, and elevation to three feet above the 100-year flood plain. This complements the comprehensive resiliency plan underway across the Rockaway peninsula, including 3.5 million cubic yards of sand now providing interim protection on Rockaway beaches, major shoreline improvements, a double dune system in Breezy Point, bulkhead repairs, and much more.

FEMA has obligated \$480 million for boardwalk reconstruction, which includes the costs of repairs and resiliency measures. The de Blasio administration is committed to using any remaining funds from the FEMA reimbursement on further protective measures along the Rockaway peninsula.

“Today is a great day for the Rockaways and for our city. The boardwalk is central to this community’s history and identity – and the new boardwalk will be a symbol of the Rockaways’ strength and resiliency,” said **Mayor de Blasio**. “As a result of our push, the Rockaways will have a continuous boardwalk by next Memorial Day. Any funds that remain once work is complete will stay here, to make the community even stronger, safer, and more resilient. Thank you to Senator Schumer, FEMA, and all of our local partners for their vital leadership.”

“I am very pleased that the City has made it clear, that when it comes to FEMA money for the boardwalk and mitigation, what gets sent to the Rockaways stays in the Rockaways! Since day one, we’ve worked very hard to deliver this massive federal investment of \$480 million to rebuild our glorious Rockaway Boardwalk in a way that is magnificent and resilient to future storms. That’s why I worked so hard to secure these resources in the Sandy relief bill. Any funds not used on the boardwalk will be used on resiliency efforts to protect the Rockaway families. I thank all partners including Mayor de Blasio, Representative Meeks, Assembly Member Goldfeder, FEMA and other community leaders. I look forward to a fun-filled beach season for Rockaway and all of New York City,” said **Senator Charles E. Schumer**.

“With more than 4 million visitors last year, Rockaway Beach provides the entire city with a place to enjoy the waterfront and beat the summer heat, but more importantly it is the first line of defense for the Rockaway community against coastal storms,” said **Parks Commissioner Silver**. “We are very proud to open the first section of newly reconstructed and resilient boardwalk, and welcome everyone to a better protected Rockaway. I would like to thank our partners at the Economic Development Corporation, and all of the members of the Rockaway community, whose ideas and hard work have helped to make this possible.”

“The devastation that occurred during Hurricane Sandy is still very much felt in the Rockaways, but today we take an enormous step forward as we officially open the first full section of the historic boardwalk,” said **NYCEDC President Kyle Kimball**. “The increased investment and focus to this area’s resiliency and enrichment represents the City’s commitment to ensuring a successful future for this community, and we look forward to continuing to rebuild and increase opportunities for the people right here in the Rockaways.”

“Sandy highlighted our vulnerabilities in the Rockaways and across the city’s coastal communities. Today marks the next step in our recovery while we continue to strengthen our resiliency,” said **Daniel Zarrilli, Director of the Mayor’s Office of Recovery and Resiliency**. “These investments, now and to come, are making the Rockaways ready to withstand and emerge stronger from the impacts of climate change and other 21st century threats.”

“I commend the Administration for making the commitment that all of the \$480 million in FEMA hurricane reimbursement funding to the Rockaways will be targeted toward building a safer and more resilient peninsula,” said **Queens Borough President Melinda Katz**, “Ensuring that the residents and business owners of the Rockaways never have to experience the devastation that took place on October 29, 2012 again is a top priority for this city. Applying the full amount of funding to resiliency projects will bring much needed relief to those who continue to call the peninsula home.”

“We are delighted that 100 percent of the \$480 million in FEMA funding will stay in the Rockaways, an area devastated by Superstorm Sandy, but poised for a rebirth,” said **Senator James Sanders Jr.** “We have already seen the effects of this financial investment with the start of repairs to the boardwalk, but more improvements are needed. I hope that the use of this money will result in something that our children and our children’s children can be proud of.”

“I am elated once again to celebrate the Rockaway Beach Opening,” said **Assembly Member Michele Titus**. “As a community we welcome hundreds of families to our beaches and this year I applaud our Mayor’s commitment to dedicating the necessary funding to restore our Rockaway Boardwalk.”

“I applaud the administration for aggressively prioritizing repairs to the Rockaway Boardwalk that will improve its resiliency to extreme weather events made more frequent by climate change. This reconstruction incorporates the most up to date coastal protection designs developed through collaboration with the Rockaway community. The reconstruction of the boardwalk will serve as a model of resiliency and is a fabulous way to kick off the beach and pool season, said **Council Member Mark Levine, Chair of the Council Committee on Parks**.

“I am so excited to be here for this momentous announcement, which stands as another symbol that the Rockaways are truly on the rise to becoming stronger than ever,” said **Council Member Donovan Richards**. “I am grateful to the Mayor’s Office for allocating \$480 million to the boardwalk, and I will be diligent in ensuring that my district gets its fair share and any excess funds are spent in the areas where FEMA help is needed the most.”

The new boardwalk, which started construction in April 2014, will set a global standard for resilient shoreline design, while providing the Rockaway community with a beautiful, functional beachfront. The project is being integrated into a multi-layered system of coastal protection that will resist future weather events and account for the long-term effects of climate change. It is constructed with a steel-reinforced concrete deck, fixed to steel pipe support piles that elevate it above the 100-year flood plain. Multiple layers of protection are also being integrated into the boardwalk design, including approximately six miles of planted dunes. A concrete retaining wall is being constructed underneath the boardwalk to keep the beach’s sand in place and prevent it from entering the community. Much of the new boardwalk’s appearance – including its sand-colored decking, brightly colored ramps and designated bike lane – was decided during a series of collaborative design sessions with Rockaway residents.

In order to maximize the amount of boardwalk available and minimize disruption to the community, work on this project is being completed in phases. This will allow access to old, intact sections to be preserved until construction is started in that area. Intact and previously restored sections will allow the City to open all 4.7 miles of the boardwalk by the summer of 2016. The complete boardwalk reconstruction is scheduled to be completed by the summer of 2017.

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