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**TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO DELIVERS REMARKS AT CEREMONY FOR A
100 PERCENT AFFORDABLE HOUSING PROJECT**

President and CEO James Patchett, Economic Development Corporation: Hey, good afternoon. We're going to get started. Hi, James Patchett. I'm the President of the New York City Economic Development Corporation and I'm really thrilled to be here with you all to celebrate the topping off of this fabulous project. Today's milestone serves an important reminder of the city's commitment to building stronger communities and investing in our future. I want to thank Mayor de Blasio, our city partners at HPD, HDC, DOT, and DDC, as well as Queens Borough President Richards, our local elected partners, the community builders, and there are many community partners for their tireless efforts and support in building the foundation of the Far Rockaways economic transformation. I also want to thank my fabulous team at EDC for leading this effort over the last five years.

It was not too long ago that we were celebrating the downtown Far Rockaway rezonings. Some of you may know this is one of my last public events as the President of EDC. I announced my departure two weeks ago, and I honestly couldn't be prouder to have this as one of my final events. This is why I got into public service. I started working on affordable housing in the eighth grade when I volunteered for Habitat for Humanity and I haven't stopped since. I believe that affordable housing and community investments are the cornerstone of economic development. Projects like this are the whole point of public service. It's not working – government working against communities or trying to convince them of what government wants to do. It's government working with communities to take their priorities and transform it into a plan to [inaudible] government resources and make a community a better place for everyone. We will use every tool at the city's disposal to make the community's vision a reality. We are transforming underutilized properties to bring housing, quality jobs, and open space to the center of this neighborhood and the speed with which we are delivering on our commitments, even in the middle of a global pandemic, reflects how serious we are about our commitment to this community. Construction has continued to progress even with all of the challenges of COVID and that is thanks to the community builders and the talented construction workers who are delivering this much needed development for this neighborhood.

Soon, this transformational project will include 224 housing units of a 100 percent affordable housing, a community facility, and retail space for local businesses, and we're not even close to done. Our partner agencies are upgrading critical infrastructure, creating new public spaces, constructing the neighborhood's first new library since 1976, and its first new park since 1931. It is truly been a pleasure to work with all of you over the years. It is amazing to bring this kind of change that residents have so long called for. Investments like this and Beach 21st Street and the Pedestrian Plaza will catalyze downtown Far Rockaway's future, one that is bright and full of promise for all of its residents. I am confident this space will be a cherished spot that brings neighbors together and makes this community an even more special place to live. I'm now

pleased to introduce one of our fabulous community partners - one of our fabulous city partners and my friend commissioner, Louise Carroll from HPD.

I'm sorry. We're going to change up the order, the Mayor's here.

[Laughter]

All right, never mind. We are sticking with Louise. Okay. Call it an audible.

Commissioner Louise Carroll, Department of Housing Preservation and Development: So, I guess I'm the second warmup act. Thank you, James. Thank you, Mr. Mayor, and thank you, Borough President. Good afternoon. It is great to be here for the topping off of Beach Street 21. This is an exciting project. It's one that I can't wait to be fully realized for the community of Far Rockaway. I worked on this project as a lawyer at HDC as a general counsel, and I was so excited to see it come to completion while I am Commissioner at HPD. These past few months have been difficult, and we know that the pandemic has been particularly hard for the people of the Rockaways. We know there is a lot more to do and a lot more months before we can return to normalcy, but we want the people to understand that with Beach 21st Street and the many other amazing projects underway, we are here as a sign to this community that the city is going to work to make sure that downtown Far Rockaway comes back even stronger.

HDC, HBD, EDC, DOT, and DDC, the alphabet soup of city agencies involved in this project, really represents a holistic vision of the larger downtown Far Rockaway plan to create housing, improve infrastructure, and increase economic opportunity and expand community amenities. Beach Street 21st street, as you heard from my colleague, James will bring 224 affordable homes to this neighborhood, and half of these homes will be affordable to families earning less than \$52,000 a year, including families experiencing homelessness. Under Your Home NYC, the Mayor's comprehensive approach, to helping New Yorkers get, afford, and keep their homes, we are committed to building deeper more homes for low-income New Yorkers as we progress towards our goal of 300,000 homes by 2026. These developments will bring security to our hardest hit families and communities and create jobs that will aid in our city's recovery. The homes and the way ahead at Beach 21st Street exemplify the commitment we're making, not just to affordable housing, but to first rate design that ensures that we're creating high quality, sustainable developments that not only benefit the residents, but also strengthen the entire community. The children who live here and, in this neighborhood, will have a place to play in the newly developed plaza and a place to learn and grow at the coming daycare and early childhood center on the ground floor.

We are excited when we can work with our fellow agencies, but also excited when we can work with dedicated officials like Queens Borough President Richards, who was pivotal to this plan as former council member. But most importantly, we are so excited when we can work with the folks who live here to make sure that we are building the city that you want to see. When complete, Beach 21st Street will be life-changing for 224 families. I'm looking forward to seeing this building completely listed, the restaurant downstairs bustling, and much brighter days ahead. I also want to take a moment to recognize EDC President and CEO, James Patchett, who has been a close partner and I from the start of this administration, first at City Hall, and then at the helm of EDC these past four years. Throughout James has seen the close connections between affordable housing and economic growth and vitality. Your vision to drive the city, to make the

city and even better place to live and work in your creativity, in your intelligence, in this supremely difficult time has been invaluable. Your departure is bittersweet, but you leave behind a truly awesome team and legacy, and we at HPD will continue carry on that good work with them. Thank you. And now I'd like to turn it over to –

President Patchett: Now my privilege to introduce another of my good friends, a former Council Member, now Queens Borough President Donovan Richards.

[...]

President Patchett: I'd now like to introduce our close community partner and real leader to make this whole process happen. Kevin Alexander, the President and CEO of the Rockaway Development and Revitalization Corporation.

[Applause]

[...]

Mayor Bill de Blasio: Thank you, everyone. First of all, let's give our thanks to the men and women who did the work, who are making this possible for everyone in this community. Let's thank them. This means so much to the people of the Rockaways, and folks in the Rockaways have struggled for many years, but with pride and with strength. In scripture, we remember the first shall be last, and the last shall be first. A lot of times the Rockaways was left behind, ignored, mistreated, and when we came into office seven years ago, we said, we must do something different. If we're about fighting inequality, if you want to fight inequality, you should start in the Rockaways.

[Applause]

And that is why we have made the investments in Far Rockaway. That's why we have believed that when given fairness, given investment, this already good and strong community could become so much greater. That's why we brought ferry service to the Rockaways. That's why we have seen every opportunity. We grabbed it to create affordable housing so people could live in their own beloved community.

Now, the Rockaways has caught hell time and time again, and never was that more true than with Hurricane Sandy, and I was out here. I was out here with Donovan. I was out here with James. This is one of those times when you used the word devastation, you're using the right word. The pain that this community went through. But I remember even the days immediately after Sandy, people talked about coming back, fighting back. I did not meet a single defeated person in the Rockaways, and there is a saying, it's not how many times you get knocked down, it's how many times you get back up. That could be the slogan of the Rockaways.

So, today we proved that we can move forward, and I want to thank everyone here because yes, you forged ahead during the pandemic, and that was powerful. That was a message, that it mattered. What's happening here today is about bringing this city back, and I'm talking about how we recover, it has to be a recovery for all of us. I want to be clear – we can't just have recovery for some people, we have to have a recovery for all of us. Here's an example right here,

a place that deserve the very best, getting the very best. Jobs being created, all the things that will benefit this community in the future.

Kevin, thank you for your leadership. I could hear the passion in your voice about what's been done here. The elected officials, all folks I've had the honor of working with for a long time. I know how much they love this community. Thank you, Borough President. Thank you, Senator Sanders. Thank you, and congratulations, Assemblymember Anderson. It matters when leaders care and do something about it, and you're seeing that here.

And I want to congratulate everyone who's been part of this work, and I really appreciate what Louise said, because folks that our Housing Department, HPD, Housing Development Corporation as well, working with Economic Development Corporation, they just set some records, we talked about it a few days ago for creating affordable housing in the city. Please offer my deep appreciation to your team and all your colleagues, and you just set some records, and now you're right at it setting new records for 2021. So, thank you.

[Applause]

And James Patchett. I have a heavy heart when I talk about him, he's been one of my comrades in arms as we have fought to make this a better and fairer city and he's done just immeasurable good, but I think after seven long years, he has earned his right to finally take care of himself and his family a little bit. But James, I'm glad you got to be here for this one because this epitomizes so much of what you believe in, and I'm glad we'd make a lot of jokes. James and I about the ferry service, because it was not easy getting it up and running, but I'll tell you, when you talk to folks in the Rockaways about what it's meant for their lives, what extraordinary change it's been, it really makes you understand why James and his team at the Economic Development Corporation do so much for all of us. So, we're going to miss you, but you've done good, James, you've done good.

[Applause]

And welcoming in the new, our new Recovery Czar, she's not new because she'd been doing incredible work, including right here with this project through DDC. But we're going to be bringing all of the efforts of the entire city government together. Every agency working together, one goal, a recovery for all of us in 2021 and pulling all those strands together and making it happen, our new Recovery Czar Lorraine Grillo. Thank you.

[Applause]

So, everyone, as we prepare to celebrate, because this is going to be one of those moments, you're about to see this topping-off of this building. It's going to be one of those symbolic moments. This is going to give you the perfect vignette for 2021. We were put back on our heels. We were laid low by the coronavirus. We fought back in 2020. We recover in 2021. We get better. That's what we do in New York City. Thank you everybody.

President Patchett: Okay, I'm supposed to say something now about how we're going to sign something. Everyone, but – I'm going to take my prerogative to just say how appreciative I am of

the Mayor for giving me this opportunity to be in public service for the last seven years. It's been the honor of my life and my career. So, thank you, sir. Thank you, and now everyone, this way.

[Applause]

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