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CHIYB: de Blasio Administration Announces Study to Address Basement Flooding in SE Queens

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NEW YORK—As part of City Hall in Your Borough, the de Blasio administration today announced a new feasibility study for a groundwater drainage project aimed at addressing basement flooding in southeast Queens. The groundwater table in southeast Queens has risen over the last two decades and there are a number of residential and commercial properties that report water rising up through their basement foundations. Many property owners have installed pumping systems that discharge the water into the sewer system, thereby reducing the capacity of the drainage system and exacerbating roadway flooding. The study will measure how high the groundwater table has risen, how much it must be lowered in order to mitigate the basement flooding, and the feasibility of a radial collection plan. It is anticipated that the study will be completed by the spring of 2018.

“Homeowners and businesses in southeast Queens – we’ve heard your concerns about basement flooding,” said **Mayor de Blasio**. “Basements that are constantly inundated by groundwater mean damaged property, mold and the constant concern over the next flood. This comprehensive study is the first step towards possible solutions.”

Prior to development, much of southeast Queens was composed of wetlands and streams that drained

into Jamaica Bay and its tributaries. In order to construct John F. Kennedy Airport and the roadways and buildings that make up the neighborhood today, the wetlands and streams were bulldozed and filled with soil. Today those drainage corridors still exist, however now they run beneath streets and homes. Overlaying a map of reports of basement flooding with the location of these historical drainage corridors shows there is a significant correlation. If the study shows favorable conditions, DEP would like to construct a radial collection system, or perforated buried pipes, along these historical areas to drain the groundwater to a local waterbody. Any plan would require approval from the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation prior to commencing work.

Mayor de Blasio has also committed \$1.7 billion to address roadway flooding in southeast Queens. The bulk of the funding will go towards the construction of large trunk sewer spines along 150th Street, Guy Brewer Boulevard, Farmers Boulevard and Springfield Boulevard. This work will take place through at least 18 separate projects, the first breaking ground as early as later this year. Dozens of smaller local sewer projects will connect neighborhoods to the trunk sewer spines.

“The rising groundwater table and basement flooding in Jamaica is real, and it presents a significant quality of life issue for residents and businesses and a complex problem for engineers,” said **DEP Acting Commissioner Vincent Sapienza**. “We are pleased to be able to move forward with this study, which will tell us how high the groundwater table has risen, how far it must be lowered in order to reduce the basement flooding, and the feasibility of our plan for radial groundwater collection.”

“Flooding has persistently plagued Southeast Queens’ neighborhoods for decades, damaging properties, financially burdening homeowners and at times posing a significant threat to personal safety. This groundwater study and the Mayor’s additional investments today are critical steps for future infrastructure upgrades and longer-term solutions to improve the quality of life for Queens families,” said **Queens Borough President Melinda Katz**.

“Due to the rising groundwater table, basement flooding has become a widespread problem for residents of Jamaica,” said **Congressman Gregory W. Meeks**. “This timely study will determine the various courses of action for the City’s proposal, and the businesses and residents of Jamaica deserve to know the impact of any course of action.”

State Senator James Sanders Jr. said: “The Southeast Queens community has suffered from persistent flooding issues for decades. The rising rainwater has caused damage to homes, particularly basements. I am optimistic that this feasibility study by DEP will help the agency find permanent solutions to the problem. I look forward to working with them in the future to help expedite any necessary steps that can alleviate the flooding.”

“This study is more than necessary because basement flooding is no stranger to our residents. We are pleased to hear that the city will be assessing these problems, so that we as Southeast Queens residents will not have to face groundwater table rising and basement flooding in the future. We have high hopes that this study will expose some of the flaws in our local infrastructure and focus on mitigation,” said

Assemblyman Clyde Vanel.

"For decades, our community has suffered with severe groundwater intrusion affecting thousands of homeowners. Today we take a major step in providing relief for these hardworking residents," said **Assemblywoman Alicia Hyndman**. "Thank you to the members of my water task force and our community partners for their dedication in addressing this issue. I look forward to the outcome of the study."

"Like many other property owners of Southeast Queens, I have had to undertake expensive repairs to my basement due to flooding. I am pleased that the Department of Environmental Protection is finally taking these additional, but necessary steps to relieve homeowners of this problem," said **Councilman I. Daneek Miller**. "This study will allow us to build on the progress we have already made with the city's \$1.7 billion investment in sewer infrastructure upgrades, and I am excited to one day witness the final product: dry basements in Southeast Queens."

"The residents of Southeast Queens have had to accept basement flooding as a common occurrence for far too long," said **Council Member Donovan Richards**. "Thankfully, we have a Mayor and DEP Commissioner who won't accept this systemic problem and are making every effort to correct the flooding issues that have been ignored for decades. We look forward to seeing this study move forward quickly and anticipate a plan to finally tackle the groundwater issue."

"A study to relieve the flooding conditions in so many homes in southeast Queens is long overdue. Understanding the topography on which much of this area of Queens has been developed 'on top of' goes a long way in explaining 'why' to so many affected homeowners. The 'how', or 'fix' after knowing 'why' allows homeowners to see what the city is proactively doing, and that there is a remedy that will occur in the near future. We applaud DEP for moving forward on this feasibility study and anxiously look forward to its results and the onset of remediation for our communities," said **Mark McMillan, District Manager of Queens Community Board 13**.

"The residents of Addisleigh Park are extremely pleased to hear that the City has agreed to fund a feasibility study to reduce groundwater flooding in Southeast Queens. Our community has been plagued with flooded homes, businesses and institutions for decades. Residents have seen their homes made uninhabitable due to groundwater flooding and mold. We are hopeful that this study will lead to the city and state developing a permanent solution to this problem. We are grateful to Mayor de Blasio, Commissioner Sapienza and DEP for this initiative," said **Andrea Scarborough, President of Addisleigh Park Civic Organization**.

"Flooding has been an issue in Southeast Queens for a number of years, and homeowners and businesses in the area have paid a great price. I am happy to know that at last this problem is being addressed. Kudos to Mayor de Blasio," said **Rev. Dr. Floyd H. Flake**.

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