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**RUSH TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO ANNOUNCES START OF \$87 MILLION
QUEENSBRIDGE HOUSES ROOF REPLACEMENT**

Mayor Bill de Blasio: Thank you. Thank you very much. Tammy, you did good.

[Cheers]

Tammy was nervous, but she overcame it. Let's give her a round of applause – thank her for all she does with the Resident's Association. Thank you very much.

[Applause]

There is nothing more important than hearing from people who live in developments – people who are active in developments, making life better for everyone else. And they'll tell you what matters.

And I know that for folks who care about their homes – about the developments, in many cases, they've lived in their whole lives, brought their families up in – nothing's more important than getting it right with the roofs. Nothing's more important than fixing the roofs.

And we have heard your voices – Tammy, and so many other resident leaders – we've heard your voices. And that's what brings us here today.

This is a great day for Queensbridge Houses. It's a great day for our Housing Authority because we're going to the heart of the matter and fixing one of the biggest problems, that our residents have faced for a long time.

In addition to Tammy, I want to thank, from the Resident's Association, Vera Ogletree. Thank you for leadership.

[Applause]

And two of the board members of our Housing Authority citywide, Beatrice Byrd and Willie Mae Lewis. Thank you for your leadership.

[Applause]

Now, you need a roof over your head in life, and you need a roof that doesn't leak. Nothing's more fundamental. It's one of the things that it's our obligation to make sure people have. And it isn't a good roof if it leaks all the time.

So we know that this roof replacement work is crucial. We're not just putting a Band-Aid on the situation. We are fixing the roofs, we are replacing the roofs – starting here at Queensbridge.

Now, this is the largest public housing development in the United States of America. It's something to be very proud of.

[Applause]

Over 3,000 apartments, over 7,000 residents, a very proud history – and this is the flagship for this effort. What we start here at Queensbridge is going to reach all across the city. And this effort we're starting today will ultimately replace roofs at 66 buildings – 66 NYCHA buildings across this city.

[Applause]

Now, we do not accept the status quo that has pervaded for too long in NYCHA – that residents just to put up with things like leaky roofs. I don't accept that. Residents deserve better, and we will give them better. Over 400,000 of our fellow New Yorkers – we are adamant that we will make fundamental changes in their lives.

People have had to suffer through the leaky roofs and so many other problems in buildings that have been crumbling for years or even decades. And why? Because these buildings were neglected. They weren't invested in. And we know, for too many years, the state and federal government didn't do all they could have and should have for the people of our public Housing Authority – and people suffered for it.

Well, that ends now. We have committed \$300 million dollars to this effort. And we know through this roof replacement effort that over 13,000 New Yorkers will no longer experience the indignity of a leaky roof. Their lives will be better. And when we complete this effort, we're going to go and do even more.

It's all part of the NextGen NYCHA plan – NextGeneration NYCHA. And this plan is not only about making up for the gaps, and the problems, and the history – it is about going farther. It's putting NYCHA on a stable footing for the future.

Let's be clear – I don't accept anything less than that. NYCHA needs to be financially stable. And the people who live in public housing deserve a good quality of life.

That's what this plan is all about – turning the tables on the history and giving people that fairness they deserve. NextGen NYCHA lays out a plan to secure the financial stability of NYCHA, but also the physical stability of NYCHA – making sure that our buildings are handled the right way.

Now, let's be clear – today, NYCHA has \$17 billion dollars in capital needs across all of our buildings – \$17 billion. And again, a lot of that is because the federal government, the state government stopped contributing. Well, because we have come up with a plan that turns the whole Housing Authority around, we will be able to catch up. We will be able to turn the tables and make these homes good again.

It is not enough, as I said, to put on a Band-Aid. We have to go to the root causes. And if you listen to folks who live at Queensbridge, they'll tell you that the Band-Aid solutions didn't work. Even when there were repairs, there were too many times when the water poured in from the roof; poured into the apartments; poured into the stairwells; ruined people's furniture; knocked out the electricity; did all sorts of things that made life unfair to the residents here. And obviously, health challenges, like mold and mildew and mice – all effected by the roof situation.

It wasn't right, and it can't go on any longer – because we need to fix the roofs, once and for all. That is the plan – fix the roofs once and for all, so people don't have to live this way.

[Applause]

NYCHA residents have made clear to us that roofs are the cause of the number one complaint – the health challenges we face from mold. And we know if we fix these roofs the right way we will not have that mold

problem. We won't have it here at Queensbridge, where 28 buildings will have their roofs replaced. They'll be 18 buildings at Sheepshead Bay Houses in Brooklyn; 14 buildings at Parkside Houses in the Bronx; and six buildings at Albany Houses in Brooklyn. This is an example of handling things very differently in our Housing Authority.

By the way, it's one example. Another example is the sheds – the scaffolding – that have been in too many places when it wasn't even work going on. I found out two years ago at Lincoln Houses – I had never known before – the sheds were just left up for years on end. We said that has to end. We have now taken down – this is an amazing number – eight miles of these sheds have been taken down in developments all over the city.

[Applause]

We committed \$210 million dollars to developments that needed it the most to address safety challenges, and that include – included here at Queensbridge. \$210 million dollars – you know what that achieved? In all 15 developments combined, a nearly 11 percent drop in crime overall. At Queensbridge, a 19 percent drop in crime in the last year. That is something to be proud of.

[Applause]

And another major reform – we're investing \$10 million dollars to bring free high-speed internet service to over 16,000 NYCHA residents.

[Applause]

And that includes every single resident at Queensbridge Houses – every single resident will have free high-speed internet.

And the repairs that waited so long in the past – the great work of our General Manager Michael Kelly – you'll hear from in a moment. Those repairs are now being done faster than ever. And you will be able to track the progress of the repairs – we will be open and transparent with you about it.

[Applause]

That is what we need to do to sustain our Housing Authority for the long-term. That's what Tammy's been working for, and so many other resident leaders. And one of your fellow residents and resident leaders, April Simpson, said something powerful that really breaks it down for all of us. She said, "I love my community. I've been here all my life; I've seen all the changes. This is home to us, not just the projects."

[Applause]

This is home for people. And we have to treat it like a home, and take care of people the right way.

A few words in Spanish.

[Mayor de Blasio speaks in Spanish]

[...]

Mayor: Alright, we're going to take questions on this topic, followed by questions on other topics. First, on this topic – Erin?

Question: Yeah, Mayor, this – if I understand correctly – is \$300 million dollars –

Mayor: Say it louder [inaudible].

Question: This, if I understand correctly, is \$300 million dollars of city money, so can you tell us what happened to the \$300 million in state money that had been [inaudible], that the city wanted to use for the roof replacement –

Mayor: Okay, this is a mix of city and federal, because, obviously, we do get federal money in – when I say the – when I talk about the history, the histories – although we get federal money for NYCHA, it's not what it used to be and it's not what we need. And again, I know the Congresswoman shares this view. We look forward to a day when the federal government gets back in the affordable housing business – for public housing, for senior housing – a whole host of things that used to be common. I know she's fighting with her colleagues in the House minority for that type of thing. But in terms of the state money, we still have not heard from the state. It's a \$100 million that the state pledged. We have not received a plan, and we'd very much like to get that plan.

Question: Does that mean that fewer roofs are now going to be replaced because of that? Or has the city kind of replaced –

Mayor: The money we're talking about here is our commitment. The \$300 million is the city's commitment, in our budget we passed in June. We're going to move forward with that, regardless of what the state does. But we think the \$100 million that the state pledged should be made available to the people of our public Housing Authority. It's something that NYCHA residents deserve – is the support to fix these roofs. And \$100 million more from the state would make a huge difference. We'd like to see that money sooner rather than later. Yes?

Question: Can you talk a little bit about – one of the ways that you're to make the authority sustainable – the housing sustainable – is to build some combination market rate and affordable housing on select developments –

Mayor: Correct.

Question: I understand you're going to be picking which developments are going to be the sites for that in the next couple of weeks?

Mayor: Well, at least the initial ones, yes.

Question: [Inaudible] Do you have any concerns over residents at those developments not necessarily wanting that or understanding that?

Mayor: Well, let's start at the beginning. Obviously, my predecessor had a plan which I did not agree with, and we have a very different plan. Our plan focuses on affordable housing. And I think that immediately begins to answer your question – how are residents going to feel, both in the surrounding development and in the surrounding larger community? I think people all over the city know that we need more affordable housing, and this is one of the ways we'll create it. So there's going to be two types of development here. In some places, it will be 100 percent affordable housing. In other places, it will be 50 percent affordable housing. There will be select sites. We'll identify them as we go along. In every case, we'll be working closely with residents of the development and the community. That's another thing that I did not think was being done properly in the previous plan. I don't think there was serious engagement with community members and residents to figure out what they needed – because one of the great things about our plan is, it will create a lot of money for that development. So, for example, where there is additional housing being built, there will be capital dollars created to fix problems that exist in that development. The residents are going to help us decide what that money goes to. For example, they may want their elevators to be replaced. They may want a new security system. Whatever it is, we're going to focus on the most important needs of the residents. That money would not be available without the development. So I think what's going to make this plan something that people will embrace is that it's going to overwhelmingly create affordable housing – which everyone knows we need in this city – and it's going to create a lot of new resources to fix problems in the development where it's located – problems that, in many cases, have been going on for decades, and people really want solutions to.

Question: Just going back to the state funding question. The \$100 million dollars – the governor had originally said it was going to be for roof repairs. Then he said he wanted it to be still invested in NYCHA, but in other, sort of, quality of life improvements. And when he announced that change, he said that – he emphasized that the money would be controlled by the state, because, he said, the state has a better track record at construction. Can you sort of respond to that idea – that the state – the state's track record, when it comes to construction [inaudible] –

Mayor: Yeah, that's old – that's old news. We've had that discussion before. We're very proud of the work we're doing today at NYCHA. You've heard about the eight miles of sheds that have been removed; the work already happening here at the roofs; the work that was done on security last year, very effectively. We're proud of what this public Housing Authority today is doing, and we're proud of the direction it's going in. My bottom line is, I'd like to see those resources – clearly, the roofs are the number one concern, and I think that would be the best use – but most importantly, we want to see those resources and we want to see a plan.

Question: [Inaudible] recently had situation in which contractors doing parapet work actually helped caused leaks and other problems in the King Towers in Manhattan. I want to hear about what measures you're taking to ensure that the contractors are not going to make life – making life worse for residents during these roof replacements, instead of –

Mayor: I'm glad you raised that. That's an absolutely unacceptable situation. What happened at that development should never happen anywhere. We're going to make sure that the residents affected get the right kind of support to get back to normal. There will definitely be consequences for anyone who was a part of making that mistake. And there's still an investigation going on to determine the role, either of the private contractor or the staff at that development of NYCHA, but I guarantee you there will be consequences. And I'd say this to people working on these projects all over the city – you have to do them right. You cannot leave the residents in the lurch. If you leave them in the lurch, you will pay for it. On this topic, still. Go ahead.

Question: A woman at a NYCHA –

Mayor: Louder.

Question: A woman at a NYCHA development in East Harlem was having problems because she had [inaudible] –

Mayor: You've got to speak up, brother.

Question: She had five dogs in her apartment, and she's being [inaudible] – apparently breaks the terms of her lease. Do you think she should be threatened with an eviction for having that many animals in her house?

Mayor: I don't know the policy. Do you know the policy off hand?

NYCHA General Manager Michael Kelly: [Inaudible]

Mayor: Okay, just verify, broadly.

NYCHA General Manager Michael Kelly: Yeah, very broadly, I don't know the specific incidence, but there is a pet policy. With this many – this concentration with this many families, it's very important that the agency have a published pet policy, and that all the residents, you know, live within those – those terms.

Mayor: Okay, last call on-topic. Yup?

Question: Yeah, the chairwoman of NYCHA came under fire late last – yeah – late last week, regarding comment she made [inaudible] was going to happen to matter what –

Mayor: Wait, say it again. Came under fire –

Question: [Inaudible]

Mayor: Well, I just disagree with that. The – first of all, I think our Chair, Shola Olatoye, is doing a great job. I support her fully. Second, I've made very clear this is the plan we believe in to create affordable housing. This is a crucial piece of creating the 200,000 units of affordable housing – that we will do over the next ten years – that this city needs – enough for half a million people. We're going to make sure that any facilities that people have – whether it's parking, playground, whatever – at a development are made whole, even if it means someplace else in the development. We'll make sure that people have the same amenities. But we must have more affordable housing for our people, and I think that's understood in communities all over the city. So I think this is a fair policy and a just policy, and it's going to allow us to fix the very developments where this is happening. And I guarantee you – I've spent a lot of time in my public life working with public housing residents. If you say to people, here is a way to fix elevators, to create a security system – whatever they need, we're going to work through with them to choose the priorities – and create jobs for residents of that development, people will understand that that's a good deal for them.

Question: [Inaudible]

Mayor: Say it again?

Question: [Inaudible]

Mayor: We obviously will account for any infrastructure needs. Yes?

Question: Mr. Mayor, the BB gun shooting incident at Gracie –

Mayor: We're still on-topic. Let's make sure [inaudible] on-topic before we switch up. This is still on NYCHA, and particularly this announcement. I want to see if there's anything else on this. Going once – going twice. Now you're on.

[Laughter]

Question: With the BB gun shooting incident outside Gracie Mansion, do you have concerns about your security or [inaudible]?

Mayor: I have tremendous faith in the NYPD, and I think my security and my family's security is being handled very well. I obviously was concerned for the officer. I spoke to her and she's in fine shape. So I guarantee the NYPD is going to take care of that situation.

Question: Yeah. Mr. Mayor, last week we asked you if you're personally offended by the topless performers in Times Square and you said that, you know, as a human-being and a parent you didn't think it was appropriate for women to display themselves in that way in a busy public square. Do you feel the same way about topless men, and also –

Mayor: It's a business – the difference –

Question: Sorry, how much is this taskforce costing the city?

Mayor: First of all, it's a business. Let's be clear. This about a business – people making money and doing it in a way that obviously comes with problems. So, we want to regulate it properly. That's what this taskforce is going to do. The taskforce is based on the work of city leaders and community leaders. It's not going to cost money to have that taskforce – no appreciable amount of money.

Question: Is it appropriate in your mind – or why is it appropriate in your mind that a taskforce that is – was created due to the issue of female toplessness be headed by men?

Mayor: This taskforce is about Times Square in general. It's going to look at the costume characters; it's going to look at the DVD sellers; it's going to look at the painted ladies; it's going to look at the traffic dynamics and the congestion dynamics – and the whole picture. That's all I got, dude.

Unknown: [Inaudible] It's not all men.

Mayor: Thank you. You are providing testimony. Erin?

Question: July was the most violent month of any –

Mayor: Louder.

Question: July was the most violent month of many years for Rikers Island. I wonder why you think that's happening, despite your anti violence plan. It could show the need for changes. And also, some critics have said that Commissioner Ponte should be replaced. What do you think about that?

Mayor: I think those critics don't know what they're talking about. Commissioner Ponte is a reformer who has been effective all around the country. If you look at what he's achieving already – in the units where he has put his reforms in place, there is little or no violence. And that is the shape of things to come on Rikers Island. We're going to change the culture profoundly and he's the right person to do it. Also, there's about to be a vote – the Board of Corrections – on the visitation policy. And this is an area that needs tremendous reform because that's where a lot of the weapons are coming in. And the change is going to stop the flow of a lot of the weapons. So, systematically, we are addressing that issue. Jonathan?

Question: Mr. Mayor, on the Times Square thing – last week you mentioned one of the possibilities would be rethinking – potentially rethinking the pedestrian plazas. Some critics of the idea suggested that by doing so, it could actually put more cars in the area, which they contend would, sort of, fly in the face of your Vision Zero reform. I want to see – what are your thoughts on that? Do you feel like removing the plazas are sort of –

Mayor: I think what we've done with Vision Zero is beyond what any previous administration has done, and I'm very proud of that. I give tremendous credit to NYPD, to DOT, to TLC. We drove down pedestrian fatalities to the lowest levels since 1910 last year. It's actually lower again this year. So I think we can say that the folks in my administration who are running our Vision Zero initiative know what they're talking about. This is a proposal that's going to be looked at. Now, I think we can safely say there's been some portrayal of this is a fait accompli. I didn't say that, nor did anyone else. We said we have a one month process, and this is one of the things that has to be examined. So, we'll consider all of the issues, including, of course, the safety ramifications. Going back to front. Yes?

Question: There's been an idea –

Mayor: Behind you, I'm sorry.

Question: [Inaudible] thank you for taking my question, Mayor.

Mayor: Yep.

Question: [Inaudible], our education reporter, wanted to ask you a question, and then I'll go to my second about public safety. First, he wanted to ask you – the start of school is coming around the corner. What steps are you and the schools chancellor taking to prepare students and families for the upcoming school [inaudible]?

Mayor: Well, as we always do, we're preparing the schools. We're getting alerts out to parents; we're making sure that they know what to do to prepare their kids. And, obviously, we're very excited that we have two really big changes coming. We're going to have, for the first time ever, full-day, high-quality pre-k for every single kid who's four years old. And we're going to have afterschool programs for every single middle school child who wants one. So, those are big changes. We're letting parents know that that's available to them, in both cases, for free. And we're getting everyone ready for the school year. What's the other question?

Question: Regarding public safety, the Legionnaires' disease outbreak, as we know, has calmed down from the South Bronx. But if there is any type of pandemics or any other type of public safety issues, how are you going to address that, and how will officials do the same?

Mayor: Well, look – I think we've had two situations that helped us to understand the best way to do this – Ebola and Legionnaires'. And I think this city's public health capacity is extraordinarily good. I think we have the best public health department in the nation. We have the best public hospital system in the nation. And I think we saw – amen – and we saw, during the whole preparation for Ebola, the role of the FDNY, which was exceptional. We obviously saw the heroism of Bellevue Hospital, and we saw Lincoln Hospital play an extraordinary important role in the Legionnaires' situation. So, I think this is a city that's very well prepared to handle a public health challenge, but we also try and learn. We're going to do, obviously, a full review of everything to figure out how we can even be better prepared going forward. Marcia?

Question: Getting back to the pellet gun incident –

Mayor: Getting back to?

Question: The pellet gun incident.

Mayor: Yeah.

Question: There are at least four of five buildings that are tall buildings around Gracie Mansion, where unfortunately somebody who wanted to do you harm could shoot down into the courtyard. I wonder if that concerns you – if you think there should be changes to the security. And if you thought about the fact that it could've been you, it could've been you wife, it could've been your kids?

Mayor: We all understand what we signed up for. And, obviously, my family is the center of my life, but we have absolute faith in the NYPD. They're the security experts and we know they'll take care of the situation. Anna?

Question: Given Citi Bike's expansion into the outer boroughs and into Jersey City in the future, I was wondering if you thought that Staten Island would benefit from a bike share program of that kind, or bike rental, or Citi Bike specifically, and whether or not that jives with your administration's agenda on the borough in terms of transportation.

Mayor: No, absolutely. I – look, I believe that everything needs to be thought about from a five borough perspective. And one of the things we said – as you know, there was a moment when Citi Bike was teetering financially and structurally, and the administration stepped in and worked with others to make sure that Citi Bike would be strong for the future. But one of the things we said was, it had to be a five borough system. So, it is expanding as we speak deeper into the outer boroughs – coming to Bed-Stuy this Friday, in fact – but it has to get to all five boroughs. So I certainly want to see it get to Staten Island as soon as possible.

Unknown: Thank you very much.

Mayor: Thank you, everyone.

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