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**RUSH TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO ANNOUNCES REMOVAL OF OVER 43,000 FEET OF  
SIDEWALK SHEDDING AT NYCHA DEVELOPMENTS MAKING NEIGHBORHOODS SAFER &  
CLEANER ACROSS CITY**

**Mayor Bill de Blasio:** Thank you very much. Thank you. You go away for one week and they forget your name – it's very tough.

[Laughter]

Thank you so much, Linda. Linda, thank you for your leadership. Let's give her a round of applause.

[Applause]

Resident Association President is one of those roles in this city that takes a lot of strength and a lot of wisdom, standing up for the residents of this community – and we thank you, Linda, for your leadership. And we know, because you let us know, how important it was to the people of this community to get these scaffoldings down, and to open up space and light and the ability for people to see their way around. And we heard your voice loud and clear.

It is such a pleasure to be at Sheepshead Bay Houses. It is great to be in Brooklyn – Brooklyn in the house!

[Applause]

And you can see with your own eyes today that we are making good on a promise to residents of our Housing Authority to deal with this problem. These scaffoldings, or sheds – whatever word you want you want to use for them – they've been a problem for residents. They've made life in developments worse. They've made people feel less safe and secure. And, in so many cases, it wasn't necessary – and that was the worst part. It was time to address this issue.

And we said last August that we would expedite getting these scaffoldings down wherever they weren't needed, all over this city. It was time for the sidewalk sheds to come down, and open up the space and the light, and let people feel safer again.

I am proud to say that we have followed through on that pledge. And our friends here at the Housing Authority have removed nearly 44,000 feet of scaffolding all over this city.

[Applause]

Now, for those of you counting at home, 44,000 feet is over eight miles of scaffolding that has come down in housing developments all over the city. At Sheepshead Bay Houses alone, we removed over 7,100 feet. That is nearly 1.5 miles of scaffolding – what a difference it makes for the lives of people who live here.

As you see, the work is finishing up today here at Sheepshead Bay, and it will be done very soon. And it's the culmination of an effort over these months to make a fundamental change for people who live in public housing.

Let me acknowledge some people who are here with us today. Others will be speaking in a moment. First of all, I want to acknowledge our chair of the Housing Authority, Shola Olatoye.

[Applause]

I want to say, welcome back, Madame Chair. This is her second day on the job since giving birth to the beautiful baby girl, Isabel.

[Applause]

And – you can – we all support mothers. That's very good. We're with you.

[Laughter]

I want to thank Council Member Mathieu Eugene for his support for this initiative – thank you.

[Applause]

I want to thank Community Board 15 Chair Theresa Scavo.

[Applause]

I want to thank, from nearby Nostrand Houses, the Tenants Association President Barbara McFadden.

[Applause]

And I want to thank Rabbi Rafi Treitel for his support – thank you, Rabbi.

[Applause]

Now, let's face it – people, over the years, who lived in public housing felt neglected by City Hall, and they had every right to feel that. So many times, their concerns were not heard and were not acted on. And that was true at the state level, and true at the federal level as well. We understood that. We understood that the Housing Authority had been neglected – not just in terms of attention, but in terms of financial support – and that there are real ramifications for that.

In fact, as a result of decades of disinvestment, NYCHA has now found itself in the worst financial crisis in its history – nearly \$17 billion dollars in unmet capital needs in developments all over this city. Too many buildings are not in the shape that residents deserve. And residents have been rightfully complaining and too few times have they seen results from their valid concerns.

I've talked to NYCHA residents over many years about what they need, about what they've seen happen. And one of the things in the last few years I heard the most about was the scaffolding.

People looked at it – it made no sense. Why was scaffolding up that didn't appear to have a reason, but did create so much negative for people in developments? You know, scaffolding was great for folks who wanted to do the wrong thing. It was great for criminals as a place to hide. It was great for folks who wanted to throw their

trash on top of the scaffolding. It was not great for the vast majority of good law-abiding residents who wanted a good, safe, clean place to live. It made people feel less safe and secure.

And I saw this first-hand in 2013. I spent the night at Lincoln Houses, and that was one of the developments that was so frustrated – people were so frustrated that the scaffolding was there, and they couldn't even figure out why, because no work was going on that required a scaffold.

So, we got together with the leadership of NYCHA and we said, why is this? And it turned out it was part of the same history of neglect – that scaffolding sometimes was put up for a legitimate reason to begin with, but then was left there; or the work that should've been done quickly was let to go for months and months, even years. And really, the only reason that scaffolding should be up is when there's active work going on, because people don't deserve to have it around them for any other reason.

So, let's talk about Sheepshead Bay Houses. Sidewalk sheds were here, in some instances, as much as five years – five years, for no apparent reason, making the quality of life for the people here worse. Linda talked about this, and she said that sheds were up for so long that residents forgot what the buildings looked like. And you can understand why anyone would feel less safe with all of these obscured areas and all of these places that light didn't shine.

So, we came to the clear conclusion that we could not accept business as usual. The people of – the residents of the Housing Authority deserve better. We felt their sense of urgency that something had to change.

The sheds have come down here at Sheepshead Bay and people already can feel the difference. They feel safer. They feel like their concerns were heard.

And now, the rule we want to hold all over this city is when a scaffolding goes up, it's for a particular reason, the work is expedited, and the scaffolding comes down quickly. Because there's no reason for it to hang around making people's lives worse.

This is one part of what we need to do to help the people who live in NYCHA developments.

We're investing \$300 million dollars across NYCHA for roof repairs because we know roof repair is how we stop the leaks. It's how we stop the mold that too many people have suffered through.

[Applause]

We've invested over \$210 million dollars to improve repairs in NYCHA developments, and to make them safer; to add lighting; to add youth programs in the summer.

And most recently, we launched NYCHA's Next Gen plan – Next Generation NYCHA plan. This is going to save us, ultimately, \$4.6 billion dollars. And it's going to make it possible to do so much more to help residents of the Housing Authority to finally meet their needs, and to stop the Housing Authority's constant descent downward financially.

It's the beginning of a new era. And it is a reminder that not so long ago in New York City history the Housing Authority was considered to be one of the jewels in the crown. It's one of the great progressive accomplishments of New York City – to build public housing for people who need it. And it was quality housing. And so many families worked their way from NYCHA to a stronger economic reality after.

We've got to restore that promise and make NYCHA a model for our nation again – and we intend to do so.

A couple words in Spanish before I introduce some of my colleagues –

[Mayor de Blasio speaks in Spanish]

[...]

**Mayor:** Alright, we're going to questions on topic, followed by questions off topic. Let's do some on-topic first – on-topic?

**Question:** The – the state had earmarked about \$100 million for the city that you wanted to use for roof repairs – just wondering what the status of that is. Has it been earmarked for the individual assembly members' projects yet or is there still a chance you might be able to use it for the – ?

**Mayor:** Well, we're waiting to hear from the state with a plan. The most important priorities are two – the roofs and security. The roofs because – and I think we have a lot of people who can testify from their own experience or experience of other people they know – if you don't get the roofs right, you have leaking problems and you have mold problems, and that's a health hazard to people who live in developments. So we have to focus on the roofs, where the need is greatest. And obviously we have to focus on security in many of our developments. So that's where I'd like to see the lion's share of the resources go to, but we have not yet received a plan from the state, and we obviously would like to see one as quickly as possible.

**Question:** Is there no unnecessary scaffolding on Staten Island?

**Mayor:** I think there is not. You know, knowing you'd be here, Anna –

**Unknown:** Yeah –

**Mayor:** My briefing –

**Unknown:** [inaudible]

**Mayor:** My briefing specifically says, "Question: Why didn't any Staten Island developments lose sidewalk sheds?" This is the – the – the Anna Sanders plan. We have a whole war room for this. "Answer: There are no remaining legacy sheds on Staten Island." There we go. Preparation! You know what Coach John Wooden used to say at UCLA. "Failing to prepare is preparing to fail." So we were ready this time.

Okay. On topic. On topic. Going once. On topic. Going twice. On topic.

Off topic. Off topic. Andrew –

**Question:** Mayor, while you were on vacation, former senator D'Amato suggested a pasta summit between you and Governor Cuomo. Are you open to that idea? And if not, do you think it's important to send a message to New Yorkers that you and the governor actually can get along?

**Mayor:** I appreciate Senator D'Amato's offer. I personally am trying to lose weight, so I'm staying away from pasta. But I do appreciate the good will offer. And he obviously is someone I respect. Look I'll certainly be talking with the governor, and I look forward to getting real work done on behalf of the people of New York City. The bottom line in this is my job is to defend the interests of the people of this city. When Albany hears the needs of the people of this city and acts, I say amen. When Albany doesn't listen to what people in this city need and doesn't act, I will fight. It's as simple as that. But I can work with anyone, including people I have disagreements with. That's part of the work we do.

**Question:** Mayor, in responding to your criticisms, the governor basically said, you know, you can't always get what you want, that's life. You know, some people might characterize that as trying to talk down to you or explain to you the way things work. How did you take those comments and just –

**Mayor:** I – I don't worry about any of those characterizations. I've been in public life a long time. I certainly understand a lot about how government works. And when it's done right, there is a kind of a compromise and balance that you strike that's in everyone's interest. We did that in the way we balanced the budget working with the City Council. We did that in the labor contracts that we reached with 80 percent of our workforce. I'm very comfortable with the right use of compromise in government. What I'm not comfortable with is business as usual in Albany, because too often that has left the people of New York City out of the equation. And certainly when it came to the situation with mayoral control of education, you do not need to be a rocket scientist to see that if Michael Bloomberg was able to get a seven-year term for mayoral control of education and then another six-year term for mayoral control of education, then suddenly, in a new environment, the decision in Albany is only one year, that's not in the interest of our schoolchildren; that's not in the interests of their families – and I'll call it out. I will call them as I them, because my job is to fight for the people of New York City.

**Question:** Mr. Mayor, I'm wondering how you respond to New Yorkers who seem to feel that they're seeing more homeless people on the street?

**Mayor:** I think it's a real concern and I share the concern of so many of my constituents who've said to me they're worried that there are homeless people on the streets. The actual numbers, thank God, suggest that the reality is a little different – that the actual number of street homeless has gone down a bit – but that doesn't make it any less of a problem for so many people. Because, let's face it, a lot of our street homeless have very serious mental health issues, and substance abuse issues, and we intend to treat this situation very differently. As you know, the first lady is working on a very bold plan to change how we approach mental health in general in this city – you're going to see some major announcements in the next few months. But we have to get at the core of the street homeless problem and that means getting to the core of the mental health problem and addressing it differently, and that's what we intend to do.

**Question:** Mr. Mayor, the governor – when he spoke about the back-and-forth between the two of you – said it wasn't his style – that he bites his tongue about personal opinions. Do you feel like it's a matter of style? Do you bite your tongue?

**Mayor:** Well, I would say my most illustrious predecessor, Fiorello La Guardia, didn't bite his tongue. I think he called them as he saw them. I think he was the greatest mayor we ever had. And it's my job to speak truth as I see it. Again, I can work with anyone. I can work with conservatives. I can work with Republicans. I was just in Washington a few weeks ago – sat down with Senator Inhofe to talk about the transportation bill – one of the most conservative-republican members of the U.S. Senate. We actually saw eye to eye on a lot of the issues around the transportation bill, and we're going to try and work in common cause. So, I would differentiate the idea that we all have to work together substantively from the question of whether it is important to speak truth when it means defending the interest of our people. The Albany status quo has not served the people of New York City, and I'm not going to play by a set of rules that doesn't serve my people.

**Question:** Welcome back.

**Mayor:** Thank you.

**Question:** Since your remarks last week, it doesn't appear the governor has backed off his criticism of you, and he's continued to needle you in a couple of public appearances. I just wonder do you think that your comments had an effect on the governor? Do you think your comments will yield results?

**Mayor:** I don't spend a lot of time trying to figure out other people's interpretations. I think it had to be said. And I think it's important to make clear to the people of this city, who are depending on me to produce for them, what's really going on in Albany; what's really going on in Washington. I intend to keep moving our school system forward. I'm very proud of what we've done with full-day pre-k for every child in this city starting in September, which is going to be fantastic for the children of this city –

[Applause]

– afterschool for every middle-school child, starting in September; community schools; the new PROSE schools, which are going to have a great reform approach to education. There's so much we're doing to improve our schools. I need mayoral control of education to do that. And, again, look at the fact that the very same people who voted for long-term extensions of mayoral control suddenly – suddenly had a different viewpoint when there was a Democratic mayor in place. That's not fair to the people of this city. And I'm going to call that out.

**Question:** Mr. Mayor – and you may have heard this, but – yesterday, as you know, the governor said he thought that – and he said this before – that he thought the city had fared very well, and that you also did, in Albany. I assume that you still continue to disagree with him. And also, have you spoken with him, even though you've been on vacation?

**Mayor:** No, I have not spoken with him, but I'm certain I will. No, here's what I'd say about how we fared – I think last year and this year actually have a lot of similarities. You'll remember last year the conventional wisdom was there was no way we would get a tax for pre-k, and we'd probably end up with something much smaller. I thought the tax was the right idea – the tax on those who made a half-million or more was fair and sustainable. We ended up with something that was still very good. And the reason we ended up with it was because the people of this city demanded it. We took the issue to the people – they demanded it of their lawmakers in Albany. I think the same thing happened this year on the rent issue. I think we got somewhere because the people demanded it. And we worked with the people of this city to say we needed some real changes. We needed, in fact, more than we got on rent regulation. We need a greater strengthening, but at least we made some progress. On 421-a, we all know that was deemed dead on arrival, and suddenly had a resuscitation experience and ended up being largely what we called for. So I would say we did well because we brought the issues to the people and the people demanded the outcomes. Where I'm totally dissatisfied, obviously, is on mayoral control. The – an issue that should be considered as something above the fray was turned into a political football – and that's not fair to the children of this city – and I think people are going to remember that.

**Question:** Since you spoke out last week, have you heard from anyone or has anyone in your administration heard from any elected officials who felt similarly about their own – ?

**Mayor:** A lot of elected officials have offered their views publicly, so I certainly refer you to that. I think obviously some of them shared our concerns.

**Question:** Has anyone spoken with you personally?

**Mayor:** I've been away, so I was not taking a lot of phone calls from elected officials – as much as I admire them. I would refer to Eric Adams as one example of someone who had strong views and spoke out.

**Question:** Mr. Mayor, I actually have two questions. One has to do with the parade that's coming up – A) how excited you are, what it's going to be? And how you're raising money – do you want to raise more money? Are you disappointed that not many – as many private sponsors have – have come forward? Are more coming forward? And secondly, about your desire to have a mayoral position of somebody who's going to do your national agenda [inaudible]?

**Mayor:** Sure. On the first question, look, I – the parade is going to be fantastic. I cannot tell a lie, Marcia – I can't tell you we had a beautiful plan on the shelf and we thought about this weeks and months ago. Two people deserve a lot of credit here – Gale Brewer and Howard Wolfson, both of whom said and realized that, you know, given the magnitude of the U.S. victory and what it meant not just for soccer and women's soccer, but what it meant for women's athletics and what a statement it was to the world about the growing powerful role of women in this country, that it was crucial that New York City honor this extraordinary team. So we didn't think of it in advance, but when people said, "Hey, we should do this, this belongs in New York City, this is an extraordinary moment in American history," it didn't take us long to say, "Hey, you're right." It took some real quick work to figure out how to do it logistically, but we were able to pull it together. The response has been overwhelming. And I think in terms of the private sponsorship, we feel good that what we need, which is about a half-million dollars, will be there. So I'm very, very excited, and I think it's going to be a great day for the city.

**Question:** In terms of what it will mean to, like, women and [inaudible]?

**Mayor:** Absolutely. Yeah. I mean, I am a proud father of a former young female athlete. Chiara did just about everything. She did baseball. She did softball. She did basketball. She did tennis. And I think it made her a very strong young woman. And I am such a believer that our young women deserve every opportunity to play sports. And this team captured the imagination of the nation. And their victory, I think, sends a message about the strength of women, the power of women, and the changes that we need in our society. If we're going to have a more equal society, this victory sends a powerful message about it. If we're going to have pay equity, this victory sends a message about it. So I think it's an extraordinary moment.

**Question:** You're riding in a float. Is this the first time that you've ridden a float up the Canyon of Heroes?

**Mayor:** I believe it is, yeah.

**Question:** What's it going to be like for you?

**Mayor:** Oh, it's going to be magical. I mean, the Canyon of Heroes is one of the great New York traditions. It's something that used to happen a lot – I would urge everyone to walk up and down Broadway, and you see on the ground the markers for all the different parades. It used to be a really pretty typical part of New York City life. I think it's a beautiful ceremony and I'm thrilled to be a part of it.

What was your other question?

**Question:** [inaudible] you're looking to hire a person [inaudible] –

**Mayor:** Sure.

**Question:** – [inaudible] put forward your agenda nationally?

**Mayor:** The idea here is to do the kinds of things that will change the dynamic in Washington. I've spoken about my concerns about Albany. I can speak even more deeply about my concerns about Washington. Washington has not been supporting public housing, has not been supporting mass transit, has not been supporting infrastructure development. We need to change the reality. Some of the strongest allies in this effort are mayors around the country, including Republican mayors – and I mentioned the meeting I had with Senator Inhofe a few weeks back. He said to us very clearly – and other Republicans said to us – if you want changes in Washington, you're going to have to get the voices of Republican mayors into this work. That's one of the things that actually could lead to some change. And I have to say, the Republican mayors that I have met with share a lot of the same values. I met with Mayor Barry in Albuquerque. I met with Mayor Nabours in Flagstaff,

Arizona. And we're all dealing with the same problems. And there's a lot of energy to go in common cause to Washington and to build a bigger coalition with business, with labor, with the farm community, for a highway bill and infrastructure bill that will really change this country. What does that mean for New York City, you might ask? Billions more dollars to fix our roads, highways, our mass transit. If we get a transportation bill such as the president has suggested, it will literally mean several billion more dollars for New York City to address our infrastructure issues. So that's why it matters so much.

Thank you, everyone.

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