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SCHUMER, DE BLASIO ANNOUNCE \$33 MILLION IN FEDERAL FUNDING FOR STATEN ISLAND'S BLUEBELT, COVERING 24 ACRES OF FLOOD PROTECTION PROJECT IN MIDLAND BEACH; ADDITIONAL \$17 MILLION IN USDA FUNDING WILL BE USED TO PURCHASE FLOOD EASEMENTS IN MIDLAND BEACH AND NEARLY \$6 MILLION TO PURCHASE FLOOD EASEMENTS IN NEW DORP

Eighty percent of streets in and around Midland Beach regularly flood due to lack of storm sewers; chronic flooding is ongoing problem for homeowners and was exacerbated during Sandy

Schumer, de Blasio announce \$33 million in round two USDA funding for Staten Island's Bluebelt project; prior, Schumer secured \$7.5 million in round one of emergency watershed protection program

Schumer, de Blasio announce additional \$17.4 million in USDA federal funding to purchase 9 acres of floodplain easements on flood prone property in Midland Beach and \$5.9 million to purchase 3.25 acres of floodplain easements in New Dorp

NEW YORK—U.S. Senator Charles E. Schumer and Mayor Bill de Blasio today announced that, after their push, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has approved \$33 million in federal funding for the Staten Island's Bluebelt. Specifically, the USDA will award the New York City Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) federal funding to cover 24 acres of the Bluebelt in Midland Beach. New York City applied for round two of this funding, which was created in the Schumer-sponsored Sandy Relief Bill through the Emergency Watershed Protection Program (EWP). Schumer urged USDA Secretary Vilsack to provide funding for projects within the Bluebelt.

The Bluebelt provides a stormwater management system for one-third of Staten Island and is strongly supported by elected officials and community groups. Hurricane Sandy highlighted the low-lying nature of these neighborhoods, which continue to see flooding impacts due to rain. These investments in the Bluebelt are necessary to control future flooding and provide the basis for future flood mitigation projects.

Additionally, Schumer and de Blasio today announced \$17.4 million in funding to cover nine acres of buying floodplain easements on property that is flood prone in Midland Beach and \$5.9 million in funding to cover 3.25 acres of buying floodplain easements on property that is flood prone in New Dorp.

“We saw the immense impact Superstorm Sandy had in Staten Island’s Midland Beach, and so, it’s great news that the USDA has agreed to provide millions in federal Sandy relief funding for the Bluebelt, a critical resiliency project,” said **Senator Schumer**. “With this funding, Midland Beach will be better protected in the event of a future storm, and I am confident the Bluebelt will help reduce flood threats.”

“Hurricane Sandy highlighted the issue, but Midland Beach residents have faced chronic flooding for too long. The Bluebelt allows us to better protect Midland Beach and communities around Staten Island from future storms in an innovative and efficient way—and now this key section can move forward,” said **Mayor de Blasio**. “Thank you to Senator Schumer for his partnership in securing these—and so many other—vital funds that will ensure a stronger, more resilient New York City.”

Borough President Oddo said, “This is great news for both Midland Beach and New Dorp Beach residents. Due to their geography, these communities are always at risk of flooding, even in relatively minor storms. The Bluebelt is meant to help alleviate those conditions. That is why I have been such a strong proponent and advocate for it, first during my time in the City Council and now as Borough President. This announcement of funding for the Bluebelt in Midland Beach and to buy floodplain easements in these communities proves once again that Senator Schumer is a strong federal partner for Staten Island. I am grateful for his leadership on this issue.”

The Staten Island Bluebelt provides ecologically sound and efficient stormwater management for roughly one-third of Staten Island’s land area. The program preserves and enhances wetland stream corridors to convey and cleanse stormwater, while conventional storm sewers transmit stormwater to the corridors from streets in watershed areas that are adjacent to the Bluebelt corridors. Bluebelt drainage systems are in the process of being built out on the South Shore of Staten Island—in 15 watersheds plus the Richmond Creek watershed—amounting to a total watershed area of about 10,000 acres; additionally, the City is in the process of developing more Bluebelts in the Mid-Island area. The proposed project will expand this already large Bluebelt drainage system, which relies on flood control utilizing natural areas, to new neighborhoods that desperately need it.

The project is part of the City’s climate resiliency plan to resolve serious long-term stormwater flooding issues. Restoring and expanding the Bluebelt program will allow for damaged stream corridors and wetlands to be returned to their natural ecological state. By creating large wetland areas, this project will also limit the risk of harm to people living in the area. Overall, this project would reduce the chronic flooding in the area by allowing for more rapid drainage into areas like wetlands, which are naturally designed to better handle flood water. Much of the flooding problem is a result of the loss of freshwater and tidal wetlands in the region, and this project would remove the invasive species that are responsible for this problem and restore the land to its

natural ecological state. The related award to the State for acquisition of homes adjacent to the Bluebelt is also anticipated to assist in the reduction of flooding risk in these neighborhoods.

In December, after Schumer's push, the USDA awarded New York City \$7.5 million for the Bluebelt under round one funding.

The Emergency Watershed Protection Program was established by Congress to respond to emergencies created by natural disasters, such as Hurricane Sandy. The program is administered through the USDA's Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS).

Senator Schumer fought to include \$180 million for EWP projects in the Sandy Supplemental. The program aims to restore and build floodplains, which store water, helping to protect lands downstream from future flood damage. Restoring these ecosystems ensures they are resilient to future storms. NRCS obtains easements and restores the area to natural conditions, which enhances fish and wildlife habitat, water quality, flood water retention and ground water recharge.

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