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**BUILD IT BACK ANNOUNCES CONTINUED PROGRESS ON CONSTRUCTION &  
REIMBURSEMENT, LOCAL WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT**

*Construction Has Started on 573 Homes, 591 Homeowners Have Received Reimbursement – Compared to None at the Beginning of the Year – As a Result of Mayor de Blasio’s Overhaul*

*Administration Announces New Procurement to Further Expand Design and Construction Capacity, Opportunity Fair in October, and Partnership with SBS to Enhance Workforce Development with a Focus on Sandy-Impacted New Yorkers*

**NEW YORK**—Today, the de Blasio administration announced continued progress on Hurricane Sandy recovery with 573 construction starts and 591 reimbursement checks through the Build it Back program – compared to none at the beginning of the year – as a result of Mayor de Blasio’s overhaul earlier this year. In their testimony in front of the City Council, Senior Advisor for Recovery, Resiliency, and Infrastructure Bill Goldstein and Director of Housing Recovery Amy Peterson also announced major steps to further workforce development, with a focus on providing opportunities for local New Yorkers, especially those impacted by Hurricane Sandy.

In particular, the administration announced a new procurement that will allow it to further expand construction capacity. The City will issue a new Request for Proposals for pre-construction, design, and construction services in the coming weeks, and has already hosted a pre-solicitation conference with potential bidders. This new procurement will allow the Housing Recovery Office to dramatically increase its design and construction capacity while further accelerating housing recovery, especially the elevation of homes (including attached homes). Projects will be coordinated through design and construction at the neighborhood level to minimize impact to communities.

This follows other major steps that have already increased Build it Back’s capacity, including renegotiated case management contracts that secured 45 percent savings while expanding capacity, additional Build it Back staff that has allowed the City to take over direct management of all aspects of the program, increased design capacity, and dedicated Department of Buildings inspectors and staff.

This new procurement will also further the administration’s commitment to helping Sandy communities recover through workforce and local business development. The contracts will require a pathway for local residents to access jobs with the Sandy rebuilding, as well as long-term careers through a connection to apprenticeship and job training programs.

As part of this commitment, the administration will host an Opportunity Fair, in collaboration with the Alliance for a Just Rebuilding, this October. The Opportunity Fair will connect New Yorkers, including Sandy-impacted residents, with jobs, training opportunities, and community-based organizations.

Additionally, the administration announced a new partnership between the Housing Recovery Office (HRO) and the Department of Small Business Services. As part of that partnership, contractors, consultants, and vendors receiving Sandy recovery funds from the city will be required to post job opportunities and work with Workforce1 on employment requirements. Residents in Sandy-impacted neighborhoods will be able to register for opportunities with the rebuilding effort at Workforce1 and Build it Back centers. The administration will formally launch this partnership at the Opportunity Fair, which will provide assessments, referrals to suggested training, and initial employment opportunities in anticipation of upcoming jobs.

“As a result of this administration’s overhaul, our Sandy recovery programs are finally providing the relief New Yorkers need and deserve,” said **Bill Goldstein, Senior Advisor to the Mayor for Recovery, Resiliency, and Infrastructure**. “But we aren’t stopping there – we’re continuing to aggressively move forward our comprehensive resiliency plan, implementing short-term measures as long-term projects get underway, so that we’re better prepared next time we need to be.”

“Since January, the de Blasio administration has taken Build it Back from a program of ‘no’ to a system that gets homeowners to ‘yes’ – with hundreds now in construction, and hundreds more receiving reimbursement,” said **Amy Peterson, Director of the Housing Recovery Office**. “This progress on all program pathways, combined with expanded financial relief for homeowners, a dramatic increase in capacity and homeowner service, and a real focus on local workforce development, is only the beginning. We’re committed to pushing Build it Back forward until every homeowner gets the relief they need.”

“Partnering with the Housing Recovery Office, Workforce1 will use its expertise in training and connecting New Yorkers to jobs to help Sandy impacted New Yorkers get back to work,” said **Maria Torres-Springer, Commissioner of the NYC Department of Small Business Services**. “As the city rebuilds after Hurricane Sandy, we are happy to help ensure local communities can continue to participate in the recovery efforts while at the same time access available jobs.”

The administration also announced today that the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) has closed its finding related to the reimbursement program, allowing the City to draw down on federal funds.

Additionally, Goldstein and Peterson highlighted changes at Build it Back that have improved service for homeowners; these changes follow other major improvements made earlier this year, all part of Mayor de Blasio’s overhaul: <http://on.nyc.gov/lr2F3mu>

- Creating greater flexibility; for example, allowing homeowners to move into design consultation before selecting an option (so they have a full understanding of what their homes will look like).
- Expediting cases in which the applicants are in dire need of immediate assistance, such as in homes that required lead or mold remediation and were causing major health concerns.
- Increasing community outreach, including by establishing a case management presence at satellite offices, such as at elected officials’ and community offices. Build it Back has already served nearly 3,000 applicants outside of the Build it Back centers.
- Providing special assistance to families of military personnel overseas, applicants with special needs, and senior citizens.
- Hiring bilingual staff that speaks Spanish, Russian, and Cantonese.
- Improved the functionality of Build it Back centers by bringing in technical experts (including engineers and construction managers), financial and legal counseling, DOB representatives, Disaster Case Managers, and NY Rising represents, comprising a one-stop-shop for homeowners.
- Assigning homeowners a single application coordinator, case manager, and financial or legal counselor to provide singular points of contact as they move through the application process.

- Reaching out to unresponsive applicants to bring them back into the program; to date, Build it Back, in collaboration with its community partners, has knocked on over 5,000 doors.
- Connecting ineligible applicants with non-profit partners.
- Providing free mortgage counseling for applicants facing foreclosure.
- Hosting a series of information sessions I Sandy-impacted communities to discuss specific aspects of the program, such as lead-based paint abatement.

“We’re pleased that Build it Back is continuing to make significant progress helping Sandy survivors. As the recovery process moves forward, it's crucial that local residents in the hardest-hit areas gain access to good jobs that lead to careers while rebuilding their communities. We're glad to be working with the de Blasio administration on the upcoming Opportunity Fair to ensure that Sandy recovery and rebuilding create real employment opportunities for struggling New Yorkers,” **said Susannah Dyen, Coordinator of the Alliance for a Just Rebuilding.**

“I am pleased the federal government and city have been able to resolve this hurdle and are communicating regularly. We fought very hard to get reimbursements included in federal aid expenditures and now the city can move forward and issue more checks. This is good news for homeowners who have been patiently waiting,” **said Assemblywoman Nicole Malliotakis.**

“Build it Back is finally starting to produce results for homeowners. This progress is long overdue but good news nonetheless. As I’ve said since the very beginning of this program; the day when every family affected by the storm can be restored and made whole again cannot come soon enough!” **said Council Member Eric Ulrich.**

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