

Hurricane Sandy – 10 Years Later Mayor’s Office of Housing Recovery Operations

Hurricane Sandy struck New York City on October 29, 2012, taking the lives of 44 New Yorkers and causing unprecedented flooding. The storm caused more than \$19 billion in damage and lost economic activity and destroyed or seriously impacted thousands of homes displacing 150,000 residents. In response, the City of New York created the Mayor’s Office of Housing Recovery to work with city, state and federal partners to coordinate housing recovery efforts to quickly return residents to their homes.

Short-Term Recovery: Rapid Repairs

Within two weeks of the storm, New York City both created the new Mayor’s Office of Housing Recovery (HRO) and immediately launched **Rapid Repairs**, a first-of-its-kind emergency sheltering program to provide essential repairs to thousands of homeowners left without heat, power, or hot water. Created in collaboration with and funded by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), Rapid Repairs was designed to allow homeowners to use their own homes as shelter in the storm’s immediate aftermath.

Rapid Repairs moved quickly to muck and gut and restore basic habitability to impacted homes, which was critical with the quickly approaching onset of winter. In less than 100 days, Rapid Repairs restored heat, electricity and hot water service to over **11,700 buildings—which included over 20,000 units**—addressing the needs of approximately **54,000 New Yorkers**.



Had HRO not been able to do this work so quickly, a lot of buildings would have been left to the elements and, potentially, rendered non-repairable by the time recovery and insurance funds came online, which would have created significant downstream housing problems, not to mention put people’s lives at risk had they not had heat.

Long-Term Recovery: Build It Back

One year after the storm, HRO launched the **Build It Back** program to assist homeowners, landlords, renters, and tenants affected by Hurricane Sandy within the five boroughs. Funded by Community Development Block Grant-Disaster Recovery (CDBG-DR) funds from the U.S. Department of Housing & Urban Development (HUD), the program offered multiple pathways of assistance, including property rehabilitation or reconstruction, reimbursement for repair work already carried out, and acquisition of homes. The program's primary goal was to make Sandy-affected New Yorkers and communities safer and more resilient in the face of future flooding.

Construction

NYC's Build It Back Single-Family Program has completed construction work; all homeowners have been given their keys and returned to newly resilient homes.

- **8,319 homeowners** served citywide
 - Brooklyn 2,669
 - Bronx 58
 - Manhattan 13
 - Queens 3,597
 - Staten Island 1,982
- **838 homes repaired and elevated above base flood elevation**
- **492 completely rebuilt homes, including 103 modular homes**
- **3,914 homes repaired**
- **247 homes acquired** through buyouts and acquisition for redevelopment



Reimbursement

Through Build It Back, the City also implemented a first-of-its-kind reimbursement program to reimburse impacted homeowners for uninsured losses by paying them up to 100% of the out-of-pocket costs that they incurred repairing their homes. This was critically important, particularly for low-income homeowners who faced possibly losing their homes to foreclosure or losing their life savings trying to pay for repairs. A federally funded reimbursement program had never been done before, and the methodology that NYC decided upon has now become the national standard for reimbursement. A total of **\$135,177,755 in reimbursements was distributed to 6,138 homeowners**, including 3,310 homeowners who also received a construction or acquisition benefit.

Build It Back Multifamily Program

The Build It Back Multifamily Program, led by the Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD), assisted multifamily developments with housing recovery and resiliency retrofits such as elevating electrical and mechanical equipment, installing on-site backup power generation, and dry floodproofing utilities with flood doors or barriers.

- **141 developments** comprising **19,156 dwelling units** were financed.
- In addition, **160 projects in individual condominium and cooperative units** were assisted with recovery.



Build It Back Outreach & Community Events

Between 2013-2017—the period of program outreach and intake—HRO staff conducted **2,205 outreach and community events**, including meetings with civic associations, community board meetings, and town halls.

- Brooklyn 917
- Bronx 32
- Manhattan 25
- Queens 822
- Staten Island 361
- Citywide Events 48

Overall Customer Service

Build It Back opened large-scale recovery centers in Brooklyn, Queens and Staten Island and several smaller construction offices in multiple neighborhoods throughout the city for homeowners.

- Build It Back program staff handled over **200,000 phone calls** to engage applicants and schedule intake appointments and support them through the program.
- Customer Service staff scheduled more than **45,000 appointments with homeowners** across six neighborhood field offices.
- Staff made **1,800 customer service site visits**, including meetings with homeowners, home walk-throughs and key turnovers.
- Over **30,000 damage assessments and construction inspections** were done over the course of the program.

Temporary Housing Services (THS) & Temporary Relocation Assistance (TRA)

Early on, HRO understood that not all homeowners and tenants had the ability to cover the expense of temporary relocation during the construction process. To support these families, HRO, with nonprofit partner New York Disaster Interfaith Services (NYDIS), developed a unique suite of wrap-around programs that assisted **1,150 households and distributed \$50,304,786 in HUD funds for rental, moving and storage assistance**, and other related temporary relocation and reimbursement costs.

These assistance programs were another “first-of-its-kind” housing recovery effort created by Build It Back, and have subsequently have been adopted nationwide in other HUD disaster recovery programs.

Legal and Financial Counseling

The nonprofit Center for New York City Neighborhoods (CNYCN) partnered with HRO to provide homeowners working through the Build It Back program with legal and financial counseling. HRO applicants took advantage of **9,378 counseling sessions**. Of these, **more than 1,600 sessions focused on mortgage foreclosure prevention** for homeowners at risk of losing their homes.

Workforce Development

The Build It Back program further assisted with Sandy recovery through an unprecedented workforce development effort that put New Yorkers impacted by the storm to work rebuilding their neighborhoods.

- **1,949 Sandy-impacted New Yorkers worked for Build It Back.**
- **171 Sandy-impacted New Yorkers got pre-apprenticeship union placements.**
- **23% of all trades** working on Build It Back homes were Sandy-impacted New Yorkers, exceeding the City’s goal of 20%.

