

**TESTIMONY FROM NYCHA VICE PRESIDENT FOR RECOVERY & RESILIENCE JOY
SINDERBRAND**
SANDY RECOVERY AND RESILIENCY PROJECTS IN NYCHA DEVELOPMENTS
COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC HOUSING WITH THE COMMITTEE ON RECOVERY & RESILIENCE
TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 28, 2017 – 1:00 PM
250 BROADWAY, 16TH FLOOR COMMITTEE ROOM, NEW YORK, NY

Chairs Ritchie Torres and Mark Treyger, members of the Committees on Public Housing and Recovery and Resilience, and other distinguished members of the City Council: good afternoon. I am Joy Sinderbrand, Vice President of NYCHA's Office of Recovery and Resilience. Joining me today is Deborah Goddard, Executive Vice President for Capital Projects.

Thank you for this opportunity to update the Council on our work to rebuild stronger and more resilient than ever from the devastating impacts of Superstorm Sandy. We are repairing and fortifying a total of 219 buildings, home to 60,000 residents, demonstrating what can be achieved when government and partners work together to overcome a historic catastrophe. The size and scope of our efforts are unprecedented – with the largest grant ever awarded by FEMA, of \$3 billion, we are reimagining what our buildings look like and how they operate, improving residents' quality of life and protecting our developments from weather emergencies for generations to come. As we move forward with large-scale, multi-hundred-million-dollar projects, we continue to engage residents in the process and connect them to vital economic opportunities.

Where We Are Today: Shovels in the Ground

There is a tremendous amount of work underway – shovels are in the ground all across the City. To date, NYCHA has spent \$490 million and hired 164 residents for the recovery work. In the past year, major construction has begun at seven developments to repair 43 buildings, projects totaling more than \$536 million and benefitting over 7,400 residents. By the end of the year, we expect to begin major construction at every Sandy-impacted development.

This isn't run-of-the-mill repair work – and it wouldn't be possible if we had not fought so hard for every dollar possible from FEMA. We are replacing roofs and vital infrastructure, putting in new electrical systems and boilers, installing standby generators so residents have backup power, flood-proofing our buildings, completely renovating hundreds of damaged first-floor apartments, installing exterior safety lighting, and updating playgrounds, common areas, and community facilities.

Construction work kicked off in 2015, with the initial repair and recovery work we completed at 23 developments, replacing electrical wires and abating asbestos – the work that must be done before major construction can begin. Today, in addition to the major construction in progress at 43 buildings at seven developments, the work of advertising and awarding contracts and securing permits is underway for 15 developments. That includes our largest and most complex effort, Red Hook East and West, a \$440 million project where roof replacement is currently out to bid.

Rebuilding Better, Stronger, Smarter – For Today and the Future

Our Sandy recovery program is driven by dedication to the community at every turn – we want every dollar to make the greatest impact. Thanks to our negotiations with FEMA and support from partners like Senator Schumer, we were able to nearly double the size of the grant we received – from \$1.8 billion to \$3 billion. NYCHA's developments have not seen investment of this magnitude since their inception. With this funding, we are not only repairing the damage from Sandy but are also investing in measures that will safeguard buildings from future storms and improve residents' quality of life. For instance, we are not simply replacing damaged boilers, but are now housing the new, energy-efficient boilers in new, elevated buildings to protect them from flooding – a significant improvement that will go a long way in preventing interruption of heat and hot water service to residents, in concert with other innovations, such as flood

barriers and site restoration to mitigate flooding. The standby generators that will provide residents with backup power run on natural gas, which is cleaner than diesel fuel. And we're strengthening community centers as we repair their damage. For example, at Surfside Gardens, we're outfitting the community center with flood-proofing measures and backup power while rehabilitating the kitchen, walls, ceilings, and doors. We expect to complete this work by this fall. We're also flood-proofing and installing backup power at Ocean Bay Apartments/Oceanside's community center while replacing the damaged floors, walls, ceilings, and light fixtures.

We are guided by our *NextGeneration NYCHA* vision of safe, clean, and connected communities for New Yorkers. That means preserving and improving our buildings after the disaster, instead of abandoning them, which has been the case in other cities, such as New Orleans and Galveston, Texas. In addition, NYCHA is using the lessons learned from the Sandy recovery program to create guidelines for resiliency measures across our portfolio.

Partnering with Residents and the Community

Last year, the *Red Hook Star-Review* newspaper described a meeting with residents to discuss Sandy recovery plans at Red Hook Houses as “the best NYCHA meeting ever!” The article described the “real improvements” slated for the development, including ground-floor retail and renovated entrances and exterior lighting, which incorporated feedback and suggestions from residents at previous meetings. More recently, News 12 Brooklyn covered a workshop we held at Red Hook Houses in partnership with the non-profit KaBOOM!, so youth and adults alike could provide input on the redesign of the playgrounds there.

We believe that the public, advocates, elected officials, and, most importantly, residents must be involved in the process of rebuilding after Sandy. Since 2014, we've participated in more than 1,500 community events and meetings, resident association meetings, development family days, job fairs, and design briefings

with NYCHA residents. Councilmembers Treyger and Menchaca, you've stood with us at many of these events, and we're so thankful for your support. We've also made nearly 60,000 phone calls and posted over 115,000 flyers on Sandy matters, including job opportunities. We established a Sandy community outreach team to create a two-way channel of communication between NYCHA and residents on all things Sandy – and more than half of the 24-person team are residents. Freddie Melendez, a NYCHA resident who lives in Coney Island, is a proud member of the team. He said: “I love my job, I love working with people. We take care of the developments that were affected by Hurricane Sandy. We go to those affected areas and talk to the residents. We want to hear them out.”

Job creation is another significant silver lining in the storm's cloud, and NYCHA is working hard to connect residents with life-changing career opportunities associated with the recovery and resiliency work. Of the more than 400 people employed so far, about 250 were hired as part of the Section 3 program, far exceeding the program's requirement that at least 30 percent of new hires for federally funded projects are low-income residents of the community. More than half of the Section 3 hires – 164 individuals – are NYCHA residents, who have been connected to jobs as laborers, electricians, asbestos handlers, security guards, administrative employees, and more. Even though only 10 percent of the recovery funding is subject to Section 3 hiring requirements, NYCHA decided to apply the hiring guidelines to the entirety of the work to create as many opportunities as possible for residents.

NYCHA secured \$1.4 million from HUD to create a pre-apprenticeship program that will connect up to 100 Sandy-impacted residents to union jobs and membership. NYCHA released a Request for Proposals (RFP) in September 2016, but did not receive responses from potential partners who would develop the training and job placement programs. We revised and re-issued the RFP, with responses due by March 7. We are eager to get this program up and running to provide our residents with another pathway to greater economic mobility.

Vladeck Houses resident Gaston Acevedo is benefitting from a similar apprenticeship program with the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers union. He's installing lighting at Sandy-hit developments, including at Coney Island and Red Hook, and said that: "It feels great to work on Sandy recovery for other NYCHA residents. It feels like I'm doing something positive for the community."

To keep the public at large informed of our progress, we're putting our work on the map, literally. Launched in 2015, the Interactive Sandy Transparency Map, available on our website, provides information about all the recovery and resiliency work underway and planned at each Sandy-impacted development. It includes details like the scope of work, project phase, estimated funding levels and timelines, renderings, and contractor details.

Moving Forward

We are making history, bringing NYCHA's buildings into the 21st century and protecting this precious resource of affordable housing for generations to come. While we're cementing New York's reputation as a city that rebuilds with resiliency, we are improving residents' quality of life and creating career opportunities that transform lives and lift up communities.

Recovering from a storm of Sandy's magnitude is neither easy nor quick. Sandy brought significant destruction to 219 buildings, and we have always endeavored to repair the damage and build back right, in a way that benefits our communities and our city to the greatest extent possible. We have more work to do, but are pleased that we are on track to have major construction started at all impacted developments by the end of this year.

Thank you to the Mayor, members of the City Council, our federal representatives, residents, community leaders, and other partners for helping us

bring to fruition the largest construction program in NYCHA's history. And thank you for your ongoing support as we continue to move forward and rebuild.

Thank you. We are happy to answer any questions you may have.