



For Immediate Release

STATE ANNOUNCES EXPANDED ENHANCED BUYOUT AREA TO INCLUDE THE GRAHAM BEACH COMMUNITY

New York, NY (April 5, 2014)- The New York State Office of Storm Recovery today announced the expansion of the Ocean Breeze Enhanced Buyout Area on the East Shore of Staten Island. The expanded area will incorporate the Graham Beach section of Staten Island – an area bound by Jefferson Avenue to the west, Olympia Boulevard to the north, Father Capadanno Boulevard to the south and Naughton Avenue to the east. Residents of communities who sell to the State through this program are eligible to receive the pre-storm value of their home plus a 10% enhanced buyout incentive for participation in the buyout and a five-percent incentive if the seller purchases a home in the County after sale to the State.

In addition to Graham Beach, the State has already designated two neighborhoods in Staten Island and seven neighborhoods in Suffolk County as Enhanced Buyout Areas. Under this program, since September 2013 the State has bought 170 properties in the Oakwood Beach neighborhood of Staten Island for a total of approximately \$70 million. The State is waiting for approval of the Tier 1 environmental review from the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to begin purchasing an additional 130 properties in Ocean Breeze.

Residents outside these Enhanced Buyout Areas will be eligible for the NY Rising Home Acquisition Program, and their applications, when submitted to the program through New York City's Build it Back program, will be automatically considered for individual acquisition. The NY Rising Home Acquisition Program offers to buy at pre-storm value properties in the 100- and 500-year floodplain that sustained substantial damage as a result of Superstorm Sandy, Tropical Storm Lee and Hurricane Irene.

NY Rising Enhanced Buyout Program

Under the NY Rising Enhanced Buyout Program, the state buys properties located in the floodplain that are determined to be most at risk in future disasters based on a history of flooding or other damage related to extreme weather. The United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) requires that once a buyout is completed, all structures must be removed and the land can only be used for environmental purposes, including wetlands restoration and coastal buffer zones. It is therefore critical that Enhanced Buyout Areas consist only of multiple contiguous and clearly identified parcels in the flood plain that show similar damage and where homeowners have collectively voiced interest in relocation from the floodplain.

NY Rising Director Jamie Rubin said, "The NY Rising Buyout Program is an example of the State's commitment to building stronger and more resilient communities. Extending the program to Graham Beach will allow these homeowners to relocate to safer communities, and protect surrounding neighborhoods from the potential effects of another devastating storm."

Congressman Michael Grimm said, "This is outstanding news for Graham Beach residents, who can finally start rebuilding their lives after losing almost everything to Sandy. Having been on the ground since day-one assisting victims in the hardest-hit neighborhoods like Graham Beach, I know how incredibly essential these buyouts are. I'm thankful to Governor Cuomo for his continued support in getting Sandy victims the assistance they so desperately need. More work needs to be done in other hard-hit areas, but this is certainly a terrific step in the right direction."

Staten Island Borough President Jim Oddo said, "Offering the residents of Graham Beach a buyout makes sense given its topography, lack of infrastructure, proximity to the Bluebelt and continued vulnerability to the forces of nature. Governor Cuomo and his Administration continue to demonstrate a common sense approach, and although we have a long way to go before our collective work is done, I very much appreciate the level of communication and cooperation Borough Hall has received from the Governor's storm recovery team since my term began in January."

Senator Diane Savino said, "I'm pleased that Governor Cuomo and NY Rising has responded to Staten Island residents interested in the buyout program and has decided to expand Ocean Breeze to include Graham Beach. As I have said before, some land must return to nature, but acquisition for redevelopment will get people the financial assistance they need to relocate and move on with their lives, and when redeveloped in a smart and sustainable way, can transform our waterfront communities."

Assembly Member Nicole Malliotakis said, "I am glad to see the Governor extend this innovative program to Graham Beach. While these families love their community, and some have been here for generations, Hurricane Sandy showed us that the area is clearly more suitable for open space. I'm pleased to know that the land will be better purposed to protect surrounding residents."

Assembly Member Matthew Titone said, "The NY Rising Buyout Program has led the way in recovery efforts here on Staten Island and this expansion will be a welcome relief for Graham Beach residents and for those in surrounding communities once the land is returned to nature."

Assembly Member Joe Borelli said, "This is a good step. The State has led the way with the NY Rising Buyout Program and I am glad that the City acquisition program provides options for the rest of the storm affected neighborhoods of Staten Island."

NYC Council Member Steve Matteo said, "This is great news for the residents of Graham Beach and I applaud the Governor for extending the buyout to this area. Hopefully this community will soon be able to move forward with their lives. As the Governor said a little over a year ago, some of these neighborhoods were built in areas that should have remained part of nature. Its close proximity to the Bluebelt makes Graham Beach ideal for a buyout because it will ultimately help the residents nearby

who will remain. Despite this good news, there is still a lot left to do. Many residents are still waiting for help, and we need to take this momentum forward for their benefit and ensure that all affected by Sandy receive the help they need."

NYC Council Member Debi Rose said, "The process of recovery, resiliency and remediation has been a long and complicated one. The affected homeowners have shown remarkable patience and determination. Governor Cuomo has been responsive and responsible for setting a course that will result in Staten Island not only recovering from the devastation from the storm, but better positioned to withstand the powerful forces of nature."

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