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Governor Christie Announces More Than \$1 Billion In Sandy Housing Recovery Assistance Programs Has Been Committed

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Assistance Helping Thousands of New Jersey Homes Now Undergoing Reconstruction, Rehabilitation, and Elevation and Other Housing Recovery Work

Trenton, NJ – Advancing the Administration's commitment to rebuilding and putting families back in their homes, Governor Chris Christie today announced that more than \$1 billion in housing recovery funds have been committed for programs such as the Reconstruction, Rehabilitation, Elevation and Mitigation (RREM) Program, the state's largest housing recovery program. In fact 4,400 Sandy-impacted homeowners in RREM have now signed grant award agreements with nearly 3,600 currently in the construction process.

"I want to thank Kathleen and Chris for sharing first-hand how the RREM Program has worked to help rebuild their lives," said Governor Christie. "What I heard from them, as I have heard from many others impacted by Sandy, is just how much we can accomplish when we work together. While the Lynam's have returned home, my Administration fully understands that others have not, which is why we continue to work extremely hard to get assistance out to families so they can get back where they belong – in their homes."

To date, more than 4,400 Sandy-impacted homeowners in the RREM Program have now signed a grant award agreement, with the State obligating more than \$520 million to help them in their rebuilding efforts. Of those homeowners who have signed a grant award, nearly 3,600 are in the construction process, from pulling permits and repairing damage to elevating structures and obtaining temporary and final certificates of occupancy.

In Toms River, more 150 homes are under construction through the RREM Program. In fact, in the immediate vicinity of the Lynam's home, there are at least 15 other homes undergoing reconstruction, rehabilitation, and elevation through the Program.

The RREM Program is funded through Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Disaster Recovery monies from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), which has provided the State with two of three allocations for Sandy recovery, for a total of \$3.2 billion. Of that amount, \$1.1 billion has been allocated to the RREM Program.

Kathleen Lynam, a retired chief nursing executive who now works as a consultant in the health care field, said that she and her husband, a retired post office manager, have seen "kindnesses, generosity and actual building of relationships and friendships in our community as an unanticipated result" of the challenge of Superstorm Sandy.

"Not only is our house stronger, we are stronger and more supportive to each other than ever before," Kathleen Lynam said. "We are so grateful for the blessing that this grant afforded us."

In recent months, the State has refined the RREM Program in substantial ways. For example, it has streamlined the process so that program participants can now mail in vital documents and work remotely with their Housing Advisor rather than go to a Housing Recovery Center. Also, when a RREM homeowner submits their selected contractor and the contractor is confirmed as registered and licensed in the State of New Jersey, the State allows half of the RREM grant award to be immediately disbursed so the homeowner can quickly pay for necessary expenses. Additionally, the State has reduced the number of site inspections to accelerate repair work and continues to simplify the Program's contractor selection process so that homeowners now have the flexibility to select the contractor they want to use for their rebuilding.

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"Aside from programmatic improvements, we've recently held information sessions on the RREM Program in Toms River and other heavily impacted communities to answer questions RREM participants have about everything from selecting a contractor and elevating their home to checking their application's status and determining new action items," said Deputy Commissioner Melissa Orsen of the Department of Community Affairs (DCA). "These improvements and expanded outreach are speeding up recovery and they will remain in place once HUD approves the third allocation of Sandy recovery funds to New Jersey."

The Administration previously announced that all remaining eligible Sandy-impacted homeowners on the RREM Program waitlist will be funded through the third allocation of CDBG Disaster Recovery funds. HUD is expected to provide the funds next spring. More than half of all participants funded through the RREM Program so far are low-to-moderate-income households.

Christie today also highlighted progress in the Administration's other housing recovery programs funded with CDBG Disaster Recovery monies.

- 22 affordable housing projects financed through the Fund for the Restoration of Multifamily Housing (FRM) Program are under construction in the nine counties that HUD designated as most impacted by Sandy. They will provide 1,454 units of affordable housing for low-to-moderate income working families and households on fixed incomes.
- 9 projects financed through the Sandy Special Needs Housing Fund are under construction in the nine most impacted counties and will provide 77 affordable rental units for special needs individuals.
- 240 homes have been purchased by low-to-moderate income families through the Sandy Homebuyer Assistance Program in the nine counties that HUD designated as most impacted by Sandy.
- More than 460 affordable rental housing units have been financed through the Landlord Incentive Program, which provides rental property owners with fair market rents so that they can make their housing units affordable to low- and moderate-income families.
- 13 Neighborhood Enhancement Program projects are under construction in the nine most impacted counties; of these, five will complete construction by December 1 and begin leasing affordable housing units.
- More than 450 Sandy-damaged housing units that will be rented to low-to-moderate income families and individuals have received funding and are being repaired through the Landlord Rental Repair Program.
- More than 18,500 storm-affected homeowners in the nine most impacted counties have each received a \$10,000 check through the Homeowner Resettlement Program after agreeing to remain in their home county for three years.

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