

Keeping an eye on Hurricane Sandy recovery dollars Weekly News Round-up: February 7-14

With a high volume of media coverage in the aftermath of Hurricane Sandy, Good Jobs New York is keeping the spotlight on how government money is proposed to be spent in the rebuilding process. For more information on transparency and opportunities for community involvement, follow us on Twitter [@GoodJobsNewYork](#) [#EyeOnSandyMoney](#). Also, let us know how we can adjust this alert to make it better.

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We've updated our layout - scroll down for Advocacy News

Weekly news round-up

Disaster Relief

- Crain's provides details of two business relief programs, the City's Emergency Loan Fund (funded by NYCEDC, Goldman, and the New York Bankers Association), and the NYC Matching Grant Program. [Crain's New York Business](#)
- Mayor Bloomberg's outline for distributing the bulk of the city's first allocation of federal aid does not include any protection or relief for undocumented immigrants. Many have been denied access to unemployment benefits or rental assistance. [City Limits](#)
- The four biggest U.S. banks are holding over \$208 million in insurance claim payments, according to an investigation by the New York State Department of Financial Services. [The Wall Street Journal](#) and [New York Post](#)
- Senator Charles E. Schumer is urging federal officials to loosen restrictions on condo and co-op owners receiving disaster aid grant money to repair damaged property. FEMA defines commonly owned building infrastructure in condos or co-ops as the property of the building associations, which are considered businesses and ineligible for grants. [Newsday](#)
- Mandatory sequestration budget cuts would affect nearly \$3 billion of the recently approved \$51 billion federal disaster aid. Without Congressional intervention, sequestration will go into effect March 1. [New York Post](#)
- The National Hurricane Center downgraded Sandy to a post-tropical cyclone two days before it made landfall. Many within the agency grappled with the decision, knowing it would prevent them from issuing the strongest possible public warning, which is reserved only for active hurricanes. [The New York Times](#)

ALSO: The report issued by the National Hurricane Center details the costs of Sandy, estimating damage at \$50 billion, second only to Katrina. [AP via Times-Union](#)

- Mayor Bloomberg continues "race to the top"-like competitions for redevelopment, including \$145 million in federal Community Development Block Grants for winning ideas to improve infrastructure and spur economic development in storm-damaged neighborhoods. [New York Daily News](#)

Rebuilding Infrastructure

- Rockaway residents are wary of outside groups seeking to help them plan for the future.

The community wants to provide input on how recovery dollars will be spent in the neighborhood, and to rebuild the shore. [New York Daily News](#)

- The Army Corps of Engineers presented preliminary beach restoration plans to a crowded community board meeting in the Rockaways. [NY1](#)
- Andrew Friedman, Center for Popular Democracy, and Emmaia Gelman, energy policy consultant and advocate, make the case for keeping the Long Island Power Authority a public utility, with a mandate to invest in the communities they serve. [New York Daily News](#)
- Hoboken Mayor Dawn Zimmer recognizes that with two-thirds of Hoboken within the newly established flood zone, it is not feasible to raise all properties. The mayor suggests using federal disaster aid to build storm walls and create emergency electricity from alternative sources. [The New York Times](#)
- Governor Christie announced in a press conference that his administration will consider buyouts of contiguous parcels of flood-prone properties with federal Sandy aid. [The Star-Ledger](#)

ALSO: Decades of over-development in New Jersey have contributed to chronic flooding of in-land neighborhoods. Governor Christie is now promoting the New Jersey "Blue Acres" program to buy-out vulnerable properties. [WNYC](#)

- After defending a deal with an out-of-state contractor that also made large campaign donations, Governor Christie pledged greater transparency in the rebuilding process. He signed an executive order mandating all procurement of Sandy contracts undergo legal review by the State Comptroller and promised to post all contracts related to Sandy clean-up online. [The Star-Ledger](#)
- New aerial photos from the National Park Service show the extent of damage to Gateway National Recreation area. [New York Daily News](#)

Housing

- The Federal Housing Administration will expedite applications of New York and New Jersey owners of multifamily properties affected by Sandy and seeking to refinance their mortgages. [HUD Press Release](#)
- A blog solicits reader responses on whether more aggressive coastal retreat strategies are needed to shape coastal land use policies, including eminent domain of high-risk properties in high-risk areas. [NY Muni Blog](#)
- The New York City Council will hold an [emergency oversight hearing](#) on Tuesday, February 26 to investigate why waterfront property owners of damaged homes were given higher property-tax assessments than last year. [New York Post](#)

Jobs

- New York Representatives Velazquez and Meng wrote to the U.S. Small Business Administration demanding that more rebuilding contracts go to small, Queens firms. According to their letter, only 15 percent of Sandy-related contracts have gone to small businesses. [Times Ledger](#)
- The Army Corps of Engineers selected a contractor to perform debris-removal on Fire Island, Custom Earth Recycling. The firm released a statement that it would hire local workers. [Newsday](#)

Advocacy News

List your upcoming event here! Email elizabeth@goodjobsfirst.org

As community groups seek ways to engage local officials in the rebuilding of their neighborhoods after Hurricane Sandy, the Center for Social Inclusion outlines case study principles that can be broadly applied. In [Broadway Triangle Community Coalition - Multi-racial Efforts Towards a Sustainable Neighborhood](#), the authors highlight strategies communities can use to establish local renewable energy, green jobs, and affordable housing.

[Community groups respond to Bloomberg's announcement of proposed use of federal grants.](#)

Thursday, February 28: City & State annual forum State of Our City will feature a panel "Land Use, Post Sandy." [Register online](#)

Friday, March 1: New Jersey Future Redevelopment Forum with breakfast keynote speaker Shaun Donovan, Secretary of U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. New Brunswick, NJ. [Register online](#)

Friday, March 1: Deadline to submit application for EPA's [Smart Growth Implementation Assistance \(SGIA\)](#) program. Applications are requested from tribal, local, regional, and state governments and nonprofit organizations that have partnered with a governmental entity in four categories including: "Community Resilience to Disasters and Climate Change." Find additional information, including the Request for Letters of Interest, at <http://epa.gov/smartgrowth/sgia.htm>

The Museum of the City of New York is requesting submissions of photographs by amateur and professional photographers of Sandy damage and recovery for an upcoming exhibit. The deadline to submit photographs is March 3. For details, see www.mcnyc.org

Thursday, April 4: Crain's [Rebuilding NY Conference](#). Sheraton New York Times Square, 811 Seventh Avenue, 8:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. Registration required
The Federal Reserve Bank of New York is posting upcoming application deadlines, recovery resources, events, and key agency contacts on their [Sandy Information Center](#) page. *FEMA has [extended deadlines](#) for programs in New York. Applicants for federal disaster assistance have until February 27 to apply.*

The [New York City Council](#) and [New York State Assembly](#) will hold hearings over the next several weeks to evaluate emergency response and disaster planning efforts.

This week's upcoming hearings include:

2/14: 10:00 am City Council Hearing Oversight on Emergency Planning During and After Storm: MTA's Response and Long-Term Impact on the City's Public Transportation System (Emergency Planning and Management During and After the Storm: Shelter Management)

2/26: 1:00 pm City Council Hearing Oversight: Recovery: Restoring and Growing the City's Small Businesses.

These hearings are subject to change, check the online calendars for details.

New York State health and safety inspectors from the Department of Labor will provide inspections and assessments to businesses effected by Sandy to help firms reopen as soon as possible. Call 1-888-4-NYSDOL (1-888-469-7365) or visit their [website](#) for more information.

Several non-profit organizations have endorsed [Post-Sandy Rebuilding Principles: Building a sustainable region and economy, creating jobs for all](#). We encourage you to sign on, too. Contact bettina@goodjobsfirst.org for more information.

We'd love to hear from you!

Check out our resources on Hurricane Sandy money at our [website](#). Or follow us on Twitter: @GoodJobsNewYork #EyeOnSandyMoney. Please forward your suggestions on how we can make this round-up more useful to you in your work.

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