



Effectiveness and Impact of the Build It Back Program

What questions did the audit look at?

- ▶ Did the Mayor's Office of Housing Recovery Operations' (HRO) Build It Back Single-Family Program meet its goals of assisting homeowners impacted by Hurricane Sandy?
- ▶ Did the Build It Back Single-Family Program provide timely service and improve community safety and resilience as intended?

Why does it matter for New Yorkers?

In the wake of Hurricane Sandy in 2012, the City established HRO to coordinate recovery efforts. In 2013, HRO launched the Build It Back Single-Family Program to assist homeowners and other occupants impacted by Sandy by reimbursing them for repairs, repairing or rebuilding damaged homes and in some cases, elevating them, or purchasing damaged homes and assisting with relocation.

The audit found that Build It Back suffered from prolonged application processing and construction times due to a lack of prescribed timeframes, poor recordkeeping, and weak oversight, among other things. As a result, many homeowners withdrew from the program and those who persisted waited three years on average for construction to be completed—and almost a decade in one case. The audit found that HRO served only 36% of the over 22,436 people who initially applied to the program and that nearly 50% withdrew. It also did not meet its stated goal of completing construction efforts by 2016, with nearly 1,600 homes (40.1% of those served) not completed by this time.

These delays impacted New Yorkers who were already left reeling from the storm. As climate-driven disasters become more frequent, the City's ability to deliver timely, well-managed recovery programs is essential to ensuring that future recovery efforts do not repeat these costly mistakes.

What changes did the agency commit to make following the audit?

- ▶ HRO agreed to document timeframes and deadlines in policies and procedures at the start of future disaster recovery programs, so application processing and construction progress can be consistently monitored.
- ▶ HRO agreed to establish and track performance indicators, including contractor timeliness both application processing and construction management, in order to improve recordkeeping and program oversight and accountability.

AUDIT FINDINGS



Build It Back served just 36% of initial applicants.



40% of homes served were not completed within Build It Back's stated goal of completing construction by 2016.



New deadlines and acceleration initiatives failed to reduce overall completion times.



Those served by the program were dissatisfied at very high rates across many aspects of the program.

Audit Recommendations		Agency Response
1	Document timeframes and deadlines in policies and procedures at the beginning of a program for program staff and/or case management contractors to monitor application processing, and for contractor managers to monitor construction activities, to ensure their timely progression and completions.	AGREED
2	Establish and track performance indicators in the recordkeeping system, including timeliness for contractors responsible for application processing and construction management.	AGREED

