



THE CITY OF NEW YORK
OFFICE OF THE COMPTROLLER
BRAD LANDER

October 4, 2023

The Honorable Eric Adams
Mayor
City Hall
New York, NY 10007

Re: Initiation of Investigation into City's Progress on Extreme Rainfall Preparedness

Dear Honorable Eric Adams,

The flooding New York City experienced from Tropical Storm Ophelia last week demonstrated that the “new normal” of intensified storms requires a whole-of-government focus on emergency preparedness and climate resilience. After Hurricane Ida, the City of New York committed to improving the City’s emergency preparedness, communications, and infrastructure in response to extreme weather. My office is launching an investigation into progress towards those commitments. In addition to increasing public transparency regarding the City of New York’s efforts to prepare for future storms, I hope that this review will aid your administration in prioritizing the distribution of managerial and financial resources to priority initiatives, as well as identify other steps that the City and our partners can take to accelerate efforts that would prevent damage, injury, and loss of life in future storms.

The investigation will evaluate the City’s implementation of new policies and protocols set forth following the devastating impacts of Hurricane Ida. The review will include commitments made by the de Blasio administration in the September 2021 *[The New Normal Report](#)*, as well as the commitments made by your administration in the July 2022 *[Rainfall Ready](#)* plan, March 2022 *[CDBG-DR Action Plan](#)*, and the extreme rainfall-related commitments in the April 2023 *[PlaNYC: Getting Sustainability Done](#)*. The review will assess whether near-term actions were completed and evaluate how those actions have been incorporated into the City’s emergency response protocols, and to what extent they were followed for Tropical Storm Ophelia. For longer term initiatives, such as capital infrastructure improvements, the investigation will assess whether projects are on track and explore recommendations to improve, and potentially accelerate or expand, implementation.

Pursuant to Chapter 5, Section 93, of the City Charter and Chapter 3 of the Administrative Code, the Office of the New York City Comptroller will request detailed information from a number of agencies identified in the plans noted above as responsible for various emergency preparedness commitments, including the Mayor’s Office of Climate and Environmental Justice, New York City Emergency Management, Department of Environmental Protection, Department of Housing Preservation and Development, Department of Transportation, Department of City Planning,

Department of Small Business Services, Department of Design and Construction, Department of Parks and Recreation, Department of Buildings, and the New York City Housing Authority. Since this investigation seeks information from several City agencies, I request that you designate a point person to coordinate with my office.

When Hurricane Ida arrived in September 2021 with record-breaking rainfall that took 13 lives and caused millions of dollars of damage, it was a wakeup call that prompted our urgent attention to the risks of heavy rainfalls. Hurricane Ida drove our attention to infrastructure improvements and emergency planning for inland communities vulnerable to flash flooding. In the immediate aftermath of Hurricane Ida, the City, under your predecessor, convened an Extreme Weather Response Task Force comprising interagency staff who issued a new set of protocols and policies for combatting heavy rainstorms. Thereafter, in 2022, the City received \$188 million of HUD CDBG-Disaster Recovery [funding](#) to support long-term Hurricane Ida recovery, and your administration released Rainfall Ready, a plan for intense storms.

Two years after Hurricane Ida, the most recent storm that drenched New York City on September 29, 2023 shut down half the subway lines, flooded basements, schools, and entire city streets. These types of rainstorms are only becoming more frequent – and our efforts to prepare must escalate. My office looks forward to working with your agencies to ensure that our City has effectively adopted the lessons learned from recent storms and to identify areas where focused attention can accelerate implementation of policies and protocols that will keep New Yorkers safe in future storms.

I thank you and your team in advance for your assistance with this investigation.

Sincerely,



Comptroller Brad Lander