



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Joseph P. Addabbo Jr.

## Addabbo: “Before Considering a Buy-Out Plan, First Let’s Help Those Who Want to Stay Here”

JOSEPH P. ADDABBO JR March 11, 2013

**Queens, NY, March 11, 2013** – NYS Senator Joseph P. Addabbo, Jr. (D-Howard Beach) today announced that while Mayor Michael Bloomberg is proposing to buy homes in flood prone areas affected by Hurricane Sandy, similar to a proposal by New York Governor Andrew Cuomo, plans to assist homeowners who want to stay in their homes should be the priority.

“I appreciate all the ideas that are coming forward to address the shorefront property situation, but I believe we should really focus our attention and resources to those individuals and families who don’t want to move,” Addabbo stated. Under Cuomo’s plan, the state would use \$400 million in federal Sandy aid to acquire, at pre-Sandy prices, properties from owners who would prefer to move rather than rebuild in the flood plain. The purchased land would then be used strictly as open space for parks, wetlands, drainage or other purposes. The governor mentioned he would consider starting the buy-outs on Staten Island’s East Shore.

Mayor Bloomberg wants to offer a similar buy-out plan to Cuomo’s. However, the same purchased land could be turned over to other entities and be developed again. The Bloomberg administration is working on this buy-out program and would use federal Community Development Block Grant funding. So far, \$1.8 billion has been set aside for the city, but how much money would be devoted to the plan has not been decided.

According to Senator Addabbo, “My residents’ plans are – they want to stay; I want to help them to stay. The mayor’s buy-out plan gives the land to other developers, instead of letting the land remain vacant. So far, all buy-out plans lack detail and seem very vague to me.”

The Bloomberg administration also stated that “buy-outs would be an important part of the city’s relief package.” These properties are valuable and some of the most expensive homes sold in Queens are on the waterfront. However, the redevelopment of these sites poses an economic risk to taxpayer money, if a future massive flood would hit again. Mayor Bloomberg has implied that under his buy-out plan, homes would be elevated above the 100-year-flood level and it would make them “flood-proof” for the future. However, this does not solve the whole problem, since the impervious surfaces would still experience massive flooding in the surrounding areas.

Similar to the governor’s buy-out plan, if the mayor’s plan is moved forward, it would then need to be approved by the federal government. The federal guidelines state that “any acquired property could not typically be redeveloped,” but they do allow some exceptions if the buyout price is based on the post-disaster value of the land and if additional aid to the property owner is given for relocation assistance.” Addabbo concluded, “While the details and further approval of both buy-out plans are being discussed, our people who want to stay here need immediate help. I think they should be our priority.”

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Judy Close, Press Secretary

NYS Senator Joseph P. Addabbo, Jr.

15th Senate District - Satellite Office

66-85 73rd Place

Middle Village, NY 11379

Ph: [718-497-1630](tel:718-497-1630)