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CC: Adm.  
11/2/15 JES

**Masser, Michelle**

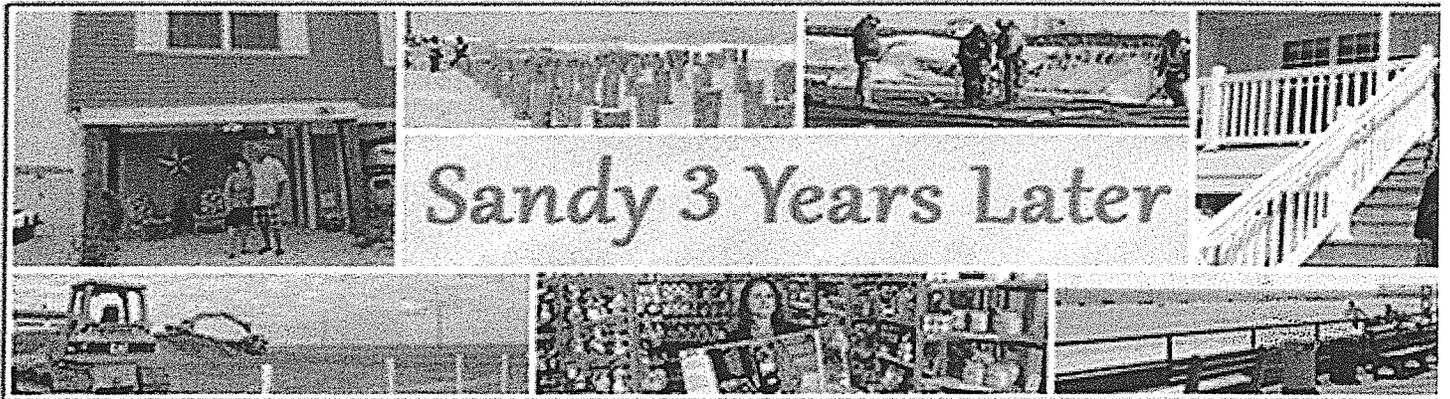
**From:** Fenderson-Singh, Nateshea <Nateshea.Fenderson-Singh@dep.nj.gov> on behalf of Randazzo, Cindy <Cindy.Randazzo@dep.nj.gov>  
**Sent:** Thursday, October 29, 2015 4:19 PM  
**To:** Randazzo, Cindy  
**Cc:** Fenderson-Singh, Nateshea  
**Subject:** DEP Release: DEP Announces First Blue Acres Closings in Linden  
**Attachments:** Linden Blue Acres Buyout - P98.pdf

Dear Municipal Clerks:

Please see the DEP Press Release regarding the First Blue Acres Closings in Linden, attached and below.

Best,

Cindy W. Randazzo  
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**IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
 October 29, 2015  
[www.nj.gov/dep](http://www.nj.gov/dep)

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**DEP ANNOUNCES FIRST BLUE ACRES CLOSINGS IN LINDEN**

*PROGRAM TO MOVE RESIDENTS OUT OF FLOOD-PRONE AREAS APPROACHES 400 CLOSINGS, 700 OFFERS ON 3<sup>RD</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF SUPERSTORM SANDY*

**(15/P98) TRENTON** – Continuing its mission to make flood-prone communities more resilient, Department of Environmental Protection Commissioner Bob Martin announced the first Superstorm Sandy Blue Acres property purchases in Linden today, the third anniversary of the historic storm.

The Blue Acres' buyouts of three homes in Linden are the first of the program to be funded entirely by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). More than 40 homes have been identified in Linden for possible buyouts as a result of flooding devastation resulting from Hurricane Irene in 2011, Superstorm Sandy in 2012 and prior storms.

"The Blue Acres Buyout Program continues to fulfill the Christie Administration's commitment to move residents in flood-prone communities out of harm's way," Commissioner Martin said. "We are pleased the program has expanded to Linden, which suffered significant damages during Sandy. We look forward to making the city of Linden and other communities more resilient for future storms.

"While the decision to relocate from these homes where memories are born is often difficult, Blue Acres continues to give residents the opportunity to move to higher ground and continue on without fear of additional damages or disruption."

Launched in May 2013, the DEP's Blue Acres Buyout Program purchases homes from willing sellers, at pre-Sandy market values so residents in areas of repetitive and catastrophic flooding can rebuild their lives outside flood-prone areas. Structures are demolished and the properties are permanently preserved as open space for recreation or conservation purposes.

To date statewide, buyouts are underway in 12 municipalities in six counties. Offers have been made to 695 homeowners and 526 have accepted the state's offer. Closings have been completed on 395 properties, 259 of which have been demolished.

Sandy-damaged areas in Sayreville, South River and Woodbridge in Middlesex County were among the first to take advantage of the program. Since then, purchases have extended into flood-weary areas like Manville in Somerset County and East Brunswick and Old Bridge in Middlesex County. The program is now underway in Rahway in Union County and Lawrence and Downe townships in Cumberland County.

Most of the previous buyouts were funded through the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) Hazard Mitigation Grant Program, which approved more than \$100 million for the Blue Acres Buyout Program, and which has been processed through the New Jersey Office of Emergency Management. Additional funding came from the U.S. Department of Agriculture – Natural Resources Conservation Service and the state Green Acres Program.

Linden and Old Bridge are the first New Jersey communities where Blue Acres home purchases are being funded through a second tranche of Community Development Block Grant – Disaster Recovery (CDBG-DR) funding provided to the state by HUD.

Commissioner Martin announced the purchase of the first three Linden properties by Blue Acres at a home previously owned by Jean and Leonard Kostak, which the state purchased for \$220,000 earlier this month. The Kostaks had lived at the home since 1964, before the rising waters of nearby Marshes Creek, off the Rahway River, inundated their basement and first floor.

"HUD commends New Jersey for its thoughtful approach to recovery from Sandy," said Holly Leicht, HUD Regional Administrator for New Jersey and New York. "The State has been strategic in determining where it makes sense to rebuild more resiliently, and where retreat is the only option to ensure that lives and homes are not lost in the future. It is not easy for families such as the Kostaks to make the decision to relocate, but after the

devastation of Sandy, we have no choice but to acknowledge that climate change is a reality, and programs like New Jersey's Blue Acre Buyout must be part of our nation's collective preparation.”

“New Jersey was devastated by Superstorm Sandy,” said Linden Mayor Derek Armstead. “Although the New Jersey shore area got most of the news coverage, the city of Linden was not spared. We also felt the impact as our Tremley Point and Emma Place neighborhoods fell victim to the devastation of the storm.

“We are grateful that our city is one of the municipalities given the opportunity to work with the Blue Acres program. This program is giving these families the chance to move forward and rebuild their future,” Mayor Armstead said.

“We knew we could never go through something like that again,” said Jean Kostak, 73. “The decision to leave was difficult, but the Blue Acres team really helped us through the process. Our caseworker was there to answer every question and made us feel very comfortable as we went through the paperwork.”

The DEP has created a special buyout implementation team for its Blue Acres Buyout Program to work closely with sellers and process their applications as quickly as possible. Individual case workers work with the homeowners to personally guide them through the entire buyout process.

Homeowners interested in selling their homes or who have questions about the buyout program may call the DEP's Blue Acres Buyout Program at (609) 984-0500.

For more information on the Blue Acres Buyout Program, visit:  
[www.nj.gov/dep/greenacres/blue\\_flood\\_ac.html](http://www.nj.gov/dep/greenacres/blue_flood_ac.html)

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