



THE CITY OF NEW YORK
OFFICE OF THE MAYOR
NEW YORK, NY 10007

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: January 6, 2016
CONTACT: pressoffice@cityhall.nyc.gov, (212) 788-295

**AS PART OF HOMELESS SERVICES RESTRUCTURING, MAYOR DE BLASIO
EXPANDS EFFORT TO IMPROVE SHELTER CONDITIONS**

Shelter Repair Squad 2.0 Builds On Program That Corrected 12,000 Violations

NEW YORK—Mayor Bill de Blasio announced today a substantially increased effort to ensure the City’s ability to identify and fix problems in the City’s homeless shelters. Shelter Repair Squad 2.0, or SRS2.0, began on New Year’s Day and expands the existing Department of Housing Preservation and Development inspections of DHS shelters and new repairs.

SRS2.0 follows other homeless restructuring steps: 1) ending use of cluster apartments for shelter over the next three years, 2) re-iterating requirement to keep shelters open during the day for residents, and 3) announcing HOME-STAT, the nation’s most comprehensive street homelessness outreach effort.

“For decades, our shelters have not been safe enough or clean enough and that’s just not acceptable. We have already taken steps to improve conditions, but as a result we have learned that more is needed. So we have developed a systematic and thorough program to ensure that problems are promptly identified and fixed and that there is monitoring to make sure the repairs are done correctly and on time. I don’t want anyone refusing to come into a homeless shelter because of bad conditions,” said **Mayor de Blasio**.

The comprehensive repair plan is part of the 90-day review of homeless services that the Mayor ordered on December 15, 2015. The new plan will substantially increase the City’s ability to monitor and correct unacceptable conditions in shelters, remedy years of disinvestment in the not-for-profit shelters, and help move forward with the recently announced initiative to address unacceptable conditions in buildings in which DHS has rented permanent housing apartments as "cluster" shelter units for families. The shelter repair efforts will be bolstered by increased participation from HPD for the duration of the City’s comprehensive 90-day review of homeless services.

This effort builds on the track record of the multi-agency Shelter Repair Squad which has cleared over 12,000 existing violations since May; 83 percent of identified violations at the inspected shelters have been closed out and work has begun on all long-term repairs at DHS facilities.

The City is taking immediate action to increase the effectiveness of the shelter repair initiative.

The first step is to make sure all problems are reported.

This will be accomplished by:

- Deploying City shelter condition monitors who are inspecting every shelter and then continue to monitor compliance through unannounced visits through the remainder of the fiscal year. This effort will be coordinated by the Department of Housing Preservation and Development at the outset, with assistance from the Mayor's Office of Operations.
- Implementing a new family shelter resident complaint hotline to enable homeless families to report conditions of disrepair. Two million dollars in new funding will be added to the HRA budget in the January Plan to expand the staffing for HRA's Infoline to handle these complaints. There will be a response within 24 hours to determine the seriousness of the problem and begin an assessment of what repairs are necessary.

The second step is to have the ability to fix problems promptly after they are identified.

This will be accomplished by:

- Implementing a rapid response repair program, including extermination, by using Department of Housing Preservation and Development vendors to remedy conditions of disrepair that are not corrected by the property owner or non-profit provider within the time period set in state or local law to remedy the particular condition. New funding will be added to the HPD budget in the January Plan to support this expanded repair initiative.
- Addressing the need for increased maintenance and capital investment in not-for-profit shelters to correct conditions that have built up in these shelters over many years. Next week, HRA Commissioner Banks will meet with the leadership of Homeless Services United, which represents the not-for-profit shelter providers, to address maintenance and capital funding needs during the FY2016 funding cycle. The City will work with our shelter providers to develop a capital assessment and maintenance plan so that fundamental repairs and improvements can be made that will reduce the ongoing need for repairs.

The third step is to monitor to ensure that repairs are completed, by:

- Designating the Coalition for the Homeless to monitor conditions in family shelters jointly with the City as it does currently in adult shelters.
- As noted above, the City's own shelter condition monitors will not only identify problems, but also conduct unannounced inspections to see whether they were repaired.
- The current Shelter Repair Squad was created in May by Mayor de Blasio and is the first such effort to take on systematically repairing violations and other problems in

City homeless shelters. It includes staff from the Departments of Homeless Services, Housing Preservation and Development, Health and Mental Health, Buildings and the Fire Department.

“Too often now we fix problems only to see them reoccur and new ones develop because there hasn’t been capital investment to fix the underlying issues. So while we make immediate repairs, we will also develop a plan to upgrade shelter buildings to reduce these problems in the future. Fixing buildings will be much less expensive in the long run than constantly repairing them,” said **Human Resources Administration Commissioner Steven Banks**.

"Since May, HPD has been working closely with our sister City Agencies on the Shelter Repair Squad to ensure our City's homeless shelters provide just that – shelter for our most vulnerable residents worthy of the name," said **Housing Preservation and Development Commissioner Vicki Been**. "We are pleased that the learning we've gained through this initiative led to the concrete inspection, repair, and capital improvement plan the Mayor announced today to promote the long-term sustainability of our shelter housing. HPD will continue to use all the enforcement tools at our disposal to protect the quality of all New York's housing stock."

Assembly Member Andrew Hevesi, Chairman of the Social Services Committee, said, “For far too long, shelter conditions have been deteriorating due to lack of City and State resources. Building on the success of the Shelter Repair Squad launched earlier this year, Mayor de Blasio’s new investments and rapid repair team will help improve living conditions for families and children in shelters.”

Council Member Stephen Levin, Chairman of the Social Services Committee, said, “After decades of neglect, I am pleased Mayor de Blasio is stepping up and addressing the unacceptable conditions in our shelters with new capital investments and rapid shelter repairs. New Yorkers in shelter deserve improved conditions.”

Christy Parque, Executive Director of Homeless Services United, said, “Homeless Services United and its members pride themselves on fulfilling their missions to provide safe and effective solutions for New Yorkers facing a housing crisis. We have made no secret that the shelter system, and in particular the non-profit operated shelters, are in crisis and in need of an infusion of capital and maintenance funding. This additional funding and government support is the right step to take in solving a decades old problem failing to maintain and invest in the City’s emergency shelter system.”

Christine Quinn, President and CEO of Women in Need, said, “To help homeless families achieve independence and self-sufficiency, we need to make sure that when they enter the shelter system, they live in a safe, clean, and supportive environment. Shelters should be a respite from the streets – a warm place where homeless women and children can rebuild their lives. Today’s announcement recognizes that and will go a long way toward ensuring that facilities for homeless families in New York are seen as positive step away from the streets and toward self-sufficiency.”

Mitchell Netburn, President and CEO of Project Renewal, Inc. and President of Homeless Services United Board of Directors, said “Mayor de Blasio and his administration are making critical and thoughtful investments that will greatly improve conditions throughout the homeless services system. We applaud the City for this major commitment which will help homeless New Yorkers renew their lives.”

"Having decades of experience providing transitional housing – we opened the nation’s first family shelter in 1972 – we commend the Mayor’s increased investment in New York City's shelter system. The safety, stability and function of shelter facilities are of paramount importance in providing quality transitional housing, and we applaud the Mayor’s commitment to create a systematic approach to identify concerns and provide resources to address them. We also are pleased with his inclusion of groups with expertise, such as Coalition for the Homeless and Homeless Services United, which will only contribute to the success of the administration's efforts," said **David Garza, Executive Director of Henry Street Settlement**.

“While they prepare to return to the community and permanent housing, homeless New Yorkers are protected by consent decrees that require the City to provide them with safe, decent shelter placements. We are very pleased that this City Administration is proposing to make repairs and improve shelter conditions, and is hiring an independent monitor, the Coalition for the Homeless, to verify that the shelters are safe and in good repair,” said **Judith Goldiner, Attorney in Charge Civil Law Reform Unit The Legal Aid Society**.

"A safe, healthy and comfortable place to sleep should be a reality for all New Yorkers utilizing our City's homeless shelters. We applaud Mayor de Blasio for prioritizing improvements to shelter conditions and look forward to these much needed repairs," said **Alyssa Aguilera, Political Director of VOCAL-NY**.

Tony Hannigan, Executive Director of Center for Urban Community Services, said, “Following years of sporadic neglect, the administration’s focus on improving the shelter system is much needed and commendable. The Department of Homeless Services also recently made similar upgrades to security throughout the shelter system.”

Frederick Shack, LMSW, Chief Executive Officer of Urban Pathways, Inc. said, “For decades, not-for-profit organizations under contract with DHS to provide services to the homeless have struggled to maintain our facilities that house our programs. Requests for capital funding to make the requisite repairs were too often met with denials based on austerity, failing to provide the not-for-profit with the necessary funding to address capital concerns, which in some case included repairs required to address building safety issues. We are pleased that we now have a true partner in the City of New York as this Mayor commits to working with our sector to fund these necessary repairs.

“Homelessness is a serious, complex problem that has challenged the best and the brightest. Solutions demand collaborative public-private leadership. The Mayor’s intense engagement and responsive, thoughtful leadership is what New York City needs to be on the cutting edge. A necessary step is the Mayor’s elevation of an involved safety net between the City, Housing Preservation and Development, Human Resources Administration, Departments of Homeless

Services, Health and Mental Health, Buildings and the Fire Department, Coalition for the Homeless, and not-for-profits. Mayor de Blasio's investment in capital meets critical short and long term needs which will result in a more stable and higher quality system. These steps continue to pave the path to preventing homelessness proactively. The Mayor can continue to count on Acacia Network as a fully committed partner," said **Pamela Mattel, Chief Operating Officer of Acacia Network.**

Reverend Dr. Terry Troia, Executive Director of Project Hospitality, said, "Attention to the conditions under which our City provides safe shelter to people experiencing homelessness is a critical piece of creating safe space for our neighbors most in need. We are grateful to Mayor de Blasio for constantly raising up the value of these vulnerable lives by making shelters more safe and always welcoming."