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## GOOD STORY

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### **Hurricane Sandy: Displaced Sandy Survivors Find Free Temporary Housing on Social Media Rental Site**

*The LLIS.gov team identified several innovative Whole Community ideas and practices to support preparedness, response, and recovery following Hurricane Sandy.*

#### **SUMMARY**

After Hurricane Sandy left over 100,000 of New York City residents temporarily homeless, Mayor Michael Bloomberg's office partnered with Airbnb, an online travel booking site, to match those needing temporary housing with others who had space to spare. This unique initiative provided New York residents wishing to help those affected by the disaster with an opportunity to contribute their already available spaces across the city.

#### **DESCRIPTION**

##### ***Hurricane Sandy***

On Monday, October 29, 2012, Hurricane Sandy made landfall near Atlantic City, New Jersey, pushing a massive storm surge to shore and generating winds to up to 75 miles per hour. More than 3,200 people spent the night in 112 Red Cross shelters in nine states as the storm approached. Shortly after landfall, the National Hurricane Center downgraded Sandy to a post-tropical cyclone. Sandy caused storm surge, record flooding, and wind damage. Nine days after the storm, a large nor'easter caused massive snowfall undermining response operations in the disaster-impacted areas.



**Hurricane Sandy Image from NOAA on October 29, 2012**

As a result of these events, millions of people were left without power and thousands were displaced along the East Coast from North Carolina to Maine. Unable to immediately return home, many New York and New Jersey residents needed alternative housing solutions after the disaster, particularly in areas such as Staten Island NY, and along the New Jersey shore, where approximately 72,000 homes and businesses had been damaged or destroyed.

Following the storm, several government agencies assisted the states of New York and New Jersey in meeting the housing needs of disaster survivors. This joint effort included housing and technical experts from the impacted states, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, FEMA, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the U.S. Small Business

Administration, and a number of voluntary agencies. In addition, more than 1,200 FEMA Community Relations (CR) specialists met with New York and New Jersey residents to explain the types of assistance available through the Federal government and to help disaster victims register for these programs. As of November 6, 2012, 906,900 individuals had registered for assistance, and more \$194 million had been approved.

### **The Airbnb Partnership**

Airbnb is a website that provides unique accommodations across 30,000 cities in 192 countries and has booked over 10 million nights worldwide. Airbnb allows owners to list their home or rooms in their home for rent while the company provides a business platform and insurance to protect its users.

In the week following Hurricane Sandy, a surge of over 2,500 reservations were made through Airbnb. The City of New York recognized the value of this initiative and partnered with Airbnb to provide immediately accessible housing to disaster victims.

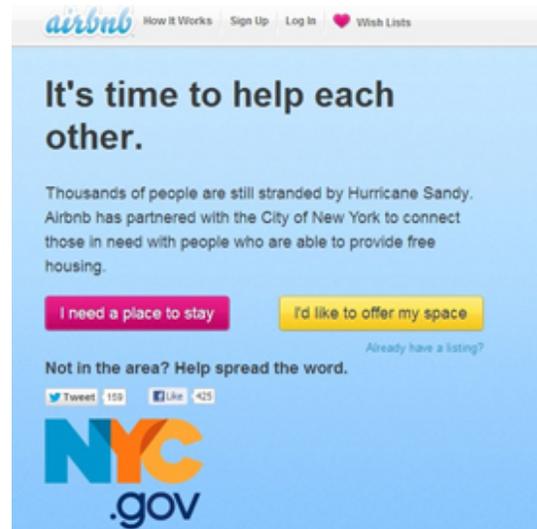
Airbnb waived the usual booking fees for hosts and renters, and provided the standard insurance protection for rentals. More than 1,400 Airbnb users signed up to offer their homes at no cost to disaster victims. New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg stated, "Since Sandy hit, we've seen numerous examples of the private sector using technology to find new ways to help people. This new offering from Airbnb is another great way to match New Yorkers in need with those who have something to give."

### **REFERENCES**

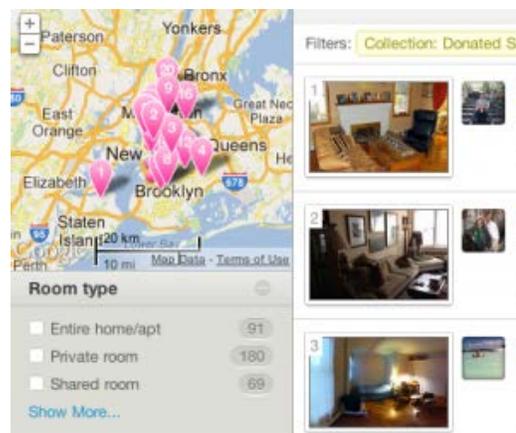
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**The partnership linking NYC.gov to Airbnb highlighted in PC Magazine**



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