

Faith Leaders Demand Temporary Housing For Sandy Victims

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Faith leaders working with [Occupy Sandy](#) on Hurricane Sandy relief efforts plan to converge on the residence of Mayor Michael Bloomberg to demand that the city provide temporary housing for those displaced by the storm or those living in unsafe conditions.

The rally in front of the mayor's office is expected to begin at 11 a.m. today.

As we [reported Monday](#), elected officials say FEMA is considering renting empty apartments and housing those in need of safe refuge because of damage done to their homes by Sandy “especially in neighborhoods in the Rockaways.

Housing conditions are deteriorating in the communities on the peninsula as mold continues to grow unchecked in many homes, while still others remain without heat and power.

Grassroots groups have been protesting the lack of temporary housing for weeks now and the movement seems to be growing.

Dennis Saleeby, volunteer field operations director for New York Resilience System, says a group of advocates for storm victims is expecting to meet with the office of Council Speaker Christine Quinn today to discuss the need for housing.

The Bloomberg administration has noted that a number of hotel rooms they have for displaced victims are sitting empty. But some residents of the the Rockaways say they need to be in their communities to be able to commute to their jobs. Others seem not to know exactly [how to get a voucher for a hotel room](#)

Far Rockaway Resident Vern Clarke [told Gotham Gazette](#) that hotels can't accomodate his family of seven. He says that although FEMA visited his house and saw his mold problem, they did not offer him housing assistance.

"It is clear to me that as we, people of faith, have responded in opening our churches, synagogues, and other sacred spaces and it is long overdue that the government and those who have accumulated and have the resources, in their care, need to step up. It is a crisis and we need our structures in place to adapt and work for the most vulnerable among us," Rev. Juan Carlos Ruiz, who has worked along Occupy Sandy's hub at St. Jacobi's Lutheran Church, said in a press release.

The release also quotes resident Luis Casco as saying: "We are living in a mold infested community. One of my neighbors is a 67-yea- old woman who cannot run her daycare any longer and has a respiratory disease and is living in mold. We are people, not animals, we should not be living in these horrible conditions."

Photo by Cristian Salazar

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