



Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice

Elizabeth Glazer, Director
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September 27, 2018

Hon. Margaret S. Chin
The Council of the City of New York
Council Member, First District, Manhattan
1 Centre Street, 19th Floor
New York, NY 10007

Dear Council Member Chin:

Thank you for your September 24th letter in which you share your concerns about the City's efforts to engage the community regarding the City's plan to close Rikers Island jails and create a network of modern and humane borough-based jails. Addressing community concerns, being transparent, and conducting robust engagement are all priorities of this Administration.

We are committed to providing more substantive opportunities for community engagement throughout and beyond the Uniform Land Use Review Procedure (ULURP) and building design process.

Community Engagement

We believe community input is paramount to the development of facilities that appropriately integrate into their surrounding neighborhood. In an effort to expand engagement opportunities, the City commits to:

1. Extending the comment submission period for the draft scope of work from October 15th to Oct. 29th.
2. Establishing a community driven process to provide community members with concrete opportunities to voice concerns, receive updates, provide feedback and shape the new facilities. Through this process, community members will meet regularly with City officials to discuss various issues including the design and the utilization of the 20,000 square feet of community space within the new facility.
3. Supporting a community-driven participatory process to determine the potential future usage of Manhattan Detention Center's North Tower ("MDC North") – a 226,000 square

foot building that will be returned to the community at the completion of the project. The future use of MDC North could include affordable housing, senior housing, or another use.

4. Providing additional opportunities for community members to engage in fruitful dialogue with the New York City Department of Corrections (DOC) and others from the administration regarding the existing Manhattan Detention Center.
5. Continuing to meet with community-based organizations to discuss criminal justice reform, and working together on these ongoing issues.

Thank you for sending us questions and identifying issues important to you and members of the Chinatown community. Please see responses below.

1. **What was the process of selecting 80 Centre Street as the location to scope for this project?**

Answer: The Administration considered both 125 White Street and 80 Centre Street as locations for the replacement detention facility for the Manhattan Detention Center. Both buildings are city-owned and adjacent to the courthouse. While the Administration solicited feedback on both options as possible replacement facilities, 80 Centre Street was selected by the Administration because it was closer to the civic core and comparably scaled buildings; the 125 White Street location would have been a taller building, and 80 Centre Street opened up a community development opportunity for the neighborhood.

2. **What were the results of the analysis of alternative sites/locations considered for Manhattan's Borough-based jail, and why did the Administration deem those sites not feasible?**

Answer: The land area of the facility at 125 White Street did not have adequate space for our programming goals. A proposed jail on that site would have been taller, and would have been closer to the residential areas of Chinatown. 80 Centre Street is closer to the civic center of Downtown Manhattan and is closer to the taller buildings of that area, and also opens up the opportunity to return the North Building of 125 White Street to the community for development into another community need such as housing.

3. **How did the Administration determine that 125 parking spots would be included at the 80 Centre Street site without information about number of detainees, or necessary Corrections staff?**

Answer: The current plan is provide for 125 spots on site. This was determined based on the size of the site and the geotechnical conditions that limit our ability to build below

grade parking. We are currently working with estimated staff and visitor needs to evaluate the extent to which these spots are sufficient. The result of that analysis will be provided for public review and comment as part of the Environmental Review process.

Criminal Justice Reform Concerns:

1. **Given that State action will be required for criminal justice reform, specifically regarding bail reform, how can the City commit to a decrease of detainees to the targeted number of 5,000? If not, what is your plan to work with the Governor and State Legislature to enact these needed changes?**

Answer: The City can achieve a 5,000 person average jail population without the State cooperation and/or changing existing laws. However, State criminal justice reform – particularly bail and parole reform – would allow the City to reduce the jail population to a 5,000 person ADP faster. Based on our data projections, along with a 25+ year trend of reducing the jail population, we are confident that through strategically reducing crime, shortening case length, and offering safe alternatives to detention (along with other initiatives), the City can continue to reduce the population to our stated goal. Lastly, the City is working with the State to pass comprehensive criminal justice reforms.

2. **What is the back-up plan if the City cannot reduce the number of detainees to targeted levels by the time needed?**

Answer: The City’s crime and jail projections indicate that reaching a 5,000 person average daily population is feasible—even without state cooperation and/or legislative changes. The City has achieved more than 25 years of declining crime and jail population reduction. Since the Mayor took office, the jail population has fallen by 27%. The City is working tirelessly to achieve this goal through expanded pretrial release programs, alternatives to incarceration programs, and various crime prevention programs like the Mayor’s Action Plan for Neighborhood Safety and the Office to Prevent Gun Violence.

Community Concerns:

1. **Why was there no mention of impacts that a relocated MDC would have on the community, or any mention of a plan to mitigate those impacts, in the Administration’s presentation at the Sept. 12 Town Hall?**

Answer: The Draft Environmental Impact Statement will include analyses of the potential for the proposed project to result in impacts within study areas up to ½-mile surrounding the 80 Centre Street site. In accordance with City Environmental Quality Review (CEQR) guidelines, the analyses, any potential impacts, and mitigation for those

potential impacts will be underway after the scoping meetings and will be publicly available within the following months.

2. **For example, nearby Worth Street is currently under a massive, multi-year reconstruction that is already three years behind schedule. How is redevelopment on 80 Centre Street going to be coordinated with this ongoing project?**

Answer: We estimate that the overall Worth Street project will be done in spring 2021. We expect work near 80 Centre Street to be done in spring 2020. As for the work at the 80 Centre Street site, if passed, we don't anticipate coordination issues across the two projects but would work with all stakeholders to minimize construction impacts in the area.

3. **Given that placards for official vehicles already take up numerous parking spaces in Chinatown and elsewhere in Lower Manhattan, what is the Administration's plan to accommodate the increased parking needs for staff and visitors of an expanded MDC?**

Answer: There will be on-site parking for use by staff and service providers and the City will continue to look into this issue.

Thank you for your attention to this important issue and sharing with your concerns. We look forward to continued discussions regarding the closure of the jails on Rikers Island and the construction of a new borough-based jail system as we create a smaller, safer, fair criminal justice system.

Sincerely,



Dana Kaplan
Deputy Director