

SUPREME COURT OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK
COUNTY OF NEW YORK

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IN THE MATTER OF NEIGHBORS UNITED
BELOW CANAL, JAN LEE, DCTV, EDWARD J.
CUCCIA, BETTY LEE, and AMERICAN INDIAN
COMMUNITY HOUSE,

Petitioners,

For a Judgment pursuant to Article 78 of the CPLR

-against-

MAYOR BILL DE BLASIO, et al.,

Respondents.
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Index No.

**AFFIDAVIT OF BETTY LEE
IN SUPPORT OF THE
VERIFIED PETITION**

BETTY LEE, being duly sworn, deposes and says:

1. I am a long-time resident of Chinatown in Manhattan. I live in apartment in a small building on Baxter Street between Bayard and Walker Streets, directly across the street from 124-125 White Street, where the City intends to construct a huge new jail.
2. I am a Petitioner in this proceeding and submit this Affidavit in support of the Verified Petition and in opposition to the new jail, which will have significant negative impacts on my everyday activities and quality of life and on my neighborhood and community.
3. I am 71 years old and my husband and I have lived in the same apartment on since 1974. We both worked full time as we raised our daughter, who now lives a few blocks west of our apartment with her husband and two young children. I worked as a data processor and my husband worked as a baker and cook in Chinatown and then in a factory in the garment district. We are now retired and are able to remain in our apartment in

Chinatown because it is rent stabilized and affordable.

4. Our fourth-floor apartment directly faces the jail site. Although there are two buildings located on the site now, they are completely separated by White Street, which allows light and air to permeate Baxter Street. Right now, our apartment gets fresh air and sunlight. We are able to sit in our living room and read by natural light well into the afternoon. We also keep our living room windows open and enjoy fresh air, even during the summertime. If a new giant jail is built, it will cast a shadow over our entire building, which is only six stories tall. The jail also will block airflow, making our apartment very hot and stagnant, especially during the summer. Our building is very old, and I am afraid it may become unstable due to the construction.

5. Every aspect of my day-to-day routine is in Chinatown, and I use the existing pedestrian block of White Street between Baxter and Centre Streets multiple times a day.

6. Every weekday morning, I walk west on White Street towards Broadway to pick up one or both of my grandchildren and take them to their schools on the eastern side of Chinatown. To get to their schools, we walk east on White Street and then continue further east along Bayard. Walking to my daughter's apartment, then back to the children's schools, takes approximately 25 minutes. In the afternoon, I pick up both grandchildren and we walk to after school activities, and eventually back across White Street to get back to their apartment to the west. I then cook dinner for my daughter's family and go back across White Street to get home. On Sundays, I walk across White Street to pick up my grandson and then take him back across White Street to get to the to the Chinese School on Mott Street. If White Street is closed for construction, all of these trips will take twice as long in each direction, as will be forced to walk further north to use Walker Street, or further south to use Hogan Place.

7. Even if the pedestrian plaza at White Street is eventually replaced, after years of construction, with a long, cold, dark tunnel between Baxter and Centre Streets, it will still significantly impact my daily life. I'm certain that I will not feel safe walking there, especially at night when any stores that may be located in the tunnel will be closed.

8. Without safe access to White Street, I know I will not be able to go out as much. I may not be able to walk my grandchildren to back and forth to school anymore, or see my daughter as frequently.

9. My husband is 73 years old and was diagnosed with lung cancer four years ago. I am his primary caretaker and cannot afford to spend much time away for him. I also worry I would not be able to get home quickly in an emergency.

10. The demolition of the existing buildings and the construction of the new jail also will have a huge impact on other aspects of my daily life. Now, like many other residents of Chinatown, I am able to go grocery shopping nearby every day and buy fresh ingredients to cook our meals. I buy most of my fresh food from the open-air stands and street vendors on Mulberry, Mott and Elizabeth Streets. I am worried that once demolition of the existing buildings begins, and all during construction, the shops and vendors will close, or the healthy, fresh food I usually buy will be covered in dust and unsafe to eat.

11. My husband and I attend Transfiguration Church at least every Sunday at 29 Mott Street. Sometimes we attend on weekdays, too. In nice weather, we sit in Columbus Park, on the corner of Baxter and Bayard Streets, or take our grandchildren there to play. There are tai chi classes there every day.

12. I am worried that we and other Chinatown residents will not be able to continue to go about their daily lives during demolition and construction of the new jails, as there will be air and noise pollution, and it will be much harder to navigate the streets.

13. Every two weeks, I take my husband to the hospital for cancer treatment. We also both see doctors regularly at 139 Centre Street, between White and Walker Streets. I am concerned that my husband may not be able to make these trips to the hospital and our doctors if our neighborhood is too polluted or difficult to navigate due to demolition and construction.

14. I am worried that the air and noise pollution from demolition and construction, our inability to get around as we do now, and our inability to get fresh food nearby, will exacerbate my husband's illness, and worsen his quality of life.

15. I am also worried that as a result of pollution and street closures during demolition and construction, and without safe access on White Street, my husband and I will become isolated from our friends and family, many of whom are elderly and have difficulty traveling to begin with. Friends and family – our support network - will not feel safe visiting us and it will be more difficult for us to get around to visit them.

16. As a resident living in close proximity to the jail site, I am deeply concerned about the significant negative effects the new jail will have on me and my community. Years of construction will be devastating to the community, and a massive jail cutting off safe access, light and air will completely alter the unique character of Chinatown. The ebb and flow of daily Chinatown life will be completely interrupted and irrevocably damaged.

17. Last month, in January 2020, there was a tragic fire at 70 Mulberry Street. As a result of that fire, half of Mulberry Street and half of Bayard Street are now closed to cars, for who knows how long. While the sidewalks on these streets remain open, there is a terrible smell from the fire. Our already crowded neighborhood has become even more congested with cars that can no longer access the closed areas of the streets. Events like these have a huge impact on our neighborhood and I'm certain that demolition and

construction activities for the new jail will have similarly huge negative impacts.

18. I have watched Chinatown shrink over the last 46 years and become isolated from surrounding neighborhoods due to other City actions, such as the permanent of closure of Park Row after September 11th, which has made it more difficult to enter and leave our neighborhood. Parking on our streets has also been reduced dramatically, so it is harder for people to access our community by car. I am afraid this jail will be the final nail in the coffin, with the addition of another large institutional building that will wall off the eastern Chinatown neighborhood from Centre Street and beyond, further isolating and essentially dooming my unique community and its residents and businesses. I wish the City had considered the catastrophic impact that the new jail will have on Chinatown and its residents, especially older people like me.

19. For those reasons and the reasons set forth in the Verified Petition, I respectfully request that the relief set forth in the Verified Petition be granted and that the approvals of the new jail be annulled.

Betty Lee 2-3-2020

Betty Lee

Sworn before me this
3rd day of February 2020

Notary Public

ALICE POON
NOTARY PUBLIC-STATE OF NEW YORK
No. 01PO6397384
Qualified in New York County
My Commission Expires 09-03-2023