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Neighbors United Below Canal

To NUBC leadership,

I feel the need to bring to this group's attention the potential for, at least the appearance of, a conflict of interest for me, between my efforts working with you to preserve the character of our neighborhood and my long-standing commitment as MOCA's architect. For the past 20 years I have worked tirelessly to help MOCA realize their expanded home at 215 Centre Street and then to assist in planning and designing what will become their vision for a national cultural and historical institution here in NYC. Over that time, I have worked with them in support of numerous grant and funding requests made of the City which have been repeatedly denied in favor of others, while MOCA is placated with promises regarding future asks.

The museum's goals of preserving and presenting the history, heritage, culture and diverse experiences of people of Chinese descent in the United States is a cause I believe to be worthy of taxpayer funding. MOCA's presence and success are good for NYC, Chinese Americans, and specifically our neighborhood. Likewise, I think you all know, my heart lies with the fight to stop the City from building an out of scale ill-purposed building on White Street which will effectively damage and destroy our fragile community for years to come. I am one hundred percent behind a revised vision for Riker's Island as a key step on the path to justice reform and as an ideal home to redefine what the bricks and mortar of restorative justice looks like.

Accordingly, I do not understand how attacking MOCA is in the community's best interest or for that matter does one thing to stop the BBJ project we are all opposed to. It sadly sounds like old grudges and discontent over some other previous issues may have made MOCA a target of criticism when the funding to repair and augment outdated systems at Chung Pak or upgrades to Columbus Park are viewed less critically. If one handout for the City's buy-off attempt is to be criticized, then they all must be in the same equitable fashion. Construction mitigation takes many forms, and does not always mean simply looking after the neighbor next door. MOCA is no more complicit in the Mayors decision than you or I and should not be turned into a piece on the chess board for this fight. Why would we attack any recipient of construction mitigation measures when it is the proposed construction project we protest?

I am not interested in being a part of these attacks on MOCA or others for that matter. I believe it to be a distraction from the real cause and will have zero effect on the outcome of the project we are fighting against together. It only serves to further divide community members and is likely to shine a light on this group in a less than favorable manner, when in fact the efforts of this group to reframe the City's design for the Manhattan jail complex are worth every minute of everyone's time.

It is important for me to state where I stand in regards to seeing MOCA survive and thrive as well as to reinforce my commitment to help redefine the City's plans for BBJ and Rikers Island. I do not believe they are incompatible efforts. However, I will leave it up to you to decide whether or not you think it is inappropriate from me to continue working on both of these initiatives under the present circumstances. Please understand, if it is, then my professional commitment to MOCA must come first.

Regards,

Bill Bialosky