

COMMUNITY BOARD 1 – MANHATTAN  
RESOLUTION

DATE: MAY 22, 2021

COMMITTEE OF ORIGIN: EXECUTIVE

COMMITTEE VOTE: 0 In Favor 0 Opposed 0 Abstained 0 Recused  
PUBLIC VOTE: 0 In Favor 0 Opposed 0 Abstained 0 Recused  
BOARD VOTE: 0 In Favor 0 Opposed 0 Abstained 0 Recused

RE: Borough Based Jails/Manhattan Detention Complex

WHEREAS: Community Board 1 (CB1) voted unanimously (with one recusal) to disapprove the Borough Based Jail (BBJ) Plan and Manhattan Detention Complex (MDC) Complex application during the ULURP review on May 28, 2019 (resolution attached); and

WHEREAS: CB1 calls for an immediate pause on funding and work on the proposed demolition of the existing MDC at 124 and 125 White Street, and a pause on funding and work on the Design Build plans to construct an approximately 1.27 million gross sq ft , 295’ high tower for a new jail at this site; and

WHEREAS: The Lower Manhattan community has long accepted the location of the Manhattan Detention Complex, a city jail and the Metropolitan Correctional Center, a federal prison in the heart of our Civic Center/Chinatown neighborhood. This call for an immediate pause is not born from a NIMBY position, but rather a call for reason to allow time for the new administration to review the proposal in light of new developments and missing information before the City moves forward on the highly consequential BBJ plan; and

WHEREAS: CB1 strongly believes the portion of the 11 billion dollar BBJ budget earmarked for the demolition of the existing MDC and the construction of a new 30 story jail in Lower Manhattan is egregiously wasteful and is in fundamental contradiction to the Lippman Commission’s report advocating for smaller and more humane buildings for detainees in four of the five boroughs; and

WHEREAS: CB1 urges our new Mayor, Eric Adams, to consider alternatives that assure that a large part of this 11 billion BBJ jail budget be spent on critically needed mental health services, job training, after school programs and affordable housing in Lower Manhattan that are closely aligned with the new administration’s commitment to social justice reform and environmental sustainability; and

WHEREAS: CB1 continues to strongly oppose the demolition (now imminent) of the north tower of the New York Criminal Court (The “Tombs”), a building identified as eligible for landmark designation by the NYC Landmark Preservation Commission. CB1 urges that any and all alternatives to preserve and renovate the tower be carefully reviewed with robust community engagement prior to allowing for its demolition; and

WHEREAS: There has been woefully insufficient public engagement on this proposal with many questions that have been left unanswered, and requests for information unfulfilled. Certain requests for information pertaining to BBJ contracts and RFPs have needed to be subject to FOIL requests, and there have also been discrepancies and inaccuracies in certain presentations and exchanges; and

WHEREAS: To date, almost none of the ULURP recommendations put forth by former Manhattan Borough President Gale Brewer in July 2019 (link to doc) have been met, including promised monthly multi-lingual meetings with the community; requests for review of any schematic plans of the new jail; review of alternatives showing potential adaptive re-use of the existing MDC; alternatives showing the safeguarding of the north tower of the landmark eligible Criminal Court building; the review of using city and federally owned buildings near the existing MDC (such as 137 Centre St. and 2 Howard St.) to fulfill any of the jail's current programming requirements; and

WHEREAS: On December 31, 2021, an article was published in the New York Times titled 'Behind the Violence at Rikers, Decades of Mismanagement and Dysfunction' which detailed the rampant corruption, dysfunction and management at the Rikers Island correctional facility. CB1 is extremely concerned about the prospect of spending billions of dollars on new correctional facilities, only to transplant existing Department of Corrections (DOC) culture into the new facilities. In the reconsideration of this plan, the City must incorporate plans for reform and training programs for DOC Correctional Officers as well as judiciary and other reforms that will reduce the numbers of detainees and their incarceration time, before the BBJ plan is finalized and implemented; and

WHEREAS: To date, no design review has been done reflecting any new vision of incarceration, nor sufficient plans developed on how to protect the community from the substantial adverse impacts that are confirmed in the EIS and recent environmental probe reports; now

THEREFORE  
BE IT  
RESOLVED

THAT: CB1 urges Mayor Eric Adams to take immediate action to put the proposed demolition of the MDC and the proposed construction of a 30 story jail at 124-125 White Street on pause. Given that the City remains in the throes of this historic pandemic, it is essential to allow time for City officials and the public to further review the proposed BBJ proposal, estimated to cost NYC taxpayers 11 billion dollars, until the following is provided:

- Projected daily jail population analysis and evaluation of updated potential detainee population reduction.
- The City's "Fair Share" analysis is reviewed again to consider a more equitable spread to other facilities, including establishing a facility in the borough of Staten Island, reducing the need for an over-one facility in Manhattan.
- Alternative proposals requested by CB1 and CB3 in March 2019 which show the cost-benefit analysis of razing and replacing 124 White Street and renovating the north tower of the Criminal Court complex preserving its exterior ( a city-eligible

landmark), and an alternative showing the use of neighboring city or federal owned properties if additional space is confirmed to be required.

- Opportunity for community to review and provide input on specific building and site designs, complete demolition and construction mitigation plans and environmental impact mitigation plans.
- Updated traffic study which includes accurate current street conditions and impacts of congestion pricing.
- Plan of what occurs if after demolition, hazardous materials are found such that the site will be designated a Brownfield site.

And that the following promised documents are provided to CB1 immediately:

- Original RFP
- Pre-Construction Plan
- Environmental Remedial Action Plan, including specifics on how asbestos and lead abatement will be addressed, and a plan on how the underground 10,000 gallon diesel fuel tank will be removed and remediated
- Construction Health Plan
- Construction Waste Plan
- Evacuation plan in case of emergency and accident (as occurred when the crane fell on Worth Street in 2016)
- Demolition plan submission provided to the Department of Building, now pending approval
- Breakdown of capital costs of entire proposal (demolition and construction) in today's dollars, and cost of renovation of existing buildings (as compared to demolition and construction)