

Written Statement for 4/16 CB3 hearing

My name is Patricia Tsai and I am here to represent the Lin Sing Association.

As we have stated from the beginning, real prison reform involves reforming the people who manage prisons, not the concrete walls or land that house prisoners. Mere change of physical location is not the solution.

So why the sudden rush to erect skyscraper jails in congested city centers? The city's argument pivots on three components.

First, integration of detainees into local communities. City officials repeatedly cited the Lippman Commission's recommendation to dismantle Rikers and move to the city. The presumption is that integrating the incarcerated into local communities will help to rehabilitate them and reduce recidivism. But what they don't tell you is that the Lippman Commission recommends multiple SMALL jails which are intended to become part of the local community. The commission never called for mega surveillance structures which overshadow existing local buildings, overwhelm local housing and small businesses, and disrupt local traffic and way of life. How are detainees supposed to be integrated into local communities when the city creates pernicious conditions which pit one against the other from the very outset? IF YOU BUILD IT, THEY WILL FILL IT. THIS IS MASS INCARCERATION.

Second, access to the island. City officials repeatedly stated that being on Rikers makes family visits difficult. What they don't tell you is that the NYC Ferry route to Soundview (opened on August 15, 2018), which bypasses Rikers Island, is less than a ten minute ferry ride from 90th Street and the East River and less than a five minute ferry ride from Soundview, in The Bronx. Extending the NYC Ferry Soundview Route to Rikers Island would transform transportation access there. Ferry boats could make direct connections from existing docks in The Bronx and Manhattan, and transfers could be made from Queens and Brooklyn.

Third, the costs of shuttling detainees between Rikers and the courts. City representatives contend that there are considerable transportation costs to be saved by moving to city centers because courts are located there. What they don't tell you is that however considerable these transportation costs are, they will not in a million years amount to the \$11 billion price tag of the proposed projects.

We reject the spurious claim that criminal justice reform requires changing the physical location of detention centers at Rikers. Simply shuffling detainees around by replicating four Rikers in the city does no justice to the incarcerated because it creates a false appearance of improvements in their conditions while delaying urgent substantive reform.

As a proposal, city skyscraper jails are highly suspect in the manner in which the city rushed through SCOPING and EIS and consolidated separate developments in four boroughs into one single ULURP process, which effectively deprives the public of critical scrutiny over the plan's actual effectiveness and potential harm, as well as exploration of fiscally more responsible alternatives. It is **fiscally irresponsible** to spend \$11 billion on new jails when a small percentage of \$11 billion would be better spent actually reforming case processing, sentencing, bail, changing the laws, and strengthening diversion and preventative mental health programs across the city.

We urge CB3 members to hold the city accountable by demanding that the process be rolled back, specifically, restart SCOPING and EIS with full community engagement as well as accurate site address (not 80 Center Street as a stand-in for 125 White Street) and abide by the democratic principle of one review process per construction site. Thank you.

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