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**DE BLASIO ADMINISTRATION UNVEILS PLANS FOR BOROUGH-BASED JAILS
TO REPLACE FACILITIES ON RIKERS ISLAND**

*Modern facilities will be designed to be integrated into surrounding neighborhoods and
promote safety and support for the people who work and reside within them*



NEW YORK—The de Blasio administration today unveiled plans for the [building of four modern, community-based jails](#) throughout the City that will replace the detention facilities on Rikers Island. The innovative plan envisions facilities that will be fully integrated into the surrounding neighborhoods with community space, ground-floor retail and parking. The planned facilities will also provide a safer environment to work and will allow people in jail to remain closer to their loved ones, as well as offer quality health, education, visitation and recreational services that will help people reintegrate once they return to their communities.

“We’re taking a big step forward in the process of closing Rikers Island and creating a modern community-based jail system that is smaller, safer and fairer,” said **Mayor Bill de Blasio**. “Now we can move full steam ahead on the engagement and planning for our new facilities so we can close Rikers as fast as possible.”

“These new jails will enable this city to close Rikers Island, which I know will help make this city a better place. The new facilities are designed to be safer for both the people incarcerated as well as the staff. The next chapter of criminal justice in New York City is beginning, and I couldn’t be prouder,” said **City Council Speaker Corey Johnson**.

Mayor Bill de Blasio announced plans to close the jails on Rikers Island in 2017 and released a roadmap for a smaller, safer and fairer justice system. The roadmap included plans to safely reduce the jail population to 5,000 people and transition to a local borough-based jail system.

Progress on these strategies is underway with the partnership of New Yorkers, the City Council, the courts, district attorneys, defenders, service providers, and others within the justice system. When New York City released its roadmap in June 2017, the City’s jails held an average of 9,400 people on any given day. One year later, the jail population has dropped by almost 13 percent to around 8,200, the lowest level in more than three decades.

The sites under consideration are:

- Bronx Site—320 Concord Avenue
- Brooklyn Site—275 Atlantic Avenue
- Manhattan Site—80 Centre Street
- Queens Site—126-02 82nd Avenue

“Closing Rikers and moving into newer, community-based facilities comes down to one thing – and that’s safety,” said **DOC Commissioner Cynthia Brann**. “These new jails will have improved interior layouts allowing officers more effective ways to supervise people in detention, and also provide space for quality education, health, and therapeutic programming. As we move forward with this transition, I want the men and women who are currently working on Rikers Island to know that the safer, state-of-the-art facilities you deserve are on the way.”

Elizabeth Glazer, Director of the Mayor’s Office of Criminal Justice, said, “Our jails hold up a mirror to the fair functioning of our justice system. The release of today’s scoping study is another step forward on a path towards creating the safest and most humane justice system possible. It reflects a future that we have begun to sketch with many partners — New Yorkers,

non-profits, justice system agencies and others — one in which jails can be civic assets, integrated into and contributing to neighborhoods; where the people incarcerated have opportunities that will permit them to thrive and contribute when they leave; and the people who work inside have the physical environment that promotes their safety.”

Each facility will contain approximately 1,500 beds in order for the City to meet the needed 6,000 beds to accommodate an average daily population of 5,000 people, while allowing space for population-specific housing requirements, such as those related to safety, security, health, and mental health, among other factors, as well as normal fluctuations in the jail population. Currently, existing borough-based facilities only have the combined operational capacity to house approximately 2,400 people.

The plans feature hundreds of parking spaces, community space and ground-floor retail as well as on-site support services. The proposal for the Bronx envisions rezoning the western portion of the site to facilitate the development of a residential building with potentially more than 200-units and ground floor retail.

The proposal will need to go through a public review – the Uniform Land Use Review Procedure (ULURP) – which includes hearings and recommendations by the local community board, borough president, the City Council and the City Planning Commission.

The Administration and its partners are also beginning a comprehensive engagement strategy that will go beyond what is required as part of public review of these discretionary actions. At the core of the City’s strategy will be neighborhood advisory bodies with local elected and neighborhood leaders to provide feedback on design, program, neighborhood integration and tackle a range of quality of life concerns within the neighborhoods where these sites will be located.

To date, the City has held meetings with community groups and local elected officials and conducted focus groups with correctional officers, service providers, defenders, educators, formally detained people and families of justice-involved people, among others. Engagement with the community in the weeks and months ahead will ramp up.

In February, the Mayor and the Speaker of the City Council agreed to consolidate the proposal to renovate or construct jails in Manhattan, Brooklyn, Queens and the Bronx into a single ULURP process, which will allow for a more expedited review. An application will be submitted for certification by the end of the year.

The Administration has launched an array of programs that are safely driving down the jail population, including a citywide alternative-to-bail program that allows eligible people to remain in the community while waiting for trial and a program that replaces short jail sentences for minor, low-level offenses (typically under 30 days) with services aimed at preventing reoffending. In addition, the Administration announced that every eligible person in the Department of Correction’s custody will receive re-entry services to help connect them with jobs and opportunities outside of jail, as well as be offered up to five hours of programming per day to address vocational, educational, and therapeutic needs.



“By leading the movement to close Riker's Island for good, our City is setting a roadmap for comprehensive criminal justice reform through the creation of a borough-based system that will be more safe, humane and integrated with the surrounding community, and I commend Mayor De Blasio, Speakers Johnson and Mark-Viverito and all the advocacy groups for their tireless work to reach this moment,” said **Council Member Margaret S. Chin**. “This announcement presents an opportunity for neighborhoods in Lower Manhattan to be part of this critical criminal justice conversation, while addressing longstanding needs regarding safety, quality of life, traffic and parking. I thank our local stakeholders who have weighed in on this proposal, and will continue to fight to make sure the community’s voices are heard in this process.”

“Closing Rikers Island and opening community based facilities is not only beneficial for New York City’s corrections officers and incarcerated population, but also beneficial for the Kew Gardens community,” said **Council Member Karen Koslowitz**. “The new facility in Kew Gardens will bring significant economic development, and provide hundreds of new parking spaces for the community. I look forward to taking the next steps in opening community based facilities.”

“Rikers must close,” said **Council Member Stephen Levin**. “It has fallen short on safety, severs familial and social ties, and its outdated design and remote location work against our commitment to justice and fairness for all New Yorkers. We have an opportunity to create more just, better integrated, and safer facilities close to courts, community services, and transportation.

I look forward to robust engagement with the Administration and the community to reimagine 21st century facilities in Downtown Brooklyn.”

“I am a firm believer in closing Rikers Island, as the jail’s current conditions are neither safe nor conducive for detainees and staff. Creating a humane, innovative environment where detainees will be in close proximity to their loved ones and have access to educational, recreational, and health services will drastically change our City’s approach to detention and reduce recidivism,” said **Council Member Diana Ayala**. “With that said, I am cognizant of my community’s concerns regarding the proposed Bronx site. I am committed to launching a robust engagement plan that will target both residents and community-based organizations to ensure all of their voices are being heard throughout the input process.”

“This is a significant step forward as we work toward the closure of Riker’s Island. Modern, community-based jails will be safer, more rehabilitative, and built on the needs of those staying and working there. I look forward to working with my colleagues in the Council, the Mayor, and advocacy groups to ensure these plans are executed responsibly, safely, and with community feedback in mind,” said **Council Member Keith Powers, chair of the Committee on Criminal Justice**.

“Closing Rikers Island and moving to a Borough-based jail system as soon as possible is a necessity for New Yorkers awaiting trial and their families who have suffered through the trek to a facility that is out of sight and out of mind,” said Council Member Donovan Richards, Chair of the Committee on Public Safety. “The conditions at Rikers are inhumane and inconvenient for everyone involved, creating a dangerous culture that has failed for far too long to help detainees integrate back into society. I look forward to working with the NYPD, the Mayor’s office, criminal justice advocates and my colleagues in the City Council to reduce the population at Rikers and move this process along sooner rather than later. I’d like to thank Mayor de Blasio and Speaker Johnson for their commitment to this plan as well as all the members of the Lippmann Commission for their dedication and advocacy,” said **Council Member Donovan Richards, Chair of the Committee on Public Safety**.

“Closing Rikers is an important step in a complex series of reforms needed to create a more just criminal justice system that does not penalize race or poverty,” said **Council Member Ydanis Rodriguez, Co-Chair of the Black, Latino, and Asian Caucus**. “This is a process of which every New Yorker should be a part as it is for the benefit of every one of us. We are on the path to building a stronger, fairer, and more equitable city.”

Former chief judge of counsel at Latham & Watkins LLP, and Chair of the [Independent Commission](#) Jonathan Lippman said, “Today’s announcement of plans for modern and more humane borough jails is an important step towards the closure of Rikers Island. Though preliminary, these plans show a real commitment to providing safety and dignity to those who work in City jails, those who are detained, and those who are visiting loved ones behind bars. These plans also demonstrate a commitment by the City to continue reducing the number of people we incarcerate. In the weeks and months ahead, New Yorkers will have the opportunity to voice their concerns, ask questions, and provide feedback, which will be vital to developing facilities that benefit people both inside and outside of them. Through this process, we can

transform our criminal justice system to better reflect our City's values of fairness, dignity, and safety for all."

"This marks yet another concrete and highly significant step toward what was just a few years ago unimaginable - the closure of Rikers Island. While not perfect, the city's plans should be welcomed by anyone who is serious about a smaller, more humane and more fair justice system in New York," said Nicholas Turner, President of the Vera Institute of Justice. "There is sure to be a lot of debate in the coming months, as is always the case with blood sport of land use review. In the midst of it, it behooves us to remember our goals: to shrink the incarceration to levels not seen in decades and to create new facilities where people can be held with the least harm, and close to family, community and their lawyer," said **Nick Turner, President of the Vera Institute of Justice.**

"We are encouraged that the City continues to advance their plan to replace Rikers Island with safer, smaller, more modern, and more person-centered approaches to detention and incarceration. People do better when they are closer to their families and have easy access to child-friendly visiting spaces, as well as normative living, learning, working, and treatment environments. As the City continues the critical work to support and expand alternatives to sending people to and keeping them in jail, community-based facilities- smaller units that emphasize access to natural light and green space, and programming that addresses the needs of the whole person - are a tremendous step forward, not only for those incarcerated but for those who work inside. The City has the great opportunity to apply this forward thinking to the current jail facilities, improving living and working conditions for people inside now as Rikers moves forward toward closing, as well as in the future facilities," said **Susan Gottesfeld, Executive Vice President and Chief Program Officer for the Osborne Association.** "Environments and policies that allow people to maintain or build healthy support networks and gain access to resources and services are critical to folks successfully returning home, staying home, and thriving."

"The prospect of closing the obsolete and infamous jails on Rikers Island and transitioning to a modern and humane community justice model represents one of the biggest criminal justice reform initiatives in recent memory. The initial plans released by the City today of state-of-the-art facilities in four of our boroughs are a critical step in this process. There is much work to be done in the months and years ahead, including engaging local residents around the design process and continuing to enact reforms that will further reduce our jail population. Yet, today's announcement is another indication that a reimagined local justice system is well within reach," said **Michael Jacobson, Executive Director of CUNY Institute for State and Local Governance.**

"The City of New York is an international leader in criminal justice reform for a reason. Building on an impressive track record of reducing both crime and incarceration, this plan for borough-based jail facilities is another major step forward. Once enacted, it will create what many reformers have long sought: a jail system that is lean, modern, and treats each individual with dignity and respect," said **Greg Berman, Director, Center for Court Innovation.**

"Creating a space conducive to reform is long overdue. Closing Rikers is imperative! It's time for true reform in our jail and justice system. This is just the beginning! I believe that we are on the right track. The intentional use of evidence based programming, enhance training, alternatives to incarceration along with the necessary resources can help us move from a mindset of continued criminalization to one of Restoration," said **Sharon Ife Charles, Director Anti-Violence Programs Center for Court Innovation.**

Stanley Richards, Executive Vice President of the Fortune Society, said "Today's technical briefing about the closure of Rikers Island is a significant forward step toward creating a smaller, fairer and safer system of justice. As a member of the Lippman Commission, I am grateful that the de Blasio administration accepted our recommendation and created a road map and concrete plan to Close Rikers Island. And, as a formerly incarcerated man, I am gratified to see the progress to date, but note that this effort requires our continued collective commitment, focus and willingness to push for the absolute closure of Rikers Island."

"As President of the Caribbean American Chamber of Commerce and Industry, I support Mayor de Blasio's efforts to address the longstanding and challenging issue related to prison reform, especially for those who are awaiting trial. We view the Mayor's actions as an important step in the right direction toward developing and implementing a more comprehensive plan as is proposed which includes reintegration into the surrounding neighborhoods where the majority of prisoners reside," said **Dr. Roy A. Hastick, Sr., President and Founder Caribbean American Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Inc., (CACCI).**

"I am in full support of closing Rikers. It is monumental that the communities that have been so deeply impacted by the incarceration of its citizens, can provide input into having a more rehabilitative and humane approach towards holistic behavioral change," said **Tiffany Murray, Program Manager for SOS Bed-Stuy.**

"Closing Rikers Island is the right thing to do and ensuring that the local detention centers are of the highest quality to properly reform inmates must be a top priority," said **Wayne Devonish, 500 Men Making A Difference.**

"We applaud our Mayor on closing Rikers Island. We must uphold our constitutional values, justice delayed is justice denied. This morally driven initiative is the first step of many towards providing justice in our great city," said **Mohammad Razvi, CEO, Council Of Peoples Organization.**

"The Mayor's plan is a step in the right direction. Making sure that the new facilities will have the proper oversight is important so that we won't have to deal with the same issues Rikers encountered," said **Rev Kevin McCall, National Action Network.**

"This is a terrific plan. I look forward to a good discussion and dialogue about its merits. The plan is clearly in the right direction and will profit from wide circulation," said **Herb Sturz, Center for New York City Neighborhoods, Board Chair.**

“It is important to treat violence as a public health issue and to create facilities that help people heal and transform. LIFE Camp, Inc. supports the Mayor in the closing of Rikers jails. Additionally, we believe supporting programs like the NYC Crisis Management System will help prevent individuals from entering the prison system all together. Thank you Mayor de Blasio for not only closing Rikers but for believing and supporting the NYC Crisis Management System,” said **Erica Ford, CEO and Founder of LIFE Camp, Inc.**

“We have to attack violence at its Roots and Rikers is the root that needs to be pulled. Pre-trial detainees should receive supporting programming in environments set up to rehabilitate not further traumatize. It’s been time to close Rikers chapter of NYC history and address the issues differently. The main step is to close Rikers. The next step of implementing borough based detention facilities is a good start we can support while we all continue to work to eradicate Mass Incarceration. It’s not about how many people a jail can hold, it’s about how many people we can keep from going to jail,” said **Shanduke Mcphatter, CEO/Founder, Gangstas Making Astronomical Community Changes Inc (G-MACC Inc).**

“I completely agree that Rikers needs to close! We need the Mayor’s borough based plan. This plan is taking in consideration not only the needs of the detainees but the entire community. I wish more people were like the Mayor and provided fresh new ideas. Thank you Mayor de Blasio this type of plan is truly needed,” said **Cynthia Simpson, President of the Marcy Houses Resident Green Committee.**

“Bravo! Finally, we have a Mayor with some heart to take on the tough issues! The cry to close Rikers is what past Administrations have ignored. The need to close Rikers is obvious but who had the courage? This current Mayor that’s who! He is closing Rikers Island and building new borough based jails that will better serve all involved. It so simple, it’s genius!” said **Leora Keith, President of Tompkins Houses Resident Association.**

“I am supporting Mayor Bill de Blasio in his plan to close Rikers Island. I thank him for putting forth a plan that includes building new state of the art facilities. These facilities that he is building throughout the boroughs will benefit the employees, volunteers, visitors and inmates who occupy Rikers Island facilities. Much appreciation to the Mayor,” said **Vanessa Y. Gumbs, TA President of 303 Vernon NYCHA Houses.**

“The sensible alternative to Rikers Island is to build smaller technologically advanced facilities which will be much easier to manage and keep everyone safe and keep the cost down. It is a win-win for New Yorkers,” said **Dr. Jahangir Kabir, Community Organizer in East New York.**

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