



Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice

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August 9, 2019

Marisa Lago, Chair
City Planning Commission
120 Broadway
New York, NY 10271

RE: Community Engagement and Design

Dear Chair Lago:

Thank you for inviting the applicant team¹ for the proposed New York City Borough-Based Jails System to testify at the City Planning Commission's public hearing on July 10, 2019. We are writing with follow-up information requested by the Commissioners and the Department of City Planning during and after the hearing.

What has been the design and the design outreach process to date and what will be the process for design and design outreach moving forward?

In the ULURP application for the borough-based jails system, the City is seeking approval for maximum envelopes for the four proposed facilities. To determine these envelopes, the City is undertaking an extensive master planning process to determine the space program and conceptual designs for the facilities that will eventually fit within these maximum envelopes. The conceptual designs for each facility illustrate how each of the program components could fit together (i.e., intake, visitation, DOC offices, housing units, etc. considering necessary operation adjacencies) within the defined parameters of the ULURP Applications, but does not represent the final building design. The master planning team² has created conceptual designs for the four proposed facilities that will continue to be revised to reflect modifications to the proposed plan and ULURP application made throughout the ULURP process. The master planning and conceptual design process, however, is not being done in a vacuum. From the moment the City issued "*Smaller, Safer, Fairer: A Roadmap to Closing Rikers Island*" ("Roadmap"), the City has

¹ The applicant team includes the Department of Correction (DOC); Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice (MOCJ); Department of Housing, Preservation and Development (HPD); and Department of Citywide Administrative Services (DCAS).

² The master plan team includes the Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice (MOCJ), Department of Correction (DOC), Correctional Health Services (CHS), Office of Management and Budget (OMB) and Department of Design and Construction (DDC) in addition to Perkins Eastman and their sub-consultants: Ricci Greene Architects, PC; Voorhis/ Roberston Justice Services LLC; WSP Parsons Brinkerhoff; Collado Engineering; Silman; Karen Karp & Partners; Professional Systems Engineering, LLC; W-Architecture & Landscape Architecture; Mueser Rutledge; Lerch Bates; Ove ARUP & Partners P.C.; Matrix New World Engineering; Philip Habib & Associates; AKRF; Atelier Ten; Ellana Inc. Construction Consultants; HR&A; Fitzgerald & Halliday, Inc.; The Osborne Association; Joseph Neto & Associates; and Marino.



undertaken a robust community engagement effort, which is ongoing and will continue throughout the design and construction of the proposed borough-based jails system.

Community Engagement Overview

Since the City issued its Roadmap to close the jails on Rikers Island in June 2017 and the start of the master planning process in January 2018, the applicant team has followed a coordinated and purposeful engagement plan involving three parallel tracks.

- The first track is the Justice Implementation Task Force (JITF), which informed the master planning team’s approach and formed the broad-based recommendations about design principles that were part of a much larger process that has informed the proposed jail facilities.
- The second track involved focus groups of stakeholder and program user groups, including formerly incarcerated people, families, visitors, service providers and staff, which informed the programming. Feedback from these groups helped guide key decisions such as the creation of a dedicated women’s facility, the nature and quantity of space for service providers, as well as the best integration of technology into the facilities.
- The third track focused on direct engagement with neighborhood residents. The applicant team worked closely with the Mayor’s Community Affairs Unit and in consultation with the local elected official to convene and meet with Neighborhood Advisory Committees (NACs) that consisted of community leaders tasked with developing recommendations regarding the facilities and surrounding community needs. Neighborhood outreach was critical in developing urban design and programming considerations for each site, including programming for the community spaces, planning principles for White Street in Manhattan, location of the community space in the Bronx and transport concerns on State Street in Brooklyn.

Justice Implementation Task Force (JITF)

In June 2017, the City announced the Roadmap to closing the jails on Rikers Island that relies on three key strategies: (1) reducing the jail population, (2) improving the culture inside City jails by increasing support for corrections officers and everyone in the City’s custody, and (3) building a smaller borough-based jails system with humane facilities for those who live and work in them. To help guide this process, the City convened the JITF which represents 75 organizations inside and outside of City government.³ Within the JITF, three working groups were formed to carry out each of the three strategies detailed above: the Jail Population Reduction Working Group, Culture Change Working Group, and Design Working Group. All three strategies, guided by the Working Groups, have advanced significantly in the two years since issuing the Roadmap to close the jails on Rikers Island.

³ The membership list is available on the project [website: https://rikers.cityofnewyork.us/implementation-task-force/](https://rikers.cityofnewyork.us/implementation-task-force/).



Notably, the Design Working Group brought together architects, designers, environmental psychologists and other design experts with knowledge of the criminal justice system to review conceptual plans. A subcommittee of the Design Working Group⁴ produced the Guiding Principles on Design (“Principles”) and briefed the master planning team on the Principles. This document has informed the master planning and conceptual designs as detailed below. The Design Working Group continues to meet and provide feedback on plans as they develop and will continue in this role following ULURP and through the duration of the term of the Design Working Group, which extends through 2021.

Focus Groups

Expanding on the work produced by the JTF Design Working Group, the Perkins Eastman and City teams conducted 13 focus groups with more than 100 participants and over 40 different organizations that included staff, daily service providers, occasional service providers, previously incarcerated individuals, families of incarcerated individuals, defense attorneys and advocates, Department of Correction (DOC) staff, educators, and healthcare professionals. The feedback from these focus groups informed both the program and conceptual design of the facilities.

For example, the City conducted numerous focus groups with previously incarcerated women, women in custody, staff and service providers to determine if women should be housed throughout the four facilities or centralized in one facility. Based on the feedback heard throughout the process, the City changed its original plans and decided to centralize women in one facility. Housing women in a centralized location allows for dedicated intake, visiting, and programming space, which focus group participants emphasized as critically important.

The master plan team conducted site visits beyond the City’s detention system to see other examples of positive and negative design interventions. The site visits to Bedford Hills and Sing Sing presented a positive example of how to better provide spaces for children visiting loved ones in detention. Both of these facilities had designated play areas with tables, chairs, games, book, and activities to help foster positive visiting experiences for both children and parents.

Neighborhood Advisory Committees (NACs)

During public engagement in the summer and early fall of 2018, a key theme emerged: a request for more community engagement. As a result, the City established an NAC in each borough to increase transparency around the City’s work and to provide a formal and regular forum to address the issues of concern in each neighborhood. Over the course of approximately six months, the City met with each of the NACs five to seven times.

Each NAC is comprised of local community leaders. The purpose of the NACs is to provide the master planning team with a better understanding of each community’s concerns, keep community leaders informed on the master planning process, and develop recommendations regarding the

⁴ The subcommittee that drafted the Guiding Principles on Design was composed of the following people: Kwan-Lamar Blount-Hill (Mayor’s Office of Criminal Justice - MOCJ), Margaret Castillo (Department of Design and Construction - DDC), Ifeoma Ebo (MOCJ), Dan Gallagher (NADAAA Architecture and Design Firm), Quilian Riano (DDC), Rosalie Genevro (Architectural League), Purnima Kapur (Department of City Planning *ex officio*), Jessica Lax (Van Alen Institute), Feniosky Pena-Mora (Columbia University and former DDC Commissioner), Stanley Richards (The Fortune Society), David Van der Leer (Van Alen Institute), and Patricia Yang (Correctional Health Services).



facilities and surrounding community needs called “NAC Guidelines and Principles.” The NAC meeting materials and final Guidelines and Principles are publicly available online⁵ and have been provided to Community Boards, Borough Presidents, the City Planning Commission and City Council.

Conversations within each of the NAC and the development of the NAC Guidelines and Principles resulted in important changes to the master planning process in each borough. Across all communities, height and bulk were major concerns and therefore the master plan team has worked to reduce the size of the buildings. The team lowered the height of each facility by a minimum of 30’ between the scoping meetings and certification and is continuing to study how to reduce the building size.

Master Plan Process

This project aims to close the jails on Rikers Island, which are currently the central point of operation and distribution for supplying and supporting jail facilities throughout the city, and replace them with four Borough-Based Jails. An endeavor of this magnitude and complexity, which affects several communities, organizations, and city agencies, necessitates a comprehensive investigation and analysis of the issues and systems involved. Additionally, a review of existing conditions and an understanding of the surrounding context in these four communities are critical to understanding the potential impacts of the proposed changes. Lastly, the community engagement aspect of the Master Plan supports this effort by conveying the needs and wishes of the local communities, with a focus on neighborhood integration and a fair share analysis. While not specifically required under ULURP or regulatory processes, the Master Plan is helpful for a project like the Borough-Based Jails System. The role of the Master Plan is to ensure the successful implementation of this Borough-Based Jails System while providing a justifiable, feasible concept for the phases following the approvals process.

In January of 2018, a consultant team led by Perkins Eastman and jointly managed by the Mayor’s Office of Criminal Justice (MOCJ), the Department of Correction (DOC) and the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) began the work of defining the space needs of a jail program that would fulfill the Administration’s vision of how the buildings’ design would support and further the significant criminal justice reforms underway, while also benefitting the neighborhoods around each building.

Upon completion, the Master Plan will consist of a space program and conceptual designs for the proposed facilities. In generating the space programming reports (summaries of the space program), the consultant team has reviewed a variety of previously developed documents that expressed the goals of the Close Rikers initiative (i.e. the JITF Design Working Group’s Guiding Principles on Design); evaluated data pertinent to the jail population; and held a number of meetings and interviews with key DOC staff members focused on soliciting input, as well as held intensive team meetings dedicated to developing the program and meetings with other city agencies and peer reviewers.

⁵ <https://rikers.cityofnewyork.us/nyc-borough-based-jails/nac-meeting-materials/>



These activities have given the consultant team a substantial understanding of operational and functional needs, including: flow through a typical facility for visitors, staff, and detainees; optimal functional adjacencies; space needs for detainee services such as medical/mental health, education and programs, and food services; as well as housing unit size, composition and support space allocation.

The space program has been developed into conceptual designs that show viable proposed buildings given the program and site constraints. The conceptual designs developed to date by the consultant team are illustrated with plan diagrams, vertical stacking sections and potential façade strategies. These diagrams are developed to a conceptual level, including preliminary dimensional and building systems coordination. The intent of conceptual designs is to present an optimal direction for each site: developed at a conceptual design level sufficient to fully define the major characteristics of the local challenges and opportunities. With this information and assuming ULURP Approval, the City can proceed to the design phase of the project with confidence that the program goals are achievable within the parameters defined by the City and with regard to community concerns.

Both the program and conceptual designs reflect a year and a half of extensive planning and design work resulting in the proposed building concepts, including floorplan layouts, building system layouts, vertical transportation systems, floorplans for various programming, ground floor layouts, entrance/exits, food service operations, building maintenance, sustainability and landscape integration, among other elements. The final Master Plan will incorporate any further program changes as well as changes to the building shape and size made during ULURP.

As described in detail below, the space program and conceptual designs were directly influenced by the Guiding Principles on Design and the NAC Guidelines and Principles, in addition to feedback from community members, City agencies, and other stakeholders.

Guiding Principles on Design

- *Strengthen Community and Family* – Each facility is located close to mass-transit to facilitate connections to courts, attorneys, families, medical and mental healthcare, service providers, community-based organizations, and volunteers. The new facilities will provide a welcoming lobby environment with public-facing community space, comfortable visiting space that allows for a diversity of types of visits, including in-person, video, child play, and outdoor visiting spaces.
- *Create Engaging Civic Asset* - The plan envisions transparent, generously scaled entrances, with high-quality building materials that reflect continuity with the surrounding neighborhood context. The plans provide for public-facing community space that can be used for community determined programming, including street-level retail space.
- *Ease and Broaden Access to Resources* - Every housing unit is designed to allow most daily activities to occur within the housing unit. The proposed program includes sufficient space for effective and tailored programming, appropriate housing for those with medical, behavioral and mental health needs, and opportunity for a more stable reentry into the community, as detailed in the July 26th 2019 letter from the applicant team to the City



Planning Commission. In addition, every housing unit will have direct access to outdoor recreation space. Contact visits, religious services, and special centralized program participation will occur in centralized spaces throughout the facilities.

- *Promote Safety and Security* - The new borough-based facilities would be designed with more manageable housing units, allowing officers to supervise people effectively in detention as a result of the improved direct-supervision floor plans. This evidence based operating model provides greater safety, access to services, and a humane environment of calm and order. Fundamental to the delivery of these services is an innovative configuration of building systems including elevators, door access control, alarms, monitoring, and technology. The systems and services must be robust, reliable, and with suitable redundancy to allow operations to proceed during routine maintenance and unexpected service interruptions.
- *Design Dignified Environments that Reflect Community Living* - The proposed program includes a variety of housing unit typologies to create community living based upon the needs of the populations. For both general population and therapeutic housing units, there will be dorms and single-celled units, both of which will have large dayrooms and robust on-unit programming space. The housing cluster will be a group of three to four housing units where certain spaces, including additional programming and medical spaces, will be centralized.
- *Support Physical Health and Mental Well-Being* - Health services, outdoor recreation space and access to natural light will be available on the housing unit and more intensive care will be provided in the building infirmary. The majority of mental, physical and behavioral health issues will be treated in the housing unit or in borough-based medical clinics. The intake process to the jail facilities is done in conjunction with Correctional Health Services to ensure the unique needs of individuals are met in regard to physical and mental health services.
- *Offer Empowering Choices* – The housing units include robust programming space to allow for direct access to programming, outdoor recreation and medical spaces throughout the day and the opportunity for people to seek the services they require. In addition to programming on the housing unit, there are centralized spaces in the building for contact visits, religious services, special programming, as well as a gymnasium.
- *Foster Safe and Positive Social Interactions* – The modern and safe housing units will augment access to and effectiveness of programs and services. The direct supervision model provides more opportunity for staff to positively engage with people who are detained, strengthening supervisory relationships. All housing units are all designed and oriented for abundant natural light.

NAC Recommendations

The NAC's offered a number of substantive recommendations on the four proposed sites centered on recommendations on urban design and integration of the facilities within the neighborhoods,



the use of community space within the sites, and other neighborhood concerns and recommended investments. While the City continues to review and consider all NAC recommendations both within the ULURP process and through the duration of facility design, a selection of key recommendations is outlined below that the City has already responded to.

- In Brooklyn, the NAC requested that the NYPD transfers of people under arrest to court for arraignment not be conducted in public at the street level. The proposed program has incorporated an NYPD transfer area within the below-grade parking structure. The NAC suggested programming of the ground level community space for community non-profits, rather than traditional commercial retail, and the City has committed to further engagement to determine what specific services and programs are located within that space.
- In the Bronx, the NAC requested moving the staff garage entrance from 141st Street to the proposed service alley has been incorporated into the proposed plan, thus providing continuous active frontage along 141st Street. There were also major concerns about parking and this resulted in the incorporation of DOC staff parking below-grade.
- In Manhattan, the NAC asked the City to maintain pedestrian access on White Street and requested the frontage on both sides of White Street be dedicated to community uses. The proposed program has incorporated the White Street pedestrian arcade lined with community-determined uses. Additionally, the NAC requested the staff parking garage entry be moved to Centre Street. The Master Plan analyzed the feasibility of the parking garage entry and determined it was not feasible based upon its proximity to adjacent intersections and the regulations on wide street curb cuts.
- In Queens, the NAC asked for more parking and to keep staff from parking in the surrounding neighborhoods. The Master Plan proposed a new public parking garage with 676 spaces, more than 150 spaces than currently exist. The Master Plan incorporates below-grade parking garage to accommodate all staff. The NAC requested the removal of the Specialized Medical Annex from the proposed facility. The proposed program was amended to remove the Specialized Medical Annex from the Queens site.

Other Engagement

The City has also briefed – and solicited feedback from – numerous community-based and advocacy organizations, such as youth groups, criminal justice advocacy organizations, architecture organizations, tenant associations, and business improvement districts on the plans to close the jails on Rikers Island. The City is committed to continuing to meet with community-based organizations on their priority issues, and has been conducting ongoing meetings and focus groups with advocacy organizations, service providers, formerly incarcerated individuals and their families.

The City worked with community leaders to identify the desired methods of engagement, and the following approaches to community engagement reflect the wishes expressed in each borough. For example, community leaders in Brooklyn were eager to tour existing DOC facilities to understand areas of improvement.



- In Manhattan, Brooklyn, and Queens, the Mayor held a roundtable meeting with the community leaders of the neighborhoods in which the proposed sites are located.
- Regular meetings were held with community leaders to brief them on the work that had been completed to date, including initial plans for their respective sites, discussion of the areas of impact that would be evaluated, and discussion of the ULURP and environmental review processes that would follow those meetings.
- Brochures describing the proposed project were published and distributed at public meetings. The brochures translated into languages used by the community members, including Spanish, Simplified Chinese, Urdu, Haitian Creole, Korean, and Vietnamese.
- Local-area newspapers, including non-English media were invited to a press conference intended to further ensure that as much of the public as possible would be aware of the proposed project.
- Tours of existing detention facilities were conducted with community leaders to discuss existing conditions and proposed improvements.
- Meetings were held with community boards in affected areas.
- A town hall was held in Chinatown.

The City team is also working on a robust City agency and community engagement plan, including with the Department of City Planning and the City Planning Commission, to detail the post-ULURP design process. We will share more information on this and the role of the Public Design Commission (PDC), which will be reviewing all four facilities during the design-build process, in advance of the August 26, 2019 review session.

Thank you for your attention to this application.

Sincerely,

Liz Glazer, Director
Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice

Cynthia Brann, Commissioner
NYC Department of Correction