

# **Community Preservation Coalition - Position Statement**

## **March 12, 2019**

### **THEME 1: SITE LOCATION & PROPOSED PROGRAM**

- **The Community Preservation Coalition (CPC)<sup>1</sup> is fundamentally opposed to the proposed site for a Queens borough-based jail. Kew Gardens, Briarwood, and Forest Hills—the communities that will be affected—are residential communities that are inappropriate for such an institution, particularly in light of the recommendations of the Lippman Commission Report. Not only does the Commission state that jails should not be in residential communities, but the chosen Kew Gardens jail site is within two blocks of two elementary public school buildings, one K-2, the other 3-6 grades, as well as close to the District 28 Pre-K school.**
  
- **The CPC demands that other locations in Queens be evaluated as potential sites, an evaluation the City totally failed to perform despite the recommendations of the Lippman Commission that there be early investigation of potential sites, contacts with the local communities being considered, and despite the obligation to do so under the \$7.6 million contract the City awarded to Perkins Eastman. A “policy” decision by the Mayor is not a substitute for facts.**
  
- **The Lippman Commission outlines that jails would be vital community centers bringing much needed services to under served constituencies. That is NOT what would occur given the existing proposal. Rather, such a jail will mean the destruction of historic New York City communities.**
  
- **Renovating or building anew, all or part, of Rikers Island has not been evaluated. Even as part of the existing plan, a short-term jail will be built on the Island to house inmates as the Brooklyn jail is being erected—only to be torn down again once the new jails exist. Interests other than criminal justice reform are driving the push away from Rikers. BEFORE construction starts on borough-based jails, the Holden Bill proposing an evaluation of the feasibility and cost of a modern Rikers should be moved out of committee, passed, and funded. In conjunction with this, we support moving State criminal court facilities close to Rikers Island and improving the transportation system to Rikers Island for visitors and workers.**

### **THEME 2: CRIMINAL JUSTICE REFORM**

- **Criminal justice reform and the closing of Rikers Island are two distinct issues.**

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<sup>1</sup> <sup>1</sup> Comprised of residents of Kew Gardens, Briarwood and Forest Hills (105 82<sup>nd</sup> Road, Kew Gardens, NY 11415)

Despite the Mayor's attempts to yoke them together as inseparable, we believe you can have one without the other. Therefore, the following should be understood in the context that Rikers need not necessarily be closed, and the borough-based jail in the Kew Gardens/Briarwood/Forest Hills community should not be built.

- Also underlying our thinking is the understanding that criminal justice reform is a complex issue which requires transforming how we manage mental health care, how we treat drug addiction, and how we provide access to affordable housing and education. These are inextricably interrelated and, therefore, require a holistic approach to criminal justice reform:

- The CPC supports investing in education and educational opportunities to prevent young people from entering the criminal justice system in the first place. We believe that the tax payer cost of borough-based jails estimated between \$10.6 billion and \$30 billion would be better spent on education.

- The CPC supports State criminal justice legislative reforms that reduce case delays and safely lower the jail population. The CPC supports hiring more judges, district attorneys, public defense attorneys and court staff while also adding more courtroom facilities, in order to ensure speedy trials.

- The CPC supports reforming the criminal justice system.

- The CPC supports that any new jails should be designed to treat detainees in a humane manner.

- The CPC supports the City working with the State to reform the bail system and find other alternatives to housing people in jails.

- The CPC supports a City commitment and development of a multi year budget strategy covering the maintenance of any new facilities to ensure they will not be poorly operated in the future and deteriorate due to lack of maintenance such as what happened to NYCHA housing.

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### **THEME 3: PROCESS**

- The CPC maintains that using this borough based jail project as the City's design-build project is a mistake given the complexity of these facilities and the impact that they will have on the surrounding neighborhoods. The nature of Design Build is forcing the city to evaluate many of the critical issues to the community only once the ULURP certification process has begun.

- The CPC demands that the City halt the ULURP certification process given the lack of transparency and honesty about community outreach to date. On September 24, 2018,

the Mayor's office misled the City Planning Commission about community outreach efforts, when the Deputy Director of the Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice stated "**we have been engaged in a significant amount of community and neighborhood engagements . . . .We have been engaged in both open and closed community meetings.**" For Queens, this is totally untrue.

- In the **Daily News** of March 12, both Melinda Katz, the Queens Borough President and Ruben Diaz Jr. the Bronx Borough President. call for starting over - "the city has gone out of its way to not only diminish, but outright ignore community input into deciding these new jails. That is unacceptable. The administration must start the process over-- and close and replace Rikers the right way."
- In all the meetings held, after all the decisions had already been made, Mayoral representatives have basically side stepped the questions and concerns raised by the community since the September 26 scoping meeting. They present the plans via power points as a "fait accompli" only asking for our input on "window dressing" items. Kew Gardens is not alone in seeing what is happening to date as a total sham in blatant violation of the mandates by the Lippman Commission to search for potential sites and fully and EARLY ON, and engage communities in meaningful and respectful dialogue.