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BOROUGH PRESIDENT

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Hon. Bill de Blasio
Mayor, City of New York
City Hall
New York, NY 10007

April 18, 2019

Dear Mayor de Blasio:

I write to express my disdain for the timing of your creation of a Design Advisory Group for the future sites of the new borough-based jails that have been proposed to replace Rikers Island.

I find it extremely disconcerting that your office, the Office of Criminal Justice (MOCJ) and the Department of Design and Construction (DDC) are proposing such an advisory group prior to the completion of the Uniform Land Use Review Procedure (ULURP), which is currently underway. The timing of this announcement makes it crystal clear that your administration has no desire to even pretend to take community input into account during the siting process, and in fact views the outcome of the ULURP as a fait accompli.

As for advice on an appropriate design, I continue to submit that your administration has chosen the wrong site for this jail, and therefore should redesign its plans at a better location. Please find enclosed a map of that location, which is inclusive of City and State owned property adjacent to the Bronx Hall of Justice. This redevelopment would include the underutilized Bronx Family Court building. Moreover, it is my understanding that New York State would consider the disposition of State owned property for these plans once fully realized.

Rikers Island must be closed. However, your administration should not abandon the principles of criminal justice reform for reasons of political expediency. Mott Haven is the wrong location for a new jail in The Bronx. An obviously better location exists for this jail. If you truly value community input on this issue you would be wise to recognize this fact.

Sincerely,

Ruben Diaz Jr.