

**BRONX BOROUGH PRESIDENT'S RECOMMENDATION
ULURP APPLICATION NO: C 200143 MMY
RIKERS ISLAND PUBLIC PLACE MAPPING**

DOCKET DESCRIPTION

IN THE MATTER OF an application submitted by the New York City Department of Correction, The Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice and New York City Council Speaker Corey Johnson pursuant to Sections 197-c and 199 of the New York City Charter for an amendment to the City Map involving:

- The establishment of Public Place on Rikers Island within the area bounded by the U.S. Pierhead and Bulkhead line;

In the Borough of The Bronx and under the jurisdiction of Community District 1, Borough of Queens, in accordance with Map No. C.P.C. 200143 MMY dated November 27, 2019, and signed by the Department of City Planning.

BACKGROUND

Rikers Island is situated in the East River between The Bronx to the north, Queens to the east and Manhattan to the southwest. The island is located approximately 1,500 feet from the Hunts Point peninsula in The Bronx and 300 feet northwest of LaGuardia Airport runway 22/04 in Queens. Other nearby islands include North and South Brother islands, both of which are in Bronx County.

Rikers Island, zoned C8-2, is considered part of The Bronx (Block 2605, Lot 40). However, as access to Rikers Island is only available through Queens, the facility's official mailing address is 10-01 Hazen Street, The Bronx, New York, but with a Queens County Zip Code, 11370 (Elmhurst, New York). The island is therefore located in Queens Community District #1. As such, this application is submitted to Queens Community Board #1. However, as Rikers Island is located in The Bronx, it is the Bronx Borough President that considers the recommendation submitted by the Queens Community Board and it is the Bronx Borough President that offers a recommendation pursuant to ULURP to the Planning Commission. An additional oddity that has since been rectified is that while Rikers Island is located within the 114th Police Precinct in Queens, in the past all crimes committed on Rikers were recorded and assigned to the 41st Police Precinct in The Bronx. This reporting practice ended on August 15, 2014.

Rikers Island has been property of the City of New York since the late 19th century. Over the decades the island was expanded by the dumping of landfill. Currently Rikers Island approximates 429.7 acres of property. Since the 1930's Rikers Island has served as the site for the city's detention facility.

As of February 2020, the following capacity and current population of New York City's correctional facilities includes:

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| • Rikers Island Facilities: | Total Capacity: | 6,552 |
| | Current Population: | 4,144 |
| • Manhattan & barge facility in The Bronx: | Total Capacity: | 1,522 |
| | Current Population: | 1,183 |

The proposed new Bronx Facility's Capacity: 886

Approval of this application will designate Rikers Island as a "public place." The specific language associated with this application is as follows: "Rikers Island Public Place: Rikers Island shall not be used for incarceration of individuals after December 31, 2026." Consequently, prior to January 1, 2027, the City of New York will be required to relocate all those who are incarcerated on Rikers Island to sites located elsewhere within New York City. This designation also requires that if a future Mayoral administration determines that Rikers Island remain in active use as a detention center this determination would require a ULURP application, the purpose of which would be to rescind the Public Place designation now proposed. Critical to note, approval of this application will NOT change the C8-2 zone. Any proposed development or use of Rikers Island would likely be subject to ULURP for numerous reasons some of which would likely include, but not be limited to site selection, the disposition of city-owned property or an amendment of the Zoning Map.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW AND ULURP CERTIFICATION

This application has been reviewed pursuant to CEQR and SEQRA and received a Negative Declaration. The City Planning Commission certified this application as complete on December 2, 2019.

COMMUNITY DISTRICT PUBLIC HEARING

A public hearing on this application was held by Queens Community Board #1 on January 21, 2020. A vote recommending approval of this application was 36 in favor, zero opposed and one abstaining.

BOROUGH PRESIDENT'S PUBLIC HEARING

A public hearing was convened by the Bronx Borough President on February 13, 2020. Representatives of the applicants were present and spoke in favor of this application. No comments from the public were made and the hearing was closed.

BRONX BOROUGH PRESIDENT'S RECOMMENDATION

I fully support the closing of Rikers Island's detention facilities. I wholeheartedly believe that the current conditions that exist within these facilities denigrates all who work for the Department of Corrections and those who are being held on Rikers awaiting a resolution of their case.

While I support the closing of Rikers Island as a place of detention, the action is premature given the pending court case The Diego Beekman Mutual Housing Corporation (Diego Beekman) has filed against the City. The case challenges the notion that the proposed Bronx jail site at 745 East 141st Street is appropriate for a 905,700 square-foot detention facility that has yet to be designed. Additionally, despite the City's aggressive affordable housing goals, Diego Beekman's longstanding, community-led plan for that site has been ignored.

Diego Beekman has a storied history of service and support to those residing in the Mott Haven community of The Bronx. In 1974, when this community was being set ablaze and so many of its residents found themselves trapped and abandoned by the City of New York, it was the founding of Diego Beekman that sustained these folks and gave them their only reason to hope for a better future. Over the decades that followed Diego Beekman has become a major resource. Today approximately 4,950 residents live in a Diego Beekman building and make 16 percent of Area Median Income (AMI). It employs approximately 120 workers, 40 of which are 32BJ members and since it was founding has coordinated and invested over \$100 million across the Mott Haven community.

Now, following years of dedicated work, Diego Beekman looks to the future as it proposed to construct a comprehensive residential, commercial and manufacturing development at 745 East 141st Street, the very same site the City of New York has selected for a jail. Highlights of this plan includes:

- 533 units of affordable residences from 30 percent-120 percent of AMI
- 75,000 square feet of retail space including a desperately needed supermarket
- 58,000 square feet of manufacturing space which will create as many as 200 jobs

Since submitting my recommendation in July 2019, my reasons for opposing this location for a jail have not changed. Aside from scuttling a project that would anchor an entire community and provide desperately needed affordable housing and employment opportunities to hundreds of residents, I believe that constructing a massive 905,700 square foot building, rising approximately 195 feet in a community composed primarily of low and mid-rise buildings will scare this community. Furthermore, I identified an alternative site, encompassing the Family Court Complex and a parcel adjacent to the Bronx Hall of Justice, that is also a short two block radius of The Bronx County Building. This location meets all the prerequisites as outlined by the city including eliminating the need for the bussing of inmates through some of the borough's most congested avenues, is far better served by mass transit, but most of all, allow Diego Beekman's plan to move forward. Nonetheless, my proposal was not given due consideration, as required in the City Charter.

Consequently, given what is at stake for the Diego Beekman community, given that I have proposed an alternative location for the city's jail, and given the unresolved status of Diego

Beekman's legal challenge that would force the City to identify an alternative location for the Bronx jail, it is entirely premature for me to approve this ULURP application.

I therefore recommend that this application be denied.