



NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTION
Cynthia Brann, Commissioner

Timothy D. Farrell, Senior Deputy Commissioner
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East Elmhurst, NY 11370

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November 26, 2019

Marisa Lago
Chair, City Planning Commission
New York City Department of City Planning
120 Broadway, 31st Floor
New York, NY 10271

Re: CEQR Lead Agency Designation
Rikers Island Public Place Application
CEQR Number: 20DOC001X
10-01 Hazen Street, Bronx N.Y. 11370
Queens, Community District 1: Block 2605, Lot 40

- By Electronic Mail Only -

Dear Chair Lago:

In accordance with Executive Order 91 of 1977, as amended, and the Rules of Procedure for City Environmental Quality Review (CEQR) found at Title 62, Chapter 5 of the Rules of the City of New York, the Department of Correction (“DOC”) proposes to assume the role of lead agency for the environmental review of the above-referenced project. The assumption of lead agency status is consistent with the underlying mandate of CEQR that the appropriate lead agency should be the agency “primarily responsible for carrying out, funding or approving an action” as well as the criteria listed in Section 5-03(h) of the Rules of Procedure for CEQR found at 62 RCNY Chapter 5. This project is a Type I action (under 6 NYCRR 617.4(b)(9)) subject to environmental review under CEQR.

The New York City Department of Correction (DOC), the New York City Mayor’s Office of Criminal Justice (MOCJ), Corey Johnson, Speaker of the New York City Council, are seeking a change to the City Map involving the establishment of a Public Place encompassing all of Rikers Island (the proposed action), which lies within the borough of The Bronx though it is under the jurisdiction of Queens Community District 1. With this Public Place designation, Rikers Island could no longer be used for incarceration of individuals after December 31, 2026, when the City’s system of four new Borough-Based Jails is expected to be completed and in operation, pursuant to a series of land use actions approved by the City Council. As such, this application is being made to reflect the City’s continued commitment to create a modern, humane, and safe justice system and guarantee the closure of the jails on Rikers Island and construction of a new smaller borough-based jail system.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The project site is the entirety of Rikers Island, an irregularly-shaped City-owned property under the jurisdiction of DOC. It is located in the upper East River between the Bronx mainland and Queens. The waterway separating Rikers Island from Queens is referred to as Rikers Island Channel. The surrounding

area within 400 feet of the project site consists of the East River and Rikers Island Channel with only a small portion of the area containing runway for LaGuardia Airport (see Figure 1).

Access to the project site is provided via Hazen Street, also known as Avenue of the Boldest, which extends northward from 19th Avenue in Queens. Hazen Street crosses over the Rikers Island Channel via the Rikers Island Bridge (the bridge), also known as the Francis R. Buono Memorial Bridge, which opened in 1966. Access onto the project site is restricted to authorized vehicles and buses, including the Q100 route operated by MTA Bus Company and the Rikers Visit Bus services operated by DOC. Visitors arriving via bus go through a security check-in process at the Rikers Island Visitor Center. There are several internal roadways on Rikers Island, including an extension of Hazen Street from Queens via the bridge, but none of these are mapped as public streets on the City Map.

Rikers Island contains ten detention centers, eight of which are currently in use and have the capacity to house approximately 11,300 people in detention. Rikers Island also has accessory facilities, such as the visitor center, parking lots, central laundry, transportation building, training facility, and a bakery.

PROPOSED ACTIONS

The proposed action is a City Map change designating Rikers Island as a Public Place, indicating its intended use for a public purpose. As part of the proposed amendment of the City Map, a notation would be added to the map stating as follows: "Rikers Island Public Place: Rikers Island shall not be used for incarceration of individuals after December 31, 2026." Other uses allowed by the site's zoning and consistent with the designation of the island as Public Place would continue to be allowed. This would include, but is not limited to, uses that are currently accessory to the detention centers, such as the central laundry.

A future use of the project site has not been identified at this time except that it would not be used for the incarceration of individuals after December 31, 2026. Any future proposal for the redevelopment of Rikers Island would be subject to future planning and public review processes, including a separate approval and environmental review process as necessary. The proposed mapping action would not result in any new development or construction on project site, changes to the structures on the project site, demolition of structures, or ground disturbance. The proposed mapping action would not result in any increase to vehicle or pedestrian traffic to the project site.

In the No-Action condition, the City would close and decommission the jails on Rikers Island upon completion of the City's borough-based jail system. In the With-Action condition, the proposed mapping would prohibit the use of Rikers Island for incarceration of individuals after December 31, 2026.

Please advise us by November 27, 2019 if you have any questions or issues concerning the Department of Correction assuming lead agency status for this project. If we do not hear from you by this date, we will assume that you have no objections.

Contact Person: Cynthia Brann, Commissioner
New York City Department of Correction
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(718) 546 - 0700

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "T. Farrell", with a long, sweeping horizontal line extending to the right.

Timothy Farrell
Deputy Commissioner
On behalf of the New York City Department of Correction

cc: Hilary Semel, New York City Mayor's Office of Environmental Coordination
Olga Abinader, New York City Department of City Planning
Kyle Daniels, New York City Department of Citywide Administrative Services
Steve Zahn, New York State Department of Environmental Conservation