



Dear Mayor Adams,

I am writing to express my concern about potential delays to the construction of Brooklyn's borough-based jail facility and the subsequent closing of the Rikers Island jail. Recent news reports have indicated that your administration may be pursuing a "plan B" for Rikers Island, an assertion supported by the release of a Department of Design and Construction (DDC) contract that pushes completion of the Brooklyn jail to October 2029, more than two years after the mandated date for the closing of the Rikers Island jail per Local Law 16 of 2021.

As a member of the City Council, I supported this legislation and the associated plan to replace the outdated Brooklyn jail. Despite some opposition, my colleagues and I stood firmly on the side of human rights and the best interest of our entire city and voted for the plan to close Rikers, reduce the population of incarcerated New Yorkers, and create more humane jail facilities. I still support that plan. One death of an incarcerated person is too many, and 19 in one year last year, and yet another in 2023, is a crisis that we must address with great urgency.

Regarding creating more humane facilities, I am also concerned that the recently released contract between DDC and Tutor Perini for the Brooklyn jail seems to allow for two options – one with 886 beds, consistent with City Council approvals; and another with 1,216 beds in an even smaller footprint. I do not see how 1,216 beds can be accommodated on this site in compliance with the provisions of Local Law 194 of 2019, which dictates a minimum 75 square feet for each living quarter. My office has also received word that the Outposted Therapeutic Unit at Woodhull Hospital, which was supposed to be completed next year, is on hold. This facility is meant to improve quality of and access to medical, mental health, and substance use treatment needs of incarcerated people and is a critical part of the plan to close Rikers.

It is important to stress that I share your concern for our constituents' safety. It is for that reason that we must stop sending some of our most vulnerable constituents to an isolated jail complex where they are much more likely to be exposed to violence and trauma than to receive the help they need. There are demonstrable ways to keep our streets safe while also moving forward with decarceration, including: working with the courts to address case delays by reducing the time between arrest and trial; investing in mental health programs and decriminalizing mental health and addiction; increasing investments in supportive housing; and supporting critical social and transitional services that reduce recidivism. I strongly believe that using these strategies, we can reduce our incarcerated population enough to close Rikers by the 2027 deadline, and shift to a system that improves safety for incarcerated people, staff in the jails, and our city overall.

We also have the opportunity to transform Rikers Island into a space that will benefit all New Yorkers by implementing the plan for Renewable Rikers. This plan will allow for the closure of polluting peaker plants and aging wastewater treatment facilities in environmental justice communities. It will contribute to the City's efforts to reduce carbon emissions and generate renewable energy locally. It will create new green space along the waterfront in communities that desperately need access to outdoor recreational opportunities. It will support your administration's waste reduction goals by increasing capacity for organics recycling and compost, further reducing the city's carbon footprint. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, it will create green jobs and job training programs, especially for formerly incarcerated people, providing new opportunities where there once were none.

In conclusion, there is no "Plan B" for Rikers Island. I am asking you and your team to:

- Commit to the 2027 deadline for closing Rikers by expediting construction of the Brooklyn jail and other borough-based jail facilities
- Move forward with the Outposted Therapeutic Unit at Woodhull hospital
- Make efforts toward decarceration as described above
- Immediately convene the Rikers Island Advisory Board, as required by Local Law 16
- Initiate the overdue consolidation of operations on Rikers and transfer of unused jails to DCAS.

On behalf of the Borough of Brooklyn, thank you for your collaboration and commitment to a better future for all New Yorkers.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Antonio Reynoso", followed by a horizontal line.

Brooklyn Borough President Antonio Reynoso