



NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTION
Martin F. Horn, Commissioner
Office of the Commissioner

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May 2, 2008

William C. Thompson, Jr.
Comptroller
City of New York City
Municipal Building, Room 530
One Centre Street
New York, New York 10007

Dear Comptroller Thompson:

I am writing in response to your "open letter" to Mayor Bloomberg on the Brooklyn House of Detention.

First, I must point out that in reopening and expanding the Brooklyn facility, we are not "adding...jail beds." In fact, the Brooklyn jail will REPLACE space on Rikers Island as part of an overall plan that will REDUCE the total capacity of the city's jails by 3,000 and the Rikers Island population by 4,000—simply by creating less capacity *off* Rikers Island than we will eliminate *on* Rikers Island. We have targeted for elimination facilities there which were intended to be temporary when built some 30 years ago and which are inefficient and have outlived their usefulness.

For the past three years we have worked tirelessly to explain to communities in every part of our city why jails are, however unfortunately, integral parts of a community, its public safety and its criminal justice system. During that time we have also highlighted the many shortcomings of the City's overdependence on jail facilities on Rikers Island—primarily the time and cost difficulties getting there for family and attorney visits, the safety risks, inefficiencies and costs of transporting 1,500 inmates to court, and the isolation and stigmatization that result from locating defendants on an island far from the communities in which they live.

We have worked conscientiously and transparently with elected leaders and community organizations in Brooklyn to listen to their concerns and develop an approach to the project that might accommodate them. As a result, several community concerns and suggestions are integrated into our approach.

Allow me to respond to some other points. First, the Brooklyn House of Detention is not "dilapidated," as described in your press release. The current jail can be reopened almost immediately and in excellent working order with few renovations. It is designed to be extremely safe and secure. And, of course, it offers the significant public safety advantage of being directly (and internally) connected to the Court House, thus, ensuring the safe delivery of defendants to and from court. We will always be required to deliver defendants to court, with or without the jail. Without it, however, we will deliver them to the sidewalk, creating a threat to public safety, increasing congestion and adding to pollution.

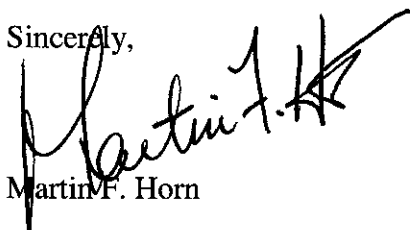
The current surge of development in the area of the jail took place unimpeded by the jail's presence. I doubt the jail—especially one enhanced with significant street-level retail space and other efforts to fit into the neighborhood—should impede further development; it hasn't in the past.

We have taken into consideration the parking and traffic issues and foresee no significant increase resulting from reopening and expansion of the jail. In fact, the reverse is true. The lack of a local detention facility will increase the amount of bus traffic carrying defendants to and from court. And loss of this particular jail, which has been in its location for almost 50 years, will increase congestion by requiring buses transporting defendants to stop on State Street to discharge passengers.

To be sure, Comptroller Thompson, we are not unmindful of economic considerations and the costs to the city of operating one of America's largest local jail systems. This Administration has worked creatively and energetically toward both strengthening public safety and reducing the debilitating economic impact of incarceration. That is why we have initiated the nation's leading re-entry programs and expanded our jail-based educational efforts.

An efficient, well run, safe and secure jail system is essential to the public's safety. Our plan will enhance public safety; selling it will diminish public safety.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Martin F. Horn". The signature is stylized and written over the printed name below it.

Martin F. Horn