



May 5, 2022

Basil Seggos
Commissioner, New York State Department of Environmental Conservation
625 Broadway
Albany, NY 12233

Subject: Independent Community Monitor for Manhattan Borough-Based Jail Project

Dear Commissioner Seggos,

We write to express concern regarding the environmental impacts of the proposed demolition and construction work at 124-125 White Street, and to call for an independent community monitor, separate from any monitors contracted by the City, to be assigned to this project to ensure full transparency of information and to protect the health and safety of the surrounding community.

Demolition of the existing Manhattan Detention Complex at 124-125 White Street is projected to commence in the coming weeks, followed by the construction of the new Manhattan Borough-Based Jail. While this project will have a myriad of environmental impacts on Chinatown and the surrounding community, air pollution and the unsettling of latent dust contaminants is of utmost concern.

Even though the project site is well within the area of Lower Manhattan directly impacted by the destruction and residual environmental damages of the World Trade Center, nowhere in the Final Environmental Impact Statement for the Borough-Based Jails plan (CEQR No. 18DOC001Y) are environmental hazards acknowledged as they relate to residual dust from September 11. In a report prepared February 10, 2020, the industrial forensics laboratory RJ Lee Group found traces of latent World Trade Center dust residues throughout the Chung Pak Housing Complex adjacent to the proposed jail site. The report notes the following:

“Given the well-established toxicological effects associated with exposure to WTC dusts and the scale of work involved with construction of a new jail building, resulting exposure scenarios could lead to serious and negative health outcomes for the exposed population. Particularly where no abatement plan is developed in advance of this work. Not only will the reentrainment of latent dusts affect workers, it will also impact the immediate community - particularly those

individuals who reside or work in the area and have an extended or ongoing coexistence with the active construction locale.”

In addition to latent World Trade Center dusts, the site also contains contaminants such as asbestos in the existing buildings and gasoline in the soil. Such a large construction project will also inevitably raise environmental concerns of air and noise pollution, vibrations, and other logistical mitigation issues.

Such immediate risks must be monitored and mitigated, but have either been unrecognized or understated by the City, formal environmental review, or associated demolition and construction contractors. In order to protect the health and safety of the immediate community surrounding the jail site, we demand the retention of an independent environmental monitor to oversee the environmental impacts of demolition and construction on the immediate community, including the following:

1. Air quality, noise, vibration, dust control, and required remediation are all regularly monitored with data directly reported to the independent monitor;
2. Known asbestos in the existing structures is extracted from the site following the appropriate protocols;
3. Analysis of completed boring tests of subsurface conditions is conducted by the independent monitor with findings reported to the community;
4. Analysis of found gasoline contaminants is conducted by the independent monitor with findings reported to the community and necessary remedial actions put in place; and
5. Monthly reports by the independent monitor are made public and delivered to the offices of Manhattan Community Board 1 and all local elected officials.

Sincerely,



Christopher Marte
New York City Council Member



Mark Levine
Manhattan Borough President



Yuh-Line Niou
New York State Assemblymember



Brian Kavanagh
New York State Senator



Jerrold Nadler
United States Congressman