The Future of Rikers and the Inner Long Island Sound
Industry, nature, and neighborhoods in harmony

From the Whitestone Bridge to the Triboro Bridge, the waterfront is finally open and accessible, with protections against sea-level rise and storm surges.

An urban park ranger gives a tour on the newly opened North Brother Island, explaining how pollution was reduced; wild-life restored to the water, land, and air; and asthma and other respiratory illnesses in the nearby neighborhoods virtually eliminated. A Bronx woman takes the new Triboro line to her good-paying industrial job, a 45-minute commute reduced to ten. On Rikers Island, the notorious detention center, now provides jobs instead of jails, with state-of-the-art energy generation, education, and environmental facilities.
From Incarceration to Infrastructure

Closing the jails on Rikers Island will open up a once-in-a-generation opportunity for New York. Transforming the island from one for incarceration to one for infrastructure could provide 40% of our contribution to zero waste goals, generate enough renewable energy for 30,000 homes and eliminate greenhouse gas emissions equivalent to 150,000 cars taken off the road. But the possibilities and benefits go well beyond this. Benefits to the surrounding neighborhoods and entire city could include:

**Creating major sites for parks, open space and other needed infrastructure.**

In addition to Rikers Island, much of the land in this area is owned by the City. The four wastewater treatment plants alone could provide over 200 acres of open space. And there is already over 70 acres of vacant open space owned by the public, but largely inaccessible to the public, including North and South Brother Islands and the area surrounding the Queens side of the Rikers Island bridge.

**Eliminating 175 CSOs & 9 billion gallons of sewer overflow**

The Inner Sound is ground zero for Combined Sewer Overflow and its detrimental environmental effects. Preventing this will repair an entire ecosystem damaged by the high nitrogen levels from this overflow.

**Opening over 12 miles of inaccessible shoreline**

Of the 9 miles of shoreline along the South Bronx and North Queens waterfront in the area, just a few thousand feet is accessible to the public. And that’s in addition to the four miles of inaccessible shoreline on Randalls Island, North and South Brother Islands, and Rikers Island itself.

**Reducing air pollution & improving health**

The South Bronx has the worst asthma rates in the City - moving contaminating uses to Rikers Island and reducing truck-to-truck waste transfer stations would provide enormous health benefits for thousands of people.

**Enabling a community-driven plan and vision for the waterfront and surrounding areas**

Community groups have already begun to envision what a new Rikers Island could be, and how best to make sure that nearby neighborhoods and people impacted by incarceration benefit from its transformation. Moving forward with closing Rikers also means moving forward with opening new possibilities for nearby communities and the city as a whole.

Images by ORG Permanent Modernity / RPA Fourth Regional Plan

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