

RENEWABLE RIKERS ISLAND

WHERE CRIMINAL JUSTICE MEETS ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE



RIKERS: "A STAIN ON OUR GREAT CITY"

In response to the organizing of formerly incarcerated people and the #CLOSErikers campaign, the New York City Council approved a plan in October 2019 to close the 10 jails on Rikers, shrink NYC jail capacity by 75%, reduce the number of people in jails by more than 50%, and ensure improved conditions for anyone still detained in borough facilities in Brooklyn, Manhattan, Queens and the Bronx. The legislation sets 2026 as a deadline for completion of the plan.



WHY NEW YORK CITY NEEDS RENEWABLE RIKERS

Survivors of Rikers have demanded that any future use of the island benefits the communities that have been most harmed by mass criminalization, by environmental injustice, and by disinvestment. Low-income neighborhoods and communities of color are often home to "peaker" plants, waste transfer stations, and other polluting infrastructure which emit particulate matter and other toxins linked to respiratory illnesses among others. A Renewable Rikers is crucial to hit NYC's ambitious zero-waste environmental goals — by removing waste from our rivers, reducing waste transport and landfill usage while creating green jobs during a time of economic and ongoing climate crisis.



THE RENEWABLE RIKERS ACT

The Renewable Rikers Act introduced in the City Council on June 13, 2019, cosponsored by Council Members Constantinides and Rosenthal, begins turning this proposal into policy. The three bills ensure another social or environmental atrocity will never again happen on this land.

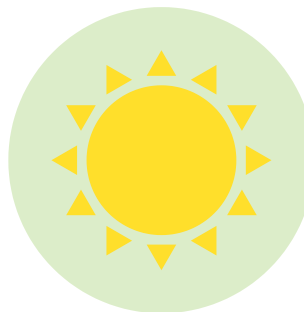
- Intro 1591: Requires New York City to assess whether a new wastewater treatment facility can be constructed on Rikers Island, as well as determine capacity for organics processing and how many gallons of wastewater from surrounding areas can be diverted there.
- Intro 1592: Transfers jurisdiction of Rikers Island from the Department of Correction to other agencies for renewable infrastructure, sustainability and environmental purpose once the jails close.
- Intro 1593: Requires New York City to determine the feasibility of what renewable energy sources can be generated on Rikers Island, as well as what of large-scale batteries to store the power can be built there.



ENVIRONMENTAL RACISM IN NYC

Neighborhoods, including the Queensbridge Houses, Sunset Park, South Bronx and the north shore of Staten Island, have been home to "peaker plants," polluting power facilities that only activate whenever the City's energy

demand increases and when air pollution is typically at its worst. Outside of worsening air pollution in low-income and predominantly POC communities, an estimated \$4.5 billion of ratepayer money in the last decade has gone towards keeping the peakers open in case they are needed. A Renewable Rikers Island can be a hub for New York City's just transition toward the renewable energy goals set by the NYS Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act.



THE CASE FOR SOLAR ENERGY

In order for NYC to meet our goal of quadrupling our solar energy capacity by 2030, we need to locate numerous unshaded rooftops or large open spaces that could host these solar installations. Spanning 413 acres, a newly available Rikers Island would be perfect for such a large-scale solar project. CUNY Law School's Center for Urban Environmental Reform hypothesizes that by using just 100 acres of Rikers Island for solar energy generation and storage would justify beginning to close peaker plants located in environmental justice communities.

SOURCES:

- JUST LEADERSHIP USA
- NEW YORK LAWYERS FOR THE PUBLIC INTEREST
- SUSTAINABLE CUNY OF THE CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK, "RIKERS ISLAND SOLAR + STORAGE OPTIONS"
- GOTHAM GAZETTE, "THE ENERGY BEHIND THE RENEWABLE RIKERS VISION"
- INDEPENDENT COMMISSION ON NEW YORK CITY CRIMINAL JUSTICE AND INCARCERATION REFORM, "A MORE JUST NEW YORK CITY"
- THE PEAK COALITION, "DIRTY ENERGY, BIG MONEY"

