

# RENEWABLE RIKERS

## Context

In response to the movement to Close Rikers which was led by formerly incarcerated people, in 2019, the NY City Council voted to approve the borough jails plan, committing to the closure of facilities on Rikers by 2027 and freeing land to be repurposed for other uses. Soon after, formerly incarcerated and environmental justice activists started organizing around a proposal that would support a transition towards renewable energy and enable the closure of key facilities that have caused ongoing pollution in waterfront communities around Rikers for decades.



Credit: Regional Plan Association

## The Problem

Low-income neighborhoods and communities of color are often home to noxious infrastructure like fossil fuel powered “peaker” plants, waste transfer stations, and other infrastructure that emit pollutants like particulate matter and other toxins linked to respiratory illnesses. For too long, environmental justice neighborhoods like the South Bronx have been negatively impacted not just by these environmental injustices, but also by the criminal justice system.

## The Solution

Renewable Rikers is a vision to transform the island from a notorious jail complex to a renewable, regenerative, and reparative hub for green infrastructure. The Renewable Rikers vision is a major step in meeting our City’s climate justice goals through equitable, resilient, and community-driven development. The campaign is focused on transforming Rikers Island’s 400 acres into a sustainability hub for large-scale renewable energy generation, battery storage, wastewater treatment infrastructure, and organic waste and compost processing for the city of New York.



**More Information**

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## Renewable Rikers Act

The legislative package behind Renewable Rikers consists of 3 local laws passed by the New York City Council in February 2021.

### Local Law 16

Establishes a process to transfer control of Rikers Island from the Department of Correction (DOC) to other agencies for sustainability and resiliency purposes as the jails close, and an advisory committee to guide the process. The advisory committee will include survivors of Rikers and residents of environmental justice communities.



### Local Law 17

Requires New York City to determine the feasibility of what renewable energy and large-scale battery storage can be sited on Rikers Island, as part of the Long-Term Energy Plan.

### Local Law 31

Requires New York City to assess capacity for organics and wastewater processing on Rikers Island.

## Proposed Legislation

### Intro 1038 - 2024

This bill, introduced by CM Sandy Nurse, would require that the city through DCAS submit a master plan for Renewable Rikers, including an estimated implementation timeline, details about the design, funding, and construction timeline for each proposed project, and evaluations of physical alterations or infrastructure improvements that Rikers Island may require to support the new infrastructure.

## Our Partners

Freedom Agenda  
New York City Environmental Justice Alliance  
Nation Resources Defense Council (NRDC)

The Point CDC  
Rikerkeeper  
Independent Rikers Commission