



**NEW YORK STATE**  
**Unified Court System**

OFFICE OF COURT ADMINISTRATION

HON. JOSEPH A. ZAYAS  
CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE JUDGE

HON. NORMAN ST. GEORGE  
FIRST DEPUTY CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE JUDGE

JUSTIN A. BARRY, ESQ.  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

November 14, 2023

Deanna Logan  
Director  
Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice  
1 Centre Street  
New York, New York 10007  
By email and US Mail

Re: Revised NYC Courts Capital Plan

Dear Ms. Logan:

Please accept this letter as a request to adjust the Unified Court System's (UCS) NYC Capital Plan.

**UCS' Top Priority – A Capital Plan Scope Development for the Bronx Family Court at 900 Sheridan Avenue**

By my September 28, 2023 letter (attached) to Hector Arrindell, Unit Head of Courts Capital at the Office of Management Budget, I notified the City that, based upon changes in court operations and foot traffic in the Bronx Housing Court, UCS no longer wanted to "swap" the operations in the Housing Court at 1118 Grand Concourse with the operations of the Bronx Civil Court at 851 Grand Concourse.

Based upon an updated review of our critical capital needs through the City, UCS asks that the City use the money earmarked for that the Bronx "Swap" project to begin a survey and analysis or Capital Plan Scope Development of the current Bronx Family-Criminal Court at 900 Sheridan Avenue to determine whether that facility continues to serve the needs of that very busy court and the Bronx citizens that it serves. Originally opened in 1977 to house the Bronx Family and Criminal Courts, the 900 Sheridan Avenue courthouse now primarily serves the Family Court. The Criminal Court retains its arraignment and summons functions there but the rest of its operations were relocated to the adjacent Bronx Hall of Justice (HOJ).

Over the course of the last ten years, this courthouse has been plagued with major structural problems. Despite numerous attempts to repair the roof and façade, major leaks occur resulting in interior damage and the loss of use of important space on a recurring basis. Equally concerning are the major sewage backups and floods that occur with alarming frequency in the

lower levels of the building resulting in loss of entire floors. The building's escalators have not functioned for over a decade, and the lack of working elevators regularly cause long waits for court users and staff trying to move between floors.

Just as importantly, the original design and intended use of the building dating to the 1970s have not kept pace with the changing needs of the Courts. There has been no holistic review of the use of the space after most of the Criminal Court functions were relocated to the HOJ. The result is that spaces that were designed for court user volume and the way that the Family Court and the Criminal Court operated in the 1970s are now used for completely different functions. Many of the courthouse's spaces are wholly inadequate for their current functions, for example jurists actually hold court proceedings in small rooms originally programmed for attorney conference rooms designed for two people. Critically, many of the current uses of those spaces place jurists, staff, and members of the public at risk as well.

With this change, UCS reiterates the importance of the following five capital projects.

1. The relocation of Brooklyn Civil Court to 210 Joralemon Street;
2. The renovation and repair of the Harlem Community Justice Center;
3. The Staten Island Master Plan, including the consolidation of Family Court operations, a new addition at 100 Richmond Terrace and the consolidation of the Surrogate and Supreme Courts at 18 Richmond Terrace; and
4. The modernization of 60 Centre Street, including the upgrade of interior spaces and building systems to improve circulation, renovation of courtrooms and offices, upgrade of mechanical systems and improvement of ADA accessibility, along with further funding to address water infiltration issues; and
5. Capital Plan Scope Development (CPSD) for 900 Sheridan Ave.

We seek your continuing commitment to these critical projects.

### **Roof Repairs**

We also seek comprehensive work on the following courthouse roofs, all of which have had significant leaks causing significant damage and disruption to court operations:

1. 1118 Grand Concourse
2. 215 East 161<sup>st</sup> Street (until such time as a CPSD has been conducted)
3. 88-11 Sutphin Boulevard
4. 89-17 Sutphin Boulevard
5. 121-20 Jamaica Avenue

We seek your ongoing commitment to expediting the replacement and/or repair on the roofs of these courthouses.

## **Sewer and Drainage Work**

We seek your assistance with continuing problems over the past two years with the regular flooding of our Bronx courthouses at 215 and 265 East 161<sup>st</sup> Street.

During significant rainfall, both courthouses have seen sewage backups and water infiltration with significant interior flooding, including raw sewage. The flooding has caused damage to court facilities and ongoing disruption to court operations. Reports from the Department of Citywide Administrative Services (DCAS) managers are that this flooding will continue to occur during significant rainstorms until sewage and storm drains are replaced with large pipes. We are informed that this is a major capital project typically undertaken and overseen by the NYC Department of Environmental Protection.

Please update us on the plan to expeditiously correct this regular occurrence in two of our busiest City courthouses. Please update us on the status of conversations with the Department of Environmental Protection regarding this issue and any timeframes for remediation that have been discussed.

## **New York City Capital Plan**

While we are appreciative that the City is moving forward with the projects listed, it is important to note that the last New York City Capital Plan (Plan) that was approved by the Court Facilities Capital Review Board (Board) was submitted in 2005.

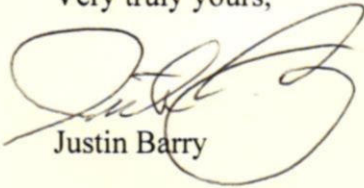
The City recognized and acknowledged in its 2005 Plan that it needed to "...implement a comprehensive plan addressing the needs of the Manhattan Courts." That 2005 Plan further provided that the City would follow-up with a plan for identifying and meeting court needs in Manhattan, which would be presented to the Court System and the Board in 2007. Since then, efforts have been made by the City to satisfy that obligation, but none have been formally submitted and presented to the Board, which is something that UCS expects to happen in the coming year.

As I am sure you are aware, the City engaged several consultants and undertook a multi-year assessment of its Manhattan court facilities, focusing on both building infrastructure as well as court operations within those facilities. The study concluded with a proposal referred to as the "Manhattan Courts Master Plan" (MCMP). Among the many conditions that study sought to evaluate were those within the facilities that house all criminal and civil court operations in Manhattan, with a focus on the 60, 80, 100, and 111 Centre Street buildings. The MCMP's goal was to assess the existing conditions in the Manhattan facilities and provide a solution for the fragmented condition of court operations that had evolved over the preceding decades. The study concluded with a detailed proposal which, if advanced, would have consolidated the fractured court operations of the Manhattan Supreme Court (Civil and Criminal Terms), improved the individual facilities on an operational level, improved court security, achieved compliance with New York City's building and fire codes, established greater ADA access to the facilities, and dramatically improved the courthouse environment for the public, the bar, judges

and court personnel.

In sum, we would ask for the City's commitment to work with us to draft a Plan that includes, not only the five capital projects (including the CPSD for the Bronx Family and Criminal Courts) and remediation of the courthouse roof leaks and sewage/drainage issues listed above, but one that address the longstanding needs outlined in the MCMP and other courthouse locations throughout the City. The goal is to present a comprehensive Plan regarding all capital projects in New York City to the Board in the coming year. I would like to schedule a meeting with you, appropriate members of your office and whomever else you feel appropriate to begin this process.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Justin Barry', is written over a circular stamp or seal.

cc: Hon. Joseph Zayas  
Hon. Norman St. George  
Hon. Deborah Kaplan  
Shawn Waterman  
Mindy Jeng  
Matt Sandler  
Hector Arrindell  
Joseph Wagner  
Haelee Shin  
Barbara Mikrut



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EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

September 28, 2023

Hector Arrindell  
Unit Head of Courts Capital  
NYC Office of Management and Budget  
255 Greenwich Street, 7<sup>th</sup> Floor  
New York, NY 10007  
By email [arrindellh@omb.nyc.gov](mailto:arrindellh@omb.nyc.gov)

Re: 851 Grand Concourse Housing Court Relocation

Dear Mr. Arrindell:

I am writing on behalf of the New York State Unified Court System (UCS) to inform you that the Court System no longer believes that it is necessary to relocate the Bronx County Housing Court currently located at 1118 Grand Concourse to the Bronx County Courthouse at 851 Grand Concourse. Consequently, we respectfully request that you withdraw the request for proposals for this work and suspend all future planning for this proposed project.

The proposal to “swap” these two operations was initially driven by the overwhelming number of court visitors at the 1118 Grand Concourse facility in the mid-2010s. In the wake of the pandemic and changes to court operations, we are no longer experiencing anything close to the volume we saw six years ago when this project was first envisioned.

A review of the current operations and changes in the pattern of court visits to the Bronx Housing Court and Bronx Civil Court and the two involved courthouses has led to this request. In 2018 immediately after we had initially proposed swapping these two court operations, the annual court visits into the 1118 Grand Concourse facility totaled almost 1 million. After an initial relocation of three housing courtrooms from 1118 Grand Concourse to 851 Grand Concourse, foot traffic at 1118 Grand Concourse dropped to a little over 325,000 in 2019. In YTD 2023, due to changes in housing court operations accelerated by the pandemic, including the use of virtual court appearances, annual in-person court visits currently stand at about 135,000 people.

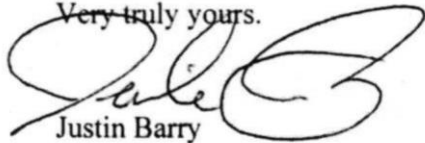
Because of this significant change in in-person court visits accompanying the relocation of three housing court parts and the dramatic increase in the use of virtual proceedings, the UCS no

longer believes that a relocation of the remaining housing court parts to 851 Grand Concourse serves the interest of the Courts and the New Yorkers that we serve.

We greatly appreciate the City's collaboration in addressing the Court System's capital priorities and we appreciate the planning that the City has devoted to this proposal so far. We do think it makes sense to suspend this project based on current appearance trends and discuss the better use of these capital funds such as making improvements in the existing Bronx Housing Court facility and for other projects that have grown in concern for us and the people of this City over the past seven years, particularly our Family Court buildings. For instance, the Bronx Family/Criminal Courthouse on East 161<sup>st</sup> Street continues to have major, ongoing facility issues and is ripe for a full assessment of its appropriateness as a high, volume court facility.

We look forward to discussing these new priorities with you and our other partners in the City soon and I am available to discuss this and any of our other projects at your convenience.

Very truly yours.



Justin Barry

cc: Hon. Joseph Zayas  
Hon. Norman St. George  
Hon. Edwina Richardson-Mendelson  
Hon. Deborah Kaplan  
Shawn Waterman  
Linda Dunlap-Miller  
Mindy Jeng  
Matt Sandler  
Jesus Coombs  
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