



# sanitation

Edward Grayson Commissioner

## Testimony of Edward Grayson, Commissioner New York City Department of Sanitation

### Oversight Hearing on Clean Streets and Expanding Vital Sanitation Service

### New York City Council Committee on Sanitation and Solid Waste Management

Friday, March 4, 2022  
10:30 A.M.

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Good morning Chair Nurse and members of the City Council Committee on Sanitation and Solid Waste Management. I am Edward Grayson, Commissioner of the New York City Department of Sanitation (DSNY), and I am joined by Bridget Anderson, Deputy Commissioner for Recycling and Sustainability, and Gregory Anderson, Deputy Commissioner for Policy and External Affairs, and Stephen Harbin, Chief of Cleaning Operations. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

I want to welcome you all to this committee, including both new and returning members. The Department and this Committee, as well as the entire Council, have a longstanding tradition of collaboration, dialogue and advancement, and I look forward to continuing that tradition with each of you. We share the same commitment to our City, to improving the quality of life and supporting thriving neighborhoods across the five boroughs, and to building a sustainable waste management system. I look forward to working with you to advance these goals.

Our Department's mission is to keep New York City healthy, safe and clean. I have been a member of this Department for 23 years now, and my parents were as well for decades before me. I am proud to continue our Department's more than 140-year legacy of service to New Yorkers. There is no doubt that the COVID-19 pandemic has created substantial challenges for us. Budget cuts and restorations, behavior change, and operational challenges have all reinforced the importance not only in investing in Sanitation services but also in working with individuals, community leaders, elected officials, and others to keep our City clean.

The topic of this hearing is a broad one, and my testimony today will highlight a few areas where we face both the greatest challenges and opportunities in our efforts to deliver on this critical mission. Afterwards, my team and I will be happy to answer your questions.

#### **Opportunities for New Funding Sources**

Over this Department's history, our services have been funded, nearly entirely, by City tax levy funds. This means that our budget is often closely tied to the cyclical periods of expansion and contraction in the overall City budget. However, we sit at the tail end of a

decisions made by manufacturers, corporate executives, retailers, marketers and individual consumers who determine how much and what kind of waste we must manage.

The Governor's proposal for Extended Producer Responsibility for Packaging and Paper Products would create transformational change in this relationship, requiring upstream manufacturers and retailers to take some financial responsibility for the end-of-life of these products. This policy would require these manufacturers to pay for the operation of curbside recycling programs statewide, including here in New York City. In short, this program could bring as much as \$100 million or more to New York City each year, which could free up funds for investment in recycling outreach and education, new waste diversion programs and other vital sanitation services. DSNY strongly supports the Council resolution being considered today, and I encourage you to work with your colleagues in the State legislature to advance this important proposal.

### **Street Cleaning Programs**

All 8.8 million New Yorkers, as well as the millions of visitors and commuters, have a role to play in keeping our City clean. Litter and trash do not just magically appear on City streets — each piece, bag or pile has a person associated with it—someone who tossed it on the ground, dumped it on the corner, or threw it out a car window. I ask all New Yorkers to do the right thing: Don't litter. Use our corner litter baskets properly. Clean up after your pet. Move your car for alternate side parking. Sweep the sidewalk in front of your home or business. And if you see a litter condition that needs DSNY's attention, please let us know by calling 311.

Our core street cleaning services include mechanical street sweeping and litter basket collection. DSNY has more than 23,000 litter baskets citywide, which are intended for use by pedestrians, including residents, commuters and tourists, to dispose of items as they make their way around the city. Litter baskets are primarily placed in commercial districts and near transit hubs, areas with higher concentrations of pedestrian traffic. Prior to the pandemic, DSNY was funded to run 736 litter basket trucks each week. In July 2020, that number was reduced to 272 trucks per week. Today, DSNY is funded to run 588 litter basket trucks each week, a 116 percent increase from service levels at the depths of the pandemic.

A portion of this funding, comprising \$8.6 million and 136 weekly litter basket trucks total, was funded as a one-time initiative in the FY2022 adopted budget. We will continue to work with the Mayor's Office and City Council to advocate for the renewal of these supplemental basket trucks, and we will continue to have discussions with the Administration and OMB regarding baseline funding levels for critical litter basket collection service.

The second core component of our cleaning programs is mechanical sweeping. For nearly 70 years, the City has used mechanical brooms operated by Sanitation Workers to clean our streets, including along the curb line. Alternate Side Parking (ASP) is a crucial tool to ensuring these brooms are effective — allowing access to the curb during scheduled sweeping windows in residential and commercial areas alike. Mechanical brooms sweep up litter, leaves and other small debris in along the curb, but they only work if drivers move their cars for posted street cleaning and other parking regulations.

Since 2020, ASP frequency has been reduced to just once time per week in residential areas that previously had more frequent sweeping. While initially implemented as part of the City's social distancing programs, this change was extended through budget cuts last year. The reduction in sweeping frequency has not only reduced the number of opportunities to clean

along the curb line, but it has also reduced the rate of compliance on the days when sweeping regulations remain in effect. For some drivers, the risk of a \$65 ticket once a week is simply the cost of free parking on the City's streets. We are working with the Administration to evaluate the frequency of ASP regulations and determine the future of this program going forward. In the meantime, we urge you to talk to your constituents and help them understand the importance of moving their vehicles on ASP days.

The Department has also created the Precision Cleaning Initiative (PCI), with teams to conduct targeted cleanings of litter conditions, illegal dumping, and overflowing litter baskets. These conditions are eyesores that affect New Yorkers' quality of life and threaten NYC's recovery. Teams are dispatched based on DSNY field observations, 311 complaints and referrals from other City agencies and community groups. This initiative celebrates its one-year anniversary next week. To date, PCI crews have collected nearly 17,000 eyesore conditions and emptied 46,500 additional litter baskets citywide.

In the past year, the Department has greatly expanded our Community Clean Up program, working with volunteers and community partners across the five boroughs. Department lends tools, trash bags, brooms and dustpans to volunteers and can now deliver these tools directly to the volunteers with our community clean-up van. The Department partnered with an estimated 7,200 New Yorkers on 278 volunteer cleanups during Fiscal Year 2021, nearly triple the number before the COVID crisis in FY2019. In the first eight months of FY 2022, we have partnered on 146 cleanups, with many more to come as we head into spring. This is another area where we would love to partner with each one of you to help us keep all communities across NYC clean.

### **Zero Waste Programs**

In 2015, the City established a goal of sending Zero Waste to Landfills, building off the Department's robust curbside recycling program and several other diversion programs. In the last eight years, DSNY has built a foundation of programs, policies, and critical technical support and community engagement approaches to move toward that goal. However, the COVID-19 pandemic had disrupted our steady progress, and we are working to restore and expand programs to get back on track toward this goal.

Organic waste, including food scraps and yard waste, is the most significant contributor of waste-related greenhouse gas emissions — and is also the largest fraction of New York City's waste stream, one third in total. Over the last decade, DSNY has grown to be a national leader in providing drop-off opportunities to compost food scraps. We have expanded the program to 210 sites citywide — the largest in the program's history — including at least one in every community board. In FY2022, DSNY's budget includes an additional \$3.5 million in funds to support the expansion of community composting and food scrap drop-off sites to our current levels, and we look forward to further discussions with OMB and the Mayor's Office regarding this program going forward.

Last October, DSNY restarted Curbside Composting, which had been suspended in 2020 due to the fiscal crisis. This iteration of the program allows buildings and residents to sign up and express interest in receiving weekly curbside composting service. Enrollment opened in August, and we have received more than 61,000 unique signups to date, representing more than 43,000 addresses. We currently offer service to residents in seven community districts. We are working with OMB and the Mayor's Office to evaluate this program with a goal of increasing both equity and efficiency, and we are not planning to expand to additional districts at this time.

The Department has also expanded non-curbside services to promote the reuse and recycling of other products, including the DonateNYC, RefashionNYC, and E-cycleNYC programs. Since 2014, these programs have diverted more than 400,000 tons of waste for reuse or recycling. Today, free on-call apartment building pickups are provided to more than 922,000 households for electronics recycling, and more than 200,000 households and hundreds of commercial and institutional facilities for textiles reuse. And these programs continue to grow.

DSNY also works to reduce the improper and dangerous disposal of hazardous products, including electronics, household chemicals, and rechargeable batteries. In 2015, New York State law banned the disposal of unwanted electronics in the landfill, instead requiring electronics manufacturers and retailers to establish programs to collect these products for proper recycling. While this law has its flaws, it has been successful at diverting thousands of tons of electronics from landfills. DSNY operates the free E-cycleNYC program for electronics recycling in apartment buildings with 10+ units and accepts electronics for recycling at our SAFE Disposal events and Special Waste Sites in each borough. We currently offer curbside electronics collection in Staten Island, but this program is not funded in future fiscal years.

State law also requires certain retailers take back rechargeable batteries for recycling. Unlike more common alkaline batteries, rechargeable batteries, including lithium-ion batteries, are dangerous products that can cause fires and pose a threat to employees of both DSNY and our recycling vendors. Last year, an improperly-disposed rechargeable battery started a large fire in a paper recycling barge at our 59<sup>th</sup> Street MTS. Thanks to the quick action by DSNY and FDNY employees, the facility suffered no major damage, and thankfully there were only minor injuries. These events are increasingly common at facilities in New York City and around the country, and it is imperative that residents properly recycle these products.

The State law, which overrode a previous City law, does not allow for local enforcement by DSNY. It also excludes the growing number of rechargeable batteries in e-mobility devices — including electric bikes, mopeds and scooters. DSNY is working with the Fire Department and our counterparts across the State to raise awareness about the potential dangers of these products, and we are hopeful that the State legislation will amend the current law to cover these products.

### **Changing Streetscapes**

The Department is exploring new models for waste setout and collection, including approaches that will move waste setout from the sidewalk and into the roadway. This program, called “Clean Curbs” seeks to test this new approach, which can contain waste, reduce rodents, improve quality of life and increase mobility, in a variety of contexts across the city. We are currently in the solicitation process to select an MWBE vendor to test the Clean Curbs model for residential waste on a small scale, potentially the first in a series of pilots that will inform our future planning.

In December, we unveiled a pilot network of “Smart Bins,” unstaffed and automated food scrap drop-off bins controlled with a smart phone or RFID card. These hold the promise of an expanded network of drop-off sites available to residents and visitors 24/7. We are also working to implement new rules, effective next month, that require new large residential buildings to submit “Waste Management Plans” at the beginning of the planning process, so that they account for the impacts of waste management in building design and operation.



DSNY is also a close partner with the Department of Transportation and other agencies seeking to transform our streetscapes to make them safer, healthier and more vibrant public spaces. This winter, we are testing an expanded fleet of 30 mini plows to clear snow from bike lanes and other public space infrastructure. We are working to procure these units for ongoing use and are in discussions with OMB and the Mayor's Office regarding staffing needs to provide cleaning and snow clearing services longer term. As the City continues to change the streetscapes, we will work with our partners to adapt our services to maintain these new spaces.

## **Conclusion**

Our work on these important topics is far from done. We continue to expand and hone our programs, invest in new technologies and infrastructure, and work to improve the effectiveness, equity, and sustainability of our operations.

The Department is currently planning for an updated waste characterization study, required by City law to be released in early 2024. This study will tell us what is in our waste stream, what we're currently capturing in our recycling and diversion programs, and how the COVID pandemic has fundamentally changed our waste. This study will inform the planning for our updated comprehensive Solid Waste Management Plan, required by State law to be completed in 2026. This study and plan will lay the groundwork for the future of our services, policy and programs, and we look forward to working with the City Council to plan for this future.

I want to again welcome the new members of this Council and this Committee and congratulate you on your role in this vital work. On behalf of our 9,700 employees, I want to thank the City Council for your support in our effort to clean our streets, sidewalks and public spaces. Our frontline workers are the true heroes of this effort, working day after day in all manner of conditions, doing the tireless work of picking up litter, emptying corner baskets, and collecting our trash, recycling and organics. For 140 years, our employees have worked to make New York City neighborhoods cleaner and to improve quality of life for our residents and visitors.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today, and we are now happy to answer your questions.



**Comments to The Sanitation Committee  
Oversight Hearing on Clean Streets and Expanding Vital Sanitation Services**

March 4, 2022

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**Board of Directors**

Stuart Appelbaum

*President,  
Retail, Wholesale and  
Department Store Union*

My name is Lynda Nguyen and I am the Senior Research and Policy Analyst at [ALIGN, the Alliance for a Greater New York](#). ALIGN leads the [NY Transform Don't Trash Coalition](#), a citywide partnership of environmental justice communities, unions, and safe streets advocates working to create good jobs and clean, safer communities for all New Yorkers.

Eddie Bautista  
*Executive Director,  
NYC Environmental Justice  
Alliance*

Sanitation plays a crucial role in enhancing public health and safety. Since the start of the pandemic, sanitation services have been one of the first to experience budget cuts or even total suspension, despite impacting every neighborhood across the city. We saw this during the past two years of the COVID-19 pandemic when critical programs like Commercial Waste Zones (CWZ), basket service, and community composting were deprioritized and underfunded, resulting in dirtier streets, a dramatic rise of litter and rodent complaints, and lower quality of life for New Yorkers. Our city is in a sanitation crisis and we cannot wait any longer for action.

Henry Garrido  
*Executive Director,  
AFSCME District Council 37*

The proposed \$1B budget cuts to the Department of Sanitation (DSNY) will exacerbate this crisis. While the NY Transform Don't Trash Coalition is heartened to see the establishment of the Commercial Waste Division in the preliminary budget, we are urging the city to implement the law as soon as possible, and to restore and expand DSNY's budget to ensure vital sanitation services are able to operate at pre-pandemic levels. Doing so will allow the city to reach its zero waste goals, and improve public health and safety.

Lucia Gomez  
*Political & Legislative Director,  
New York Central Labor  
Council*

Our city faces a unique opportunity to transform our waste management systems and investing in proven strategies is the first step. When fully implemented, CWZ will take 18 million diesel truck miles off NYC streets, increase recycling and waste reduction standards, create green career jobs, and make our city safer and cleaner. It is critical that the city fully implements CWZ as soon as possible to address legacies of environmental racism; expand and create new opportunities for minority and women-owned businesses in waste auditing, zero-emissions micro hauling, and waste reduction; and tackling the public health and sanitation crises we are met with today.

Bernadette Kelly  
*Trustee,*

IBT Local 210

Jose Lopez  
*Co-Executive Director,  
Make the Road New York*

Maritza Silva-Farrell  
*Executive Director,  
ALIGN*

Cynthia Travieso  
*Political Director,  
Community Voices Heard*

Jonathan Westin  
*Director  
New York Communities  
for Change*

Lastly, expanding New York's curbside organics recycling program stands to be the largest opportunity for the city to invest in jobs in the waste industry. Organic waste makes up one-third of the city's waste stream, and has a significant impact on climate, jobs, and revenue. Expanding organics recycling will divert a significant

amount of waste away from landfills, create more good, local jobs for New Yorkers, and has the [potential to earn over \\$20 million in revenue each year](#). In fact, other cities like [Seattle](#) have found success in incorporating incentives and regulations to: 1) steadily decrease disposal per household; 2) produce cost savings for ratepayers; and 3) substantially reduce environmental impacts.

The NY Transform Don't Trash Coalition urges the city to implement CWZ as soon as possible, and to restore and expand DSNY's budget to ensure vital sanitation services are operating at pre-pandemic levels. We appreciate the steadfast efforts of DSNY staff to engage all stakeholders and to advance vital sanitation programs like the CWZ system over the past several years, and look forward to working with the new Committee on Sanitation and Solid Waste Management to continue this important work.

**Cafeteria Culture (CafCu) Testimony -**

**New York City Council, Committee on Sanitation - Budget Hearing, March 3, 2022**

Good afternoon, Chairwoman Nurse and Council Members on the Committee of Sanitation.

I am Debby Lee Cohen, Executive Director and Founder of Cafeteria Culture, Co-Director/Producer of the movie, **MICROPLASTIC MADNESS**, parent, educator, and Stage IV cancer patient. Personally, I am deeply concerned about climate and health impacts of our city's solid waste management decisions that disproportionately hurt Black, Brown and marginalized communities and our public schools' contribution to the global climate and plastic pollution crises.

**I am testifying to urge the Council to implement a universal curbside organics collection program for all schools and residents with a *plan* and timeline, a dramatic increase of funding for interdisciplinary pre-K-12 zero waste/climate education, and prioritization of NYCHA and Environmental Justice communities.**

Our City has been unjustly underfunding zero waste/climate education and services for our 1.1 million public school students for far too long, and especially in schools servicing students of color, immigrant communities, and NYCHA.

**Eco-anxiety suffered by our city's students is real and is increasingly recognized by health professionals. Students deserve the opportunity during the school day to take climate action, which we have observed to be an excellent antidote to anxiety.**

**Our children need to witness that adult decision makers are doing everything possible to reduce climate-warming, life threatening, greenhouse gas emissions. An immediate focus on methane reduction via mandatory organics - *which make up 30% of our waste stream and possibly as much as 50% of school cafeteria waste stream* - is an action that cannot wait.**

Based on a decade of leading school environmental education programs, cafeteria waste reduction pilots, and waste audits, Cafeteria Culture suggests the following;

1. **Expand the School Organics Collection Program** with a target date to provide *all* 1,800 NYC DOE schools with composting by Spring 2023. This should include education and updated messaging and signage that connects plastic and food waste to the climate crisis.

To effectively accomplish this, points 2-4 are necessary.

2. **Reduce single-use items and single-use plastics** in DOE School Food service, which will minimize the contamination of the organics stream.

- **Set a target date for school food service to be free of non-recyclable, single-use plastic packaging**, including condiment packets, utensil wrapping, and plastic film wrap;
- **Support expanding a plastic free menu day to one day per week;**
- **Support multiple REUSABLE and REFILLABLE pilots** to collect data and feedback and envision what Zero Waste cafeterias look like;

**Cafeteria Culture (CafCu, founded as Styrofoam Out of Schools) works with youth to creatively achieve zero waste/ climate smart schools communities and a plastic free biosphere. We teach innovative environmental education that fosters youth-led solutions by merging citizen science, civic action, media and the arts. By partnering with School Food Directors and students, we catalyzed the elimination of styrofoam trays from New York City schools and other cities.**

**We are ready to catalyze the elimination of the remaining single-use plastics from NYC school cafeterias, revive refill and reuse models and pilot new methods for dramatically reducing wasted food.**

**Cafeteria Culture is a member of the Save Our Compost Coalition and a Core Member of the US Break Free From Plastic movement.**





*Creatively working with youth to achieve zero-waste, climate smart school communities and a plastic free biosphere,*

- **Revise DOE contract requirements to reward vendors who offer products with minimal packaging & positive sustainable practices.**

**3. Reduce Wasted School Food** with a long term goal to handle all school organics locally, reducing long distance trucking. Pilots should include:

- **Offer vs. Serve** - improve understanding for both servers & students;
- **Advanced notice of menu each day** as part of morning announcements;
- **Shared Food Tables** - promotion and messaging, including safety;
- **Age and “need” specific signage** for all schools;
- **PreK and K** - size appropriate composting and recycling set-ups.

**4. Zero Waste/Climate Literacy for all PreK-12 students** - interdisciplinary curriculum beyond a science-only model that highlights zero waste education, Environmental Justice, student Climate leadership opportunities, and mastering the daily practice of sorting and waste reduction in the school cafeteria,

**NYC Council has the timely opportunity to lend support to NY State legislature on five introduced Climate Education bills that are in need of streamlining and improved language. Specific suggestions for NYCC Sanitation Committee:**

- **Pre-K** - pilot PK zero waste, sorting education, and provide age appropriate materials;
- **K-5** - classroom and cafeteria support for Cafeteria student leadership (i.e. [Cafeteria Rangers](#)); and (virtual) training sessions for Sustainability Coordinators, students, and OFNS staff.
- **Middle School** - pilot a student **Sustainability Leadership Certification** that can be used for high school admissions applications.
- **High School** - support in-cafeteria and in-school **Climate Action Days** - zero waste challenges with incentives; **provide official DOE community service hours** and **climate leadership recognition** that students can list on college and job applications.
- **High School Green Job training programs** (i.e. service corps) and paid internships for cafeteria Zero Waste, Composting Leadership.

— — —  
**Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) legislation**

Finally, we join the four NYC Solid Waste Advisory Boards (SWABs) in urging the NYC Council to call upon Governor Hochul and the State Legislature to establish an Extended Producer Responsibility system that:

- makes polluters pay,
- does NOT give polluters CONTROL of the EPR program, and
- sets targets within the legislation.

Thank you,  
Debby Lee Cohen and the Cafeteria Culture team

**[Watch MICROPLASTIC MADNESS for free on our YouTube channel, CafCu Media, April 15-24](#)**

(or contact us for a preview link)

an award winning movie, starring DOE students and screened in 42 countries

**[Youtube: CafCu Media](#) [twitter @cafeteriacu](#) [Instagram: @CafCu](#)**



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Nov 16th, 2021

## Testimony of the Center for Zero Waste Design

### Oversight Hearing on Advancements in Residential and Commercial Solid Waste Management Systems New York City Council Committee on Sanitation and Solid Waste Management

March 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2022

Universal and mandatory organics collection is essential to reach NYC's climate, livability and equity goals, but stop and start funding will never allow them to improve, grow in capacity and become affordable. The administration needs to commit to organics, and the [Mayor's Climate Leadership Team](#) needs to lead collaboration across city agencies. The current siloed approach where the Parks Department look to evict long term successful community compost nonprofits funded by the Department of Sanitation, is never going to lead to success.

Organics collection needs to be considered a climate, resilience and livability solution, not just a waste problem!

Here are three actions the city council should take now:

- Require an increase to the \$7 million in funding for the NYC Compost Project to expand drop-offs and composting, and require evaluation of the broad range of educational, health, and resilience benefits of community composting and gardening.
- Require that the [Mayor's Climate Leadership Team](#) lead the development of the upcoming Solid Waste Management Plan, due 2024, and ensure it is a comprehensive plan which considers the entire waste system, from separation within buildings, to collection on streets, to transfer sites and processing. The plan should include a path to achieve efficient organics collection, and sidewalks free from piles of trash bags, rats and litter, citywide. The City Council needs to approve this plan, and should require its immediate start, scope, and the high level leadership needed for its success.
- Provide the funding to immediately start to develop, pilot, evaluate and fine-tune the many strategies that will be necessary for the plan to be achievable and rooted in proven solutions tested in NYC.

We have outlined many strategies in our [Put Waste to Work: For Vibrant Streetscapes, Green Jobs and Healthy Neighborhoods](#) advocacy campaign, which shows how the city can transform the waste system in an integrated way, rather than the current siloed and piecemeal approach. Put Waste to Work contains strategies to circulate materials so reuse and repair comes before disposal; compact and contain waste so our sidewalks are clean, with fewer rodents and trucks, and compost organic waste to regenerate soils and support green spaces and urban agriculture.

Implementing such a plan would bring so many valuable benefits, including reduced litter, rats, vibrant streetscapes, green jobs and increased social and physical resilience. But it can only be implemented with leadership, collaboration, pilots and evaluation.

As Greg Anderson said, the current DSNY pilots are very small and budget constrained. The city needs to provide additional funding to vastly ramp up pilots of possible solutions. It also requires leadership on pilots from the Mayor's Office, to ensure the necessary collaboration of other city agencies and private stakeholders to ensure their success.

For example, shared roll-off containers, introduced in Battery Park City to reduce rats, eliminated trash bags on the sidewalk in that neighborhood, but are not an option for many developments because of zoning restrictions, so City Planning needs to be involved to solve this.

Organic equipment can reduce the volume of waste by 90% in 24 hours, creating organic fertilizer that can be returned to the farm system, offsetting fossil fuel fertilizer use. But trying to install these in existing buildings is really expensive, because DOB currently won't allow them to be hooked up to the plumbing stack to vent, a common practice in other countries.

And while clean curbs enclosures can work for low to mid density neighborhoods, they take up valuable curbside space, and there are other options, such as the pilot of semi-automated trucks for larger wheeled containers. We are working with London Terrace, which has 1600 apartments setting out waste on a single block onto 24th street. We watched one Saturday morning as 1000 bags of waste were brought up in wheeled containers and transferred to piles on the sidewalk by building staff and then hand loaded into trucks by DSNY. This time consuming, back breaking process took 3 hours. Instead containers brought up by the building staff could be hooked up to trucks and emptied in a fraction of the time. But DSNY need to add hoists for rear loading containers to their trucks, costing about 10,000 each, and plan for future trucks to have fast loading mechanisms, and DOT need to ensure that the containers can be rolled out to the curb.

Rationalizing collection schedules, for example cutting back on [3 times a week garbage pick up for low density residential blocks](#), but increasing recycling and organics pick ups city wide, especially high density neighborhoods, can improve streetscapes and collection efficiency.

Lastly the city needs to recognize and support the many educational, social, streetscape and green jobs benefits brought by microhauling and small-scale composting operations citywide. The city also needs to increase the \$7 million in funding for NYC Compost Project so it can expand drop-off sites and local composting to increase social and physical resilience, allowing green spaces to act as sponges, reducing flooding and cooling the city in summer.





## Testimony 3-4-22 NYC Council Sanitation Committee

Thank you, Chairperson Nurse and Members of the Sanitation Committee for this opportunity to support expanding DSNY's services to include more services that keep waste from being exported from New York City to landfills and burners. These services must include composting and more frequent and widely available local opportunities for collection of materials that can be recycled, or that are dangerous when landfilled.

According to the 2006 Solid Waste Management Plan waste export is supposed to be New York City's last choice for how to deal with solid waste streams. As the plan says, "As a whole, this SWMP outlines a new framework for waste management in New York City. As its starting point, it sets ambitious recycling goals and, by establishing the systems and public education necessary to reach those goals, ensures that the City will be putting an increasing percentage of its waste stream to beneficial use. In doing so, New York will not just be exporting in a manner that is cost-effective, environmentally responsible, and sensitive to its local communities: it will simply be exporting less." There has been progress in recycling since 2006. But why does such lavish spending on waste export continue in 2022, while already limited curbside composting is on the budget chopping block -- again?! Why do new composting bins appear on streets without notice or education about how to use them? Why has there never been clear DSNY criteria for how many households it takes in a how many square block area for a Queens Community District to qualify for composting services? Why are citizens still waiting for infrequent local recycling special events, or hauling their castoff electronics, chemicals, and textiles to a handful of sites?

Civics United for Railroad Environmental Solutions has been working with a coalition of civic associations and Queens Community Board 5 since 2009 to try to modernize freight rail and waste-by-rail. We are a member of the Queens Solid Waste Advisory Board. DSNY and Waste Management have been responsive to community concerns in their use of sealed, leakproof containers for Municipal Solid Waste-by-rail, the retooling of one old locomotive to modern Tier 4 emissions standards (see p. 2), and outbound direct shipment of MSW by rail from transfer stations. However, sometimes there are punctured cans, and a "death stench" from rotting putrescibles blights community air. MSW export by rail costs NYC a fortune, and results in problems for distant neighborhoods, which has, in turn, resulted in lawsuits.

There is ongoing use of high-polluting 1970's freight locomotives for waste-by-rail, in addition to the one modern locomotive. Other haulers ship crushed construction and demolition debris in open rail cars that emit waste odors, blowoff, and leachate. The sheer volume of waste, and facilities and scheduling constraints result in rail cars of waste parked on tracks in residential areas. Freight rail operations take place throughout the night, accompanied by blowing horns and explosive noises. More than 750,000 residents of Queens live within one kilometer of these freight rail facilities, where pollution impacts are the worst (see p. 3).

We respectfully submit that New York City should not be spending a fortune creating new problems like the ones we have described. We ask the city to recommit to the goals of the 2006 SWMP and make it a priority to use city funds, public education, and 21st C. technologies to reduce waste streams and community burdens.

Thank you. Mary Arnold, Board Member, Co-Founder



# Preliminary Data Shows Big NOx Reduction Opportunities with Locomotives Investments for New York

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## How to Make the Most of a \$127 million Investment for Immediate NOx Reduction


	Price Per Application	# of Vehicles or Equipment placed into Service for \$127 million	Anticipated NOx Reduction per Year per Project	Total Cost to Exclusively Fund a Particular Project	Cost to Remove Each lb of NOx (\$/lb)	Total NOx Reduction (lbs) per year
pre 1991 port truck replacement with Clean Diesel	\$110,000	1,155	1,282	\$127,000,000	\$86	1,480,127
pre 1991 port truck replacement with CNG	\$140,000	907	1,252	\$127,000,000	\$108	1,172,029
MY2000 bus replacement with Hydrogen	\$1,200,000	106	1,162	\$127,000,000	\$1,033	122,978
MY2000 bus replacement with Battery-Electric	\$880,000	144	1,162	\$127,000,000	\$757	167,698
MY2000 bus with Clean Diesel	\$370,000	343	1,062	\$127,000,000	\$348	364,524
T0 to T4 Clean Diesel switch locomotive	\$3,000,000	42	37,602	\$127,000,000	\$80	1,591,818

Source: (1) National Port Strategy Assessment: Reducing Air Pollution and Greenhouse Gases and U.S. Ports<sup>4</sup>, U.S. EPA (September 21, 2016). (2) "Clean Diesel Versus CNG Buses: Cost, Air Quality and Climate Impacts." Clean Air Task Force (2012). (3) "From Decelt to Transformation: How Connecticut Can Leverage Volkswagen Settlement Funds to Accelerate Progress to a Clean Transportation System. CDHN PIRG, January 18, 2017. (4) "Consortium to Fund New Flyer Hydrogen Buses to ACTransit", Passenger Transport, February 24, 2017. (5) Locomotive engine upgrade cost based on a range of industry estimates.


DIESEL

Tier 4 Switcher Locomotive repowers give NYS the biggest NOx reduction for each public dollar spent. Slide courtesy of Diesel Technology Forum

### Switch Locomotive "Repowers" are a Cost Effective NOx Reduction Strategy

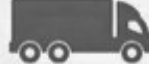


## SWITCH LOCOMOTIVES




Replacing **1** of the oldest engines with the newest clean diesel Tier 4 engines removes **37,602 lbs of NOx / Year.** This is equivalent to...

Replacing **29** older trucks

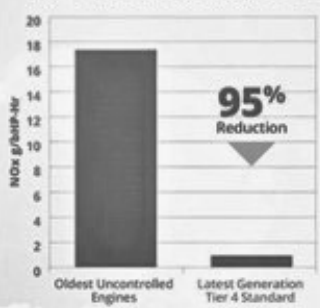


OR

Removing **30,000** cars for 1 year



**Tier 4 = Near Zero Emissions**



**95% Reduction**

**Upgrading Locomotive Switch Engines Delivers Cleaner Air Faster**

By 2020, the U.S. EPA estimates that only 5% of switch engines in service will be powered by the latest clean diesel engine. The VW Environmental Mitigation Trust represents an opportunity to get the latest clean diesel technology into service faster to generate significant air quality benefits immediately.

Repowering NYA's freight locomotives and LIRR's work trains will remove the NOx of more than a million cars from the MTA right of way. These high-polluting 1970's locomotives are still being used in NYC, where they do the most harm to the most people. Slide courtesy of the Diesel Technology Forum

## 40% less fuel + measurable reductions in ghg, local air pollution

October 1, 2019 / Brooklyn news / Williamsburg

### Trash dump express: New fuel-efficient locomotive rolls out in Williamsburg

Enlarge this image



Photo by Trey Pentecost

Waste Management showed off their recently-launched Green Locomotives at their Varick Avenue yards in Williamsburg on Sept. 26.

BY KEVIN DUGGAN

Waste honchos at a trash hauling business showed off a new “green” locomotive at a Williamsburg industrial yard on Sept. 26, which will help keep Kings County clean in more ways than one, according to an executive at the garbage company.

“It’s a much cleaner burning locomotive, much more fuel efficient,” said Jim Van Woert, director of diversion strategies at Waste Management.

Brooklyn news / Williamsburg, October 1, 2019

- 19.4 tons nitrogen oxide (NO<sub>x</sub>), a 99 percent reduction annually;
- 0.48 tons particulate matter (PM<sub>2.5</sub>), a 99 percent reduction annually; and
- 26,000 gallons of diesel saved, a 40 percent reduction annually.

US EPA “New York City Locomotive Repowers” October 2019

The map and table below show how many residents in NYC and Greater LI are adversely impacted by pollution from existing and proposed waste-by-rail facilities because they are within 1 km. (the yellow zone on the map), where pollution impacts from high polluting locomotives and open rail cars of landfill-bound waste are the worst. See pp. 68 - 70 of the Queens Solid Waste Advisory Board's The State of Waste in Queens for more information: <https://queensswab.nyc/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/Waste-Impacts.pdf>



A rough total population count would be 1,744,153 using ACS 2014-2018 data. This uses census tracts so it over selects.

Row Labels	Sum of acsEstimate!!RACE!!Total population
Bronx County	420091
Nassau County	264344
Queens County	765115
Suffolk County	294603
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>1744153</b>



Department of Sanitation | Funding for Curbside Composting

March 4, 2022

Good morning, my name is Jonas Schaller and I am the Director of Microhauling of Common Ground Compost, LLC. Our bike-powered microhauling division is called Reclaimed Organics and we have been collecting and processing food scraps from residents and businesses in Manhattan since 2014. The demand for our collection services among residents increased sharply during the pandemic after the City government decided to cut the curbside compost program. We heard countless times how disappointed and upset our fellow New Yorkers were about losing access to composting and we tried to fill the gap that the lack of City services left behind.

Our organization also helped maintain a round-the-clock accessible brown bin compost drop-off at Eastside Outside Community Garden in the East Village, where we collected about 500 pounds of food scraps per week. It was a great success - the program was working.

While I believe it was a mistake to halt the brown bin program in 2020, it would be an even bigger mistake not to double down now to fully fund and expand this vital program to all residents of New York City. Mr. Mayor, I urge you to grasp the importance of this moment and the importance of this decision. Future generations will bear the consequences of your actions today and won't judge you kindly if you fail to take the necessary steps to establish climate change mitigation as a pillar of your administration. Composting is an achievable, straightforward step in this process and New York needs more of it, not less. New Yorkers want to compost, it is up to you to give them the resources and support they need to participate in curbside composting.

Sincerely,

Jonas Schaller



Department of Sanitation | Organics Recycling Infrastructure is a Pillar of our Future

March 4, 2022

Good morning, my name is Meredith Danberg-Ficarelli. I am the Executive Director of Common Ground Compost LLC, a member of the Save Our Compost Coalition, and a Board Member of the US Composting Council. Through my work, I build zero waste programs and advocate for the expansion of access to waste reduction services. Our approach to education focuses on materials literacy, the power of individual behavioral change, and the recognition that all people must demand systemic change in order to build a livable and just future for all.

Climate change mitigation is not short-term policy. This administration's choice to spend its finite funds on climate-smart policy is a commitment to New Yorkers of the future - the kids and grandkids of voters who put this administration in office. As was shown in the IPCC report released on Monday Feb 28 2022, titled "Climate Change 2022: Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability", the impacts of climate change are hitting communities faster and harder than expected, and the impacts are being felt now. António Guterres, United Nations Secretary General, called the IPCC report "an atlas of human suffering and a damning indictment of failed climate leadership", in the way that it speaks to the absolute failure of leaders today to make decisions that allow citizens of the world to contribute to and participate in weaving the fabric of a livable Earth that supports all life. Continued inaction and pullback of social and financial support amplifies risk and promises more suffering, to be concentrated on the most vulnerable and most financially insecure individuals in our global community.

It is unacceptable to place the blame for a failed City program on a public that was not adequately informed of their options, the benefits of the program, or how to participate. As zero waste educators, we often tell people that recycling is confusing, and it is not their fault. Mr. Mayor, I'll say the same to you - our country does not have a consistent culture of recycling, and that is not your fault. But NYC does have an incredibly strong foundation of institutional knowledge, and of privately and publicly owned infrastructure, that allows our City to stand out as one that has already begun to build a localized and semi-decentralized circular economy. We have passionate people who have worked for decades to grow the social awareness that parallels physical infrastructure and we do not have time for reckless fiscal decisions to halt our progress. Stop holding our future hostage by defunding waste diversion initiatives. Let us build the infrastructure we need to support our future.

3.3.22

Dear NYC Council Members:

Hello

My name is Marisa DeDominicis, I am the Executive Director of Earth Matter NY Inc., a 501c3. Earth Matter is privileged to be a NYC Compost Project Partner. As the foot soldiers of the NYC compost movement, our job is to help our citizens become aware of organics as a resource and help teach systems for reducing waste into landfill systems and help capture nutrients essential for our planet's survival.

I'm dismayed to learn that Mayor Adams proposes to cut the compost budget in FY 23.

Composting will reduce the financial waste of exporting our organics to places that despoil our (less economically situated) neighbors and help set the standard for the world, who is watching NYC as THE world leader, and barometer on if we take our climate crisis seriously.

Composting is a basic answer to assist our city in becoming healthier, safer, and more resilient. We need to expand the budget and infrastructure for civic engagement and empowerment that composting represents. Composting in NYC is as much about building healthy communities as it is building healthy soils.

I, on behalf of our friends and members, implore you, City Council members, to expand the compost budget and mandate composting so **ALL** New Yorkers have the opportunity to shift their lifestyles to a culture where waste is viewed as a resource.

And while you are at it Council Members, please fund full-time sustainability coordinators for each and every school so that the education, and systems needed are put in place and replace the current voluntary sustainability coordinator positions, burdening our over strapped teachers.

Thank you for this opportunity to share my view.

Marisa

# East Village Community Coalition

143 Avenue B – Simplex

New York, NY 10009

(212) 979-2344

[www.evccnyc.org](http://www.evccnyc.org)



March 6, 2022

Testimony for City Council Committee on Sanitation March 4, 2022 10:30 AM

The East Village Community Coalition is known for our work to support independent small businesses and the well-being of residents. We write to express our concern for the proposed cuts to the Department of Sanitation budget as presently outlined, especially for corner basket service and the curbside composting program.

The Department of Sanitation underwent severe budget cuts during the pandemic, which despite the department's best efforts resulted in underserved corner baskets in our densely populated neighborhood. While wealthier neighborhoods' absentee residents may have reduced their waste output during this time and required less service, overflowing corner baskets fed a growing rat population in ours. Corner basket service in our neighborhood has only recently been partially restored. Any further cuts will set us back to an unacceptable level of service.

Mandatory curbside composting goes a long way to alleviate the overall problem of organic waste feeding the rat population. Containerizing organic waste reduces the food available to the rat population, which multiplies as food becomes available.

As a longtime East Village resident, I am very familiar with these issues. My block had a terrible problem which resulted in sandaled frat girls screaming on cue nightly- until the management stepped up: sealed the foundation, installed rat-proof trash containers and patrolled the tree pits. We have not seen rats on our block since, yet we encounter them nightly on Avenue B. This is not an issue at which to throw up one's hands, it's one to be addressed head on. Sanitation has a proven track record of success and only needs the necessary resources to match and improve on it.

We appreciate that the city is emerging from a pandemic and is operating with limited resources, but we believe that expanded sanitation services to neighborhoods supporting large numbers of destination nightlife restaurants is critical. We therefore request that the Department of Sanitation's budget be expanded, not cut, particularly in the areas of corner basket service and mandatory curbside recycling.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Laura Sewell". The signature is written in a light blue or grey ink on a white background.

Laura Sewell | Executive Director  
East Village Community Coalition





EQA

# Eastern Queens Alliance, Inc.

A Federation of Civic Associations in Southeast Queens

*“Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about things that matter”  
Martin Luther King, Jr.*

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Community Action Association,  
Inc.

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Environmental Science

Gloria Boyce-Charles  
Business/Education

Dawn Roberts-Semple, Phd  
Environmental Science

Honorable Sandy Nurse  
Chair, Sanitation Committee  
New York City Council

Dear Council Member Nurse,

Thank you for holding this important Sanitation hearing. The Eastern Queens Alliance is a federation of civic organizations in Southeast Queens, NY, advocating for an improved quality of life for all residents of Queens, NY, and surrounding areas. We do this by reaching out to the people in our communities to learn about the concerns that they would like to see addressed and resolved. This year, one of our initiatives is to bring awareness to our community about the impacts of global warming, especially upon environmental justice communities such as our own. Furthermore, we want to empower our community members to do their part in keeping our communities clean and helping to save our planet through intentional and responsible management of solid waste.

To do this, we have launched a solid waste management campaign entitled, “Waste Not...Talking Trash.” It is co-sponsored by several of our Queens elected officials and by the Queens Solid Waste Advisory Board (QSWAB), and consists of a series of virtual and in-person presentations and activities that challenge people to think differently about the things that they discard and the ways that they discard them. We seek to change the mindset and the behavior of our community members, making them more active participants in recycling and composting efforts and donators of unwanted goods.


Community response to this effort has been strong and we are confident that it will grow over time. Through our engagement with the community to date, we have learned that people are very concerned and discouraged by the amount of dumping and littering in our streets. Surely, this is not news to you. But you should be encouraged by the fact that they have expressed particular enthusiasm about participating in composting and recycling programs. They want to know how to engage in these practices most effectively. People want to be part of the solution. What is lacking they say, are consistent and equitable approaches to these programs, coupled with an active outreach to educate them on the importance and connection to clean communities and a safe planet. Our community members want to see an active marketing campaign that engages the New York City community and that specifies, clarifies and reinforces the behaviors that they must engage in to keep our communities clean and to help save our planet.

**This is why decreasing the budget for a standardized citywide curbside composting effort is particularly disheartening. It sends the wrong message at this critical time. Instead of “trashing” expanded curbside composting, we should be doubling down on our efforts by providing a clearly defined and equitable program that is consistent throughout the city and that includes active educational outreach and community engagement.**

The people of New York City want to live in a clean environment and on a healthy planet. The City can help by providing the right infrastructure and then actively engaging with communities through education and incentivization. An important first step for reaching out to the grassroots might be through the civics and non-profits in our NYC communities. They are important neighborhood influencers who could help spread key messages to the people. New York City, let’s invest in the right infrastructures to make our City and our planet a clean and safe place to live. And let’s rethink the ways we engage and incentivize our communities to make those infrastructures work.

We thank you for the opportunity to share the Eastern Queens Alliance’s position on this matter.

Sincerely,

  
Barbara E. Brown  
EQA Chairperson



Testimony to the NYC Council  
Committee on Sanitation & Solid Waste Management  
March 4, 2022

I'm Sarah McCollum Williams, Executive Director of Green Guerillas, a non-profit that supports community gardeners and activates youth engaged in Food Justice across the City. Thank you all for your time today.

Composting is an essential and simple activity that the City can undertake to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions and fight climate change. We respectfully request that -

- Continue to fund Community Composting and DSNY Zero Waste partner programs at the current level of \$7 million.
- Restore funding for the planned expansion of the Curbside Composting program to additional community boards.
- Make curbside composting mandatory curbside for all of NYC.

It is particularly important to maintain funding for all community composting programs. Cuts in this year's budget threatens funding for:

- Over [200 Food Scrap Drop-Off](#) sites, including farmers markets around the city, that provide composting options for all New Yorkers.
- Community composting sites that compost over 5 million lbs of food scraps and yard waste each year and provide that compost to over 500 greening projects throughout the city.
- Master Composter training for community gardens.
- Eight non-profit organizations that provide public composting services to New Yorkers citywide. GrowNYC, Big Reuse, Lower East Side Ecology Center, Earth Matters, NY Botanical Gardens, Queens Botanical Gardens, Brooklyn Botanical Gardens, and Snug Harbor all face cuts with this budget.

The city must fully invest in a robust, equitable, and accessible composting program. Requiring mandatory composting is an opportunity to prioritize a just transition, creating green jobs, engaging youth, and demonstrating a commitment to climate resilience. Thank you for your time and consideration today.





**Written Statement of GrowNYC to the New York City Council  
Committee on Sanitation and Solid Waste Management Oversight  
Hearing on Clean Streets and Expanding Vital Sanitation Service  
March 4, 2022**

Good morning, Chair Nurse and members of the Committee. Thank you for this opportunity to testify in support of expanding funding for composting in the FY23 preliminary budget. I am David Hurd, Director of Zero Waste Programs at GrowNYC, a nonprofit that has played a pivotal role in improving the environmental quality of life in NYC for over 50 years.

Since 2006, when GrowNYC's Zero Waste Programs were established, we have worked tirelessly with the NYC Department of Sanitation to achieve the City's Zero Waste Goals.

We are disappointed that the preliminary budget suspends expansion of the curbside compost program and reduces budget allocations for community composting by 50%, where GrowNYC plays an important role.

Irrespective of what happens with curbside, it is crucial that funding for community composting be maintained at FY22 levels or higher. In the absence of an expansion of the curbside program, public food scrap drop-off sites operated by GrowNYC and the seven non-profit organizations that constitute the NYC Compost Project become even more essential. Not only do they need to be maintained, but also expanded.

Simply put, community composting works. The food scrap drop-off sites operated by GrowNYC and the NYC Compost Project have collectively established over 200 collection sites Citywide this fiscal year, operating in 57 of the city's 59 community districts. In addition, we are only 3 "clusters" short of meeting the City's goal of one food scrap drop-off site per 50,000 residents in each borough. Reducing funding for community composting would force many of these sites to close, once again diminishing the public's confidence in these programs. We should not continue to stop and start these programs if we expect buy-in from the public when we do achieve mandatory, citywide curbside compost collections.

In FY22, over \$7 million was allocated to GrowNYC and the NYC Compost Project. We recommend this be expanded to \$10 million in FY23. The FY22 funding was a significant increase over the \$2.8 million allocated to these eight organizations in FY21

and allowed GrowNYC to expand from 16 to 51 food scrap drop off sites in FY22. We will be operating 57 by the end of the fiscal year. GrowNYC has already diverted almost 1.6 million pounds of food scraps this fiscal year and are nearing a milestone of having diverted 20 million pounds – 10,000 tons -- of food scraps from disposal since we began our program in 2011. This represents a greenhouse gas savings of approximately 7,200 metric tons of CO2 equivalent.

Following the restoration of funding after being eliminated in FY20, the response from the public has been phenomenal. Participation and tonnages at our sites have increased 40-50% over pre-pandemic levels. However, while the budget for the NYC Compost Project is currently baselined in the proposed budget, the funding for GrowNYC is not, including our Compost Program, our popular Stop 'N' Swap program, and funding for GrowNYC's Zero Waste Schools Program. This high-impact program builds environmental leadership among NYC public school students and diverts school waste along DSNY school organics routes and is critical to reaching the city's zero waste goals.

Here's an example of the significant impact of community composting: In December 2021, the seven curbside compost collection routes collected 209.5 tons of organics for composting. GrowNYC and just two of the NYC Compost Project partners collected 192 tons that same month – 92% of all the material collected curbside.

Any reduction in funding for community composting eliminates the educational value that GrowNYC and the Compost Project provide, including street tree care events, educational programming at GrowNYC and NYC Compost Project sites, free compost giveaways to the public and the Master Composter Program. Our presence in the city's public spaces is vital to educate the public and build their trust in municipal recycling and composting programs.

We encourage City Council to support mandatory, citywide curbside composting so that it becomes an essential service that reaches all New Yorkers in the same way recycling does. Curtailing funding for curbside composting and reduced funding for community composting will have long-term negative implications, undermining the City's zero waste goals and delaying environmental justice.

We respectfully request the City Council to allocate \$10 million in the FY23 budget to maintain and expand the network of community-based public food scrap drop-off sites. Further, we encourage the Council to provide funding for an implementation plan for mandatory, citywide curbside organics collections. That is the only way for composting to become both cost effective and equitable to all New Yorkers. Without these programs, the city will fall short of its OX30 goals.



I would like to thank Chairperson Nurse and the Committee for the opportunity to speak with you today.

With gratitude,

David Hurd  
Director, Zero Waste Programs  
GrowNYC

*For 50 years, GrowNYC has been transforming communities throughout the five boroughs by giving New Yorkers the tools and resources they need to make our city cleaner, healthier, and more sustainable. Whether it's operating the world-famous Union Square Greenmarket, building a new community garden, teaching young people about the environment, or increasing recycling rates through education, GrowNYC is hard at work in your neighborhood. GrowNYC is a privately-funded 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization.*





## **Statement of GrowNYC to the New York City Council Committee on Sanitation and Solid Waste Management Oversight Hearing on Clean Streets and Expanding Vital Sanitation Service**

**March 4, 2022**

Good morning, Chairperson Nurse and members of the Committee. Thank you for this opportunity to testify in support of expanding funding for composting and composting education in the FY23 preliminary budget. I am Kate Wimsatt, Director of Zero Waste Schools at GrowNYC, a nonprofit that has played a pivotal role in improving the environmental quality of life in NYC for over 50 years.

Like my colleague, David Hurd, I am here to express our disappointment that the preliminary budget once again slashes funding for curbside compost programming, including no allocation for important educational programs to support NYC public schools to help them achieve Zero Waste goals.

Since 2011, GrowNYC Zero Waste Schools (ZWS) has partnered DSNY and the DOE Office of Sustainability to provide education and operational support to PreK – 12 public schools across all five boroughs. Our programming has been instrumental in increasing recycling and curbside compost collection rates in the largest school system in the United States, preparing the next generation of New Yorkers by providing them with the tools to understand the importance of waste reduction, composting and recycling and effectively practice these critical behaviors.

Our work had a measurable impact. From FY15 to FY19, the first 100 ZWS receiving support from GrowNYC improved their organics tonnages 103%, compared to a 22% improvement along other school compost collection routes during that same time. MGPC tonnages improved by 74% at schools receiving support, while decreasing 7% along other routes.

Currently 924 out of 1,876 New York City schools receive DSNY curbside composting collection. To reach NYC zero waste goals all schools must be enrolled in curbside compost collection services while receiving the necessary support to do so successfully. GrowNYC Zero Waste Schools provided that support all 130 schools included in the curbside composting expansion in FY19. At the time of the school closures on March 16, 2020, these schools were performing well: sorting stations were consistently set up and serviced by staff and 80% of schools had less than 25% compost and MGPC contamination – a remarkable achievement which would have only improved had we been able to finish out the year.

The immeasurable impact of our programming is as significant, perhaps more so. Each day we encounter New York City students who are eager to learn how they can make a difference. As climate change awareness increases, so does climate distress and anxiety - a real and concerning issue for our youth. By providing opportunities for students to express their ideas to create change in their schools and participate in citywide programming available in school and in their communities that aim to reduce climate impacts, students have an outlet for action, which is essential to reducing climate anxiety. This year, one of our outreach coordinators was reacquainted with a young man they first met when he was a member of his middle school Green Team. Three years and one pandemic later, our staff member was thrilled to see that this student is now a leader of his high school green team. He especially appreciates learning about compost and seeing decomposition in action. When asked the reason he keeps coming back to the Green Team he responded, "Because it helps me with my mental stress and helps make the environment safer".

It is vital the City Council take action, demonstrating to students across the city that adults in leadership are serious about tackling the climate crisis that directly impacts their future by increasing accessibility to curbside compost collection in schools and in the community.

In the absence of the ideal of mandatory citywide curbside composting, we must at a minimum continue to support and expand the programs that are successfully operating FSDO sites as well as provide for strong, proven support for schools - so that the city can continue to increase equitable access and grow awareness of organics diversion that will expand the base of participants.

We respectfully request that City Council allocates \$10 million in the FY23 budget for the NYC Compost Project, GrowNYC's Zero Waste Programs including the Compost Program and Stop 'N' Swap program, and funding for GrowNYC's Zero Waste Schools, a high-impact program that builds environmental leadership among NYC public school students and diverts school waste along DSNY organics routes

I would like to thank Chairperson Nurse and the Committee for the opportunity to speak with you today.

Respectfully submitted  
Kate Wimsatt  
Director, GrowNYC Zero Waste Schools  
[kwimsatt@grownyc.org](mailto:kwimsatt@grownyc.org);





Lower East Side Ecology Center  
Testimony to New York City Council  
Committee on Sanitation and Solid Waste Management  
March 4, 2022

The Lower East Side Ecology Center started its program in 1987 by offering community based recycling opportunities for paper, bottles and cans by creating community based drop off programs in the Lower East Side. Currently, we provide opportunities for New Yorkers to compost and recycle electronic waste, environmental stewardship opportunities, and educational programming. Through our programs New Yorkers can learn how their everyday choices impact the long-term sustainability and health of our city and our neighbors.

We are testifying to urge the City to include funding in the FY23 budget for:

- Meeting the growth in demand for Community Composting programs
- Continuing the expansion of the Curbside Composting program
- Creating an achievable plan for providing a citywide Mandatory Curbside Composting program.
- Expanding access to electronic waste recycling

By supporting these four items in the FY23 budget, the city shows its support for working towards zero waste and environmental justice.

**Expand funding for Community Composting**

New Yorkers are eager to compost their food waste. Over the last year we have seen participation at our food scrap drop off sites grow more so than ever before. The growth being significant enough that we are nearing the capacity of our current program and would need extra funding to support our work should the growth trend continue.

We urge that the city not only maintain the FY22 level of funding, but to expand funding to account for the growth in demand for these community composting programs run by GrowNYC and the NYC Compost Project partners, which LES Ecology Center is a part of. For the last 30 years these programs provide an expansive network across the 5 boroughs of food scrap drop-off sites for NYC residents and compost education to hundreds of community groups to then build up their own community composting programs. These programs contribute to the health of our community, create green jobs and job training opportunities, and offers community engagement and education through volunteer opportunities and workshops. These programs are critical to public education around all things compost and the expansion of these programs complement the success of a curbside composting program.

**Restore funding for curbside composting expansion**

After over a decade of public investment in composting, the proposed cuts to the curbside composting expansion represent a massive setback to the city's efforts to establish composting programs and reach zero waste goals. The city must fully invest in a robust, equitable, and



accessible composting program and this is not achieved by removing the funding for such a program. The start and stop nature of the curbside compost over the last few years has led to more confusion, reduced participation and eroded trust in city waste diversion programs. This cannot go on like this.

### **The Future of Mandatory Curbside Composting**

We urge the City Council not to stop here, but to introduce and pass legislation for mandatory citywide curbside organics collection program. An important step to realizing this is to allocate funding to do this important planning work to create a successful universal curbside composting service.

Organic materials make up 30% of our overall waste stream, scaling up composting by diverting this portion of the waste stream away from landfills and incineration will not only save the City money in waste disposal costs, but will bring environmental justice to communities by reducing truck traffic to waste transfer stations, create local green jobs and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

### **Electronic Waste Recycling**

NYC residents are currently faced with few options for responsible recycling of e-waste due to the service reductions in DSNY's curbside e-waste collection program. Meanwhile, many retailers that recycle electronics either do not accept bulky items, such as televisions, or they charge a recycling fee. The FY23 budget needs to support opportunities for electronics recycling through SAFE events and the hazardous waste drop-off centers.

We also encourage the city to bring back its curbside e-waste collections. Many New Yorkers lack transportation or physical mobility to bring these often heavy electronics to a drop-off site. By bringing back curbside e-waste collection, the city can provide equitable access to electronics recycling.

Thank you for creating the opportunity to share our thoughts. We look forward to working with the City to implement these goals and create access to organics recycling through a citywide curbside program a reality.

Sincerely,  
Renee Crowley  
Deputy Director  
Lower East Side Ecology Center

I am Joyce Bialik, member of the Manhattan Solid Waste Advisory Board, and I am testifying today about one form of toxic litter in our environment.

They are a health and environmental hazard for everyone, and especially for smokers. They may be hard to see but they are the second largest category of litter and number 4.5 trillion worldwide annually. I am talking about cigarette filters – or butts.

State Senator Liz Krueger has introduced a bill to ban the sale of single use filter cigarettes and e-cigarettes. S1278

As cigarette butts are dropped on our streets they go down our drains, into local waters, and leach into our soil. They endanger fish, birds, plants, and ultimately, humans. Filters are not biodegradable. They are made of cellulose acetate, a plastic that breaks down into microplastics, are eaten by fish, become part of their flesh, and are then consumed by humans. The filters contain lead, cadmium, and arsenic which kill fish and other wildlife. \* For humans, such toxins have been found to damage young brains and cause cancer, skin lesions, and cardiovascular disease.

What's more the filters do not protect the health of smokers. They are a marketing device. In fact, filters make smoking more dangerous because as filters make smoking feel less harsh they are inhaled more deeply, which draws carcinogens in the smoke further into the smokers' lungs.\*

Because of the environmental and health hazards of cigarette filters I strongly support Senator Krueger's bill to ban the sale of single use filter cigarettes and e cigarettes. I ask that the city council as a whole pass a resolution in support of this bill and I encourage each council member to include an article in their newsletter alerting all residents -- and especially smokers -- about the issues. Smokers should be told to hold their butts for a trash can or a butt receptacle rather than drop them on the ground. In the Manhattan SWAB we have distributed free pocket ashtrays for this purpose.

\* [\\*Kicking Butts: NY Bill Proposes Banning Filtered Cigarettes](#)



## **Sanitation Committee Hearing Testimony - Friday, March 4 at 10:30 Clean streets and expanding vital sanitation service**

Thank you for this opportunity to submit testimony. I'm Allison Allen, a member of the Manhattan Solid Waste Advisory Board (MSWAB) and Chair of its organics committee.

There is a critical need for expanding vital sanitation services to include mandatory organics collection city wide for a number of very important reasons. Although the Mayor recently requested cuts to the curbside collection program, universal composting is an essential service required in order to advance the city's Zero Waste by 2030 goals, combat climate change, ensure environmental justice and deter rats.

### **COMPOSTING PARTICIPATION**

The Mayor's statement that "a minimal number of people are actually participating in the program and that it's a broken system," is not surprising. The starting and stopping of our city's composting program that resulted from COVID budget cuts resulted in confusion, broken habits, and set participation back. We cannot continue to start and stop these essential climate mitigation programs.

The fact that participation in the brown bin program is voluntary also prevents full participation. In the 7 districts that have access to curbside composting, we've constantly heard from New Yorkers that they want to compost, but their building management refuses to enroll in the program. As long as composting remains voluntary, this will continue to happen.

In addition, The program was not adequately funded or well publicized. There is low awareness of the program due to the lack of communications and outreach to the general public explaining the reasons why and how they should separate their food waste at home and place it for collection. Educational programs need to motivate participation by explaining how zero waste and climate change are related and how converting food waste to compost helps agriculture. It is simply an extension of the recycling program. Increasing participation will make the program more economic as it is for the recycling program. But, designing and implementing a successful education and enforcement program will require significantly more funding for marketing, education, communications and outreach to the public at large, in multiple languages. In San Francisco and Seattle where they achieve far greater diversion from disposal and collect organics, they spend \$3 per person per year on education. By contrast we spend \$0.86.

### **FINANCIAL IMPACT**

We applaud that the Mayor wants to "get it right" and "not use taxpayers' dollars just to do a symbolic program". MSWAB has done some analyses that we will share shortly that shows that NYC's policy of exporting 1 million tons of organic material to landfill/incineration annually creates significant fiscal, environmental, social and opportunity costs for the city. The cost of NOT having a mandatory program is actually greater than the cost of having a mandatory program when the economic, social and climate impacts are taken into account

MSWAB has a [fact sheet summarizing export costs](#) and is preparing a more detailed document related to the savings and costs of canceling NYC's organics collection program. This information will be shared with the public as taxpayers don't realize the extent of how their tax dollars are being spent to export the city's waste currently ([approximately \\$420M in 2021](#)) and that there are better options for recovering food waste and reusables overall.

The significant financial impact of curbside composting is one of the many reasons WHY all New Yorkers should recover their food waste. Other important reasons why NYC needs universal mandatory compost collection include:

### **COMPOSTING CONTRIBUTES TO SOIL HEALTH**

The Mayor has made his plant based diet well known but the healthy vegetables he endorses require healthy soil to grow. Compost is a soil amendment that nourishes the soil naturally, without pesticides. He himself could really make a difference and raise awareness for the value of composting by simply adding a couple of talking points when he speaks of the benefits of his plant based diet.

- This message might particularly resonate with the growing market of people that seek and pay a premium to buy organic food, as compost is especially important in organic farming. The US organic market has grown significantly year to year with annual sales over [\\$62B in 2020 \(a 12% increase over prior year\)](#).

### **COMPOSTING HELPS THE PLANET**

In addition to health benefits, the Mayor could also promote the benefits to the environment as food waste sent to landfills decomposes and emits methane, which contributes to global warming. Composting is one easy thing everyone can do to combat change. That message needs to get out.

Globally, if food waste was a country, it would be the 3rd largest emitter of greenhouse gas (behind China and the US), [according to the UN](#).

### **ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE**

I have included a sample chart at the end which clearly shows the disparity in one of the current areas receiving service. The disparity applies in the other 6 districts as well. We can supply charts for all of the current areas receiving service, if needed.

The Mayor announced the creation of his climate leadership team to focus on environmental protection and justice across the city and has committed to conducting NYC's first comprehensive study of environmental justice. One finding is likely to be that environmental justice communities (including NYCHA) won't be served equally by curbside composting under the current model, only when it is made mandatory and universal.

His administration said they are committed to rolling out a comprehensive system that will allow NYC to offset the effects of climate change and unnecessary carbon emissions. Mandating composting is integral to leading on climate and environmental justice.

### **RATS**

We all know the city is overrun with rats. They have no shortage of food as 34% of the contents of black plastic garbage bags, we place out on the curb, is food waste.

The DSNY brown bins are rat proof when used properly. As the city looks at options for containerizing waste, we should maximize the free option that already exists with the brown bin program. A stronger partnership with Department of Health could be developed to integrate brown bin program messaging throughout areas that index high for rats and in conjunction with DOH's rat portal. Anyone that reports a rat complaint, seeks information or help with rats should be made aware of the free rat proof DSNY brown bins.

By removing food from black bag garbage we can also decrease the number of bags piled up on our streets, blocking sidewalks - potentially by a third. By removing the organic waste (the heaviest contents of black garbage bags), it's likely that fewer bags will split open, due to their heft, spilling garbage onto the streets.

**NYC LAGS BEHIND OTHER CITIES**

We can look to all the other cities, states and countries that have already implemented mandatory organics collection effectively to see how recovering food waste has become a vital service and is normalized as part of daily life. The Mayor has committed to doing that and we hope it is prioritized in order to rework, improve and perfect our current system.

**ZERO WASTE BY 2030**

We will not come close to achieving Zero Waste by 2030 goals without a mandatory citywide organics program. MSWAB has drafted an overview of legislation needed for [getting to Zero x 2030](#) which includes key factors to include in developing a mandatory city wide organics collection program and look forward to speaking with you all about it in the near future.

**Demographic breakdown - MN06 vs NYC Total Population (other charts available upon request)**

	MN06		New York City		Pctg. Pt.
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	
Total population	160,425	100.00%	8,804,190	100.00%	0
Hispanic/Latino (of any race)	14,270	8.90%	2,490,350	28.30%	-19.4
White nonhispanic	104,434	65.10%	2,719,856	30.90%	34.2
Black/African American nonhispanic	5,734	3.60%	1,776,891	20.20%	-16.6
Asian nonhispanic	28,200	17.60%	1,373,502	15.60%	2
Some other race nonhispanic	1,528	1.00%	143,632	1.60%	-0.7
Nonhispanic of two or more races	6,259	3.90%	299,959	3.40%	0.5
Total housing units	102,101	100.00%	3,618,635	100.00%	0
Occupied housing units	89,331	87.50%	3,370,448	93.10%	-5.6
Vacant housing units	12,770	12.50%	248,187	6.90%	5.6

**Prepared for the Committee on Sanitation and Solid Waste  
March 4, 2022**

Thank you for the opportunity to share testimony today. I am thrilled to be able to speak to this body and excited to welcome the new leadership and new members. My name is Lisa Bloodgood and I am the Executive Director of North Brooklyn Neighbors, a community organization located in Brooklyn's Community Board 1, encompassing and serving the neighborhoods of Greenpoint and Williamsburg.

Sanitation issues have been and continue to be of particular concern to our community. Our organization was founded 28 years ago to fight the illegal waste transfer stations on our waterfront. Since then, our neighborhood has remained overburdened and continues to feel the impacts of NYC's trash and waste more heavily than most other neighborhoods. As estimated in the 2019 report "Trashing New York's Neighborhoods" put out by Transform Don't Trash, approximately 1,700 tons of commercial waste alone transited through North Brooklyn daily. The accompanying air pollution, traffic and noise is harmful to our community's health and environment. We are therefore very invested in decisions made about sanitation issues in our City.

Of particular concern to us is the fate of the City's organics programs. As I'm sure you know, the potential to divert around a third of the City's waste would be meaningful in so many ways. Not only would fewer trucks rumble through our neighborhood streets moving to and from waste transfer stations, but the benefits of organics recycling through reductions in methane emissions generated from landfills are global and critical in contributing to the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions.

**We are very concerned about the Mayor's proposed 50% cut to the Community Composting Program and ask that it be fully funded.** For years, this program has been not only diverting organic waste from landfills, but has been processing food scraps and creating compost, an incredibly valuable resource. This compost has benefitted city parks, community gardens, individuals, and perhaps most importantly, has sequestered carbon in our City's soils and benefited our urban forest. The proposed cuts would be devastating to the groups currently working on community composting and that have done so much to build, maintain, and grow enthusiasm and buy-in to composting in the City of New York, and remain one of the City's best avenues to promote organics recycling.

**Additionally, we ask that the committee carefully consider, and push back against, the proposed cuts to the curbside compost program.** The mayor has dismissively called the

program “symbolic.” We would ask the committee to consider why the program may not be as successful as it could be, work to address those problems and fix what could be a phenomenal program. Curbside composting in North Brooklyn was rolled out as a pilot program, with pickup and rules for services continually changed. Pickups were frequently missed, and then the program was abruptly paused as COVID hit. Later, residents were asked to “opt-in” to a curbside program which most of the City does not have access to, and that has been perceived as constantly being in danger of being canceled once again. History shows us that these suspensions and changes to service do not have temporary effects, but in fact can do long term damage to its success if not addressed. Let us not take organics any further down this path.

Additionally, our neighborhood is home to the Newtown Creek Wastewater Treatment Plant, rebranded as the Newtown Creek Resource Recovery Facility. For years, our community has been told about the plan to use organic materials collected from the curbside service to produce methane gas through the wastewater treatment process, enough to power thousands of homes. Yet this program has continually been delayed and timelines missed, the methane is being produced but instead of captured and utilized as a renewable resource, the vast majority of it is flared off, contributing to local pollution and greenhouse emissions.

The City has the resources in place, the innovative people, and the imperatives of the Climate Crisis necessary to make organics recycling a successful program, producing rich compost and valuable renewable energy which would benefit our communities. Unfortunately, through mismanagement and delays, the program has not met its goals. Rather than attributing the curbside composting issues to a lack of enthusiasm for the program and changing the plans yet again, we would ask the City take on the responsibility for the perceived failure of the program and instead truly commit to a plan to allow all New York City residents to access the critical piece of infrastructure that is organics recycling. The Mayor's proposed cuts would save little but would do serious damage to public confidence in our recycling and climate change programs. In summary, we ask that the City fully fund community composting and continue to move forward with plans to ensure that all New Yorkers have access to organics recycling with an eye towards making this waste diversion mandatory.



*Photos: Ashley Cruce, Master Composter (left); Composters at JHSCRAPS (Jackson Hts).*

### **March 4th 2022 Hearing Testimony by Ashley Cruce:**

Dear Councilmembers of the Committee on Sanitation and Solid Waste Mgt.,

My name is Ashley Cruce (resident of Jackson Hts) and I am an Environmental Educator at Queens Botanical Garden in Flushing, Queens and a proud NYC Compost Project Master Composter (trained in 2012 at QBG). I am a passionate booster for composting as a long-time gardener and environmentalist. I have directly benefited from NYC Compost Projects: **BigReuse** and **QBG Compost Project**.

Currently, I am a Master Composter volunteer with 3 different community compost sites in Queens (two in Jackson Hts & one in E. Elmhurst). We rely on the overall support of the NYC Compost Projects, and specifically BigReuse, which handles our scraps' overflow at JHSCRAPS Community Composting Site (Jackson Hts). The demand by residents for composting food scraps is significant in our n'hood in CB3, which has never been eligible for Curbside Organics Collection, sadly.

I am writing to ask that you reverse the harmful cuts to the NYC community composting program and announce a plan to scale up to a citywide, universal compost collection program that enables *\*all\** New Yorkers to compost their food scraps. The Mayor's proposed cuts would save little (less than 1.3% of the overall Sanitation budget) but would do serious damage to public confidence in the City's recycling, organics, and climate change programs.

The climate crisis cannot wait. Methane from landfilling organic waste accounts for 17% of US methane emissions. Methane has more than 80 times the warming power of carbon dioxide over 20 years. It is unjust for NYC to continue landfilling and burning our waste in low-income communities and communities of color, when much of it can be composted, recycled, or donated.

As a supporter of Save Our Compost and member of Queens Climate Project, we call on the City to include the following in the FY2023 budget:

- 1) Fully fund Department of Sanitation (DSNY) Community Composting programs which provide over 200 Food Scrap Drop Offs throughout the city and local composting sites

that produce compost for our Parks and community gardens. The Community Composting should not only continue to be funded at the current level of \$7 million, but also be expanded to meet the increasing demand for these programs with additional funding to equitably locate community composting sites in communities that do not have one.

2) Restore funding for the planned expansion of the current opt-in Curbside Composting program, ensuring that environmental justice communities are included and prioritized.

3) Require the City to develop a plan for developing a citywide curbside compost program by 2025. Provide mandatory citywide curbside composting so New Yorkers in all residential buildings and schools can compost as easily as they can recycle. We should be incentivizing this vs. just mandating due to the Climate Crisis!!!

Sincerely,  
Ashley Cruce, MA, LMSW

*QBG Environmental Educator (since 2015)--Flushing, Queens  
NYC Compost Project hosted by QBG: Master Composter (2012)--Flushing*

*JHScraps Community Composting Site--Jackson Hts.[affiliated with Jackson Hts. Beautification Group (JHBG)]*

*Riis/Queensbridge Community/Senior Garden (MAP N'hood Stat Program)--Long Island City  
McIntosh Community Garden & Compost site---E. Elmhurst*

*[Green Thumb garden, owned by Brooklyn Queens Land Trust (BQLT)]*

*Dunolly Gardens' Co-op Composting site--Jackson Hts.*

*PS69Q & PS92Q Green Team School Garden & Compost Volunteer- Jackson Hts. & Corona*





**Testimony of Carlos Castell Croke  
Associate for NYC Programs  
New York League of Conservation Voters**

**City Council Committee on Sanitation and Solid Waste Management  
Hearing on Clean Streets and Expanding Vital Sanitation Services  
March 4th, 2022**

Good afternoon, my name is Carlos Castell Croke and I am the Associate for New York City Programs at the New York League of Conservation Voters (NYLCV). NYLCV represents over 30,000 members in New York City and we are committed to advancing a sustainability agenda that will make our people, our neighborhoods, and our economy healthier and more resilient. I would like to thank Chair Nurse for the opportunity to testify today.

At NYLCV we firmly believe that a comprehensive and eco-friendly waste management system is essential to the cleanliness and health of our City. We have recognized this through plans and initiatives like zero by 30 (0X30), commercial waste zones, and the curbside composting pilot. Drastically reducing our waste, creating efficient collection systems, and expanding recycling programs will help to decrease climate change inducing emissions and keep trash from piling up on our sidewalks.

Therefore, we were disheartened to see the composting program expansion cut in the Mayor's preliminary budget. This program was implemented with the intention of expanding it to the entire city, but over the past years it has been heavily neglected. We know from previous recycling suspensions that the City struggles to regain lost ground, people often lose good habits they build when programs are stopped. Yet another shift in the composting program as it slowly makes its way back will only cause further confusion and regression on our climate goals. We must see the continued expansion of the composting program along with other common sense waste management programs that continue to reduce waste, emissions, and unhealthly norms.

In addition to composting, we must adopt design guidelines for buildings and implement containerization on our streets to streamline waste collection and prevent buildup on our sidewalks and in trashrooms. We also need to adopt more single use reduction measures, such as Skip the Stuff, and invest in public education programs to teach residents how to waste less and how to take advantage of the City's various laws and programs. We should also establish a multitude of approaches to organic waste management, not just with our curbside pilot, but also with public private partnerships and community composting drop off sites.



We hope that when the Council releases their budget response it will be true to the commitments many made around expanding composting in the City and fund the expansion of the current program. We look forward to working with the Council and this committee to push forward the policies and programs I mentioned in order to advance the City's waste reduction and climate goals and, as the chair has eloquently put it, get sanitation done.

Thank you.



**Comments of Justin Wood, Director of Policy  
New York Lawyers for the Public Interest  
to New York City Council on Sanitation on March 4, 2022  
regarding Oversight of Vital Sanitation Services**

Good morning, Sanitation Chair Nurse and members of the committee. I am the Director of Policy at New York Lawyers for the Public Interest, a founding member of the Transform Don't Trash New York City and Save Our Compost coalitions.

To put it bluntly, we shouldn't have to gather here today, and our council members shouldn't have to use this initial sanitation committee hearing to discuss another round of cuts to vital sanitation services in our city in the proposed budget.

In short, we know too much to accept another austerity budget for sanitation: we know about the overwhelming urgency of the climate crisis and the substantial contribution of landfilled and incinerated solid waste to greenhouse gas emissions; we know that sporadic half-measured approaches to composting and recycling programs are destined to confuse and dishearten the public, and fail; and we know that the solid waste system continues to place unjust burdens on low-income communities and communities of color that receive fewer waste services while facing the greatest harms from a truck- and pollution-intensive waste export system.

One of the bright spots in the sanitation landscape is the City Council's immediate commitment to fighting for a more equitable and sustainable solid waste system, which is heartening. We urge you to use your full oversight and budgeting authority to that end.

As soon as possible, we hope to work with this committee on:

- 1) Introducing and passing a plan to give every New Yorker – whether a tenant or homeowner – the opportunity to efficiently separate and recycle food scraps with ease, as well as scale up composting to sharply reduce the amount of organic waste we bury in landfills and burn in

incinerators every day.

2) Ensuring that the City follows through on the waste equity commitment in the Solid Waste Management Plan. This should include incorporating the marine transfer stations into the commercial waste system to reduce the inefficient routing hugely disproportionate numbers of commercial waste trucks traversing communities like the South Bronx and North Brooklyn.

3) A plan to bring full and equitable collection services, waste reduction and containerization technology, and composting and recycling services to communities most burdened by large piles of trash bags, rats, and other vermin – especially NYCHA buildings. We stress that in addition to generating odors, rat infestations, and disease vectors, omnipresent garbage bags present a major physical barrier to safe sidewalk and street access for New Yorkers with disabilities.

4) Finally, we urge the City to ensure full and robust implementation of Local Law 199 of 2019 – the landmark Commercial Waste Zones system – that has been delayed for two years now. This law will make private sanitation far more efficient, hold private haulers accountable to comprehensive, enforceable contracts with the City, and, for the first time, will require the private sector to meet clear standards on customer service, recycling and composting services for small businesses, worker safety programs, and opportunities for Minority and Women-Owned Businesses. However, without expeditiously completing the Request for Proposals (RFP) and contract negotiations scheduled for this spring and summer, the commercial waste industry will continue to lack the regulations, financial stability, and standards necessary for major investments in waste reduction, zero-emissions trucks, cleaner and safer infrastructure for our city.

Thank you to Chair Nurse and the committee for this opportunity to testify today. Both this hearing and yesterday's spirited Get Sanitation Done rally showed that New York City has legislators deeply committed to climate investments, to environmental justice, to clean and safe streets, and to our essential sanitation workers. We look forward to working with all of you to make those visions a reality.

**Justin Wood**  
**Director of Policy**  
**New York Lawyers for the Public Interest**  
**151 West 30<sup>th</sup> Street, 11<sup>th</sup> floor**  
**New York, NY 10001**  
**jwood@nylpi.org**  
**(212) 244-4664**

March 4, 2022

Good afternoon Chair Nurse and Members of the Committee on Sanitation and Solid Waste Management:

My name is Mark Dicus, Executive Director of the SoHo Broadway Initiative. We are the not-for-profit organization that manages the neighborhood-focused business improvement district on Broadway from Houston Street to Canal Street in Manhattan.

Thank you Chair Nurse for holding this hearing on clean streets and expanding sanitation services.

- Business improvement districts provide important supplemental sanitation services in neighborhoods throughout the city, but the City should also provide important funding in other high-traffic commercial and mixed-use areas that need supplemental sanitation services that may be outside of or adjacent to business improvement districts
- Each day, our corners pile up with unsightly bags of litter-basket waste waiting to be collected by DSNY. Additional litter basket service, which was reduced during the pandemic, must be restored or increased.
- Waste management reform and innovation is also an important part of keeping our neighborhoods clean. We are eagerly awaiting the planning for and launch of the Commercial Waste Zones program. In addition, more support is needed for the Clean Curbs pilot program, which is a container waste program that uses a container placed in the curb lane to hold waste while awaiting collection. This program will give waste producers flexibility to set waste out when convenient

and keeps the waste out of sight and off the sidewalk. Our organization is ready to maintain a Clean Curbs pilot, but needs support in the design and fabrication of containers for our district.

Thank you Chair Nurse and fellow Committee members for your time today. The SoHo Broadway Initiative is eager to work with the Committee and our Council Member Chris Marte, Borough President Mark Levine and Manhattan Community Board 2 on keeping our neighborhoods clean.

Dear City Council Members,

I am writing on behalf of Uptown Progressive Action to implore you to restore the budget cuts to the city's curbside compost collection **and make it mandatory**, once and for all, which would generate immense ecological, economic and social gains for all New Yorkers.

#### Ecological and Sanitation Benefits

Organic waste is rich in nutrients and can be used to enrich the soil in parks, community gardens, and street trees. Compost also enhances the soil's ability to retain water, making it an especially valuable tool for flood mitigation. One third of NYC's waste stream is composed of organic waste. Most ends up in landfill, which emits methane, a greenhouse gas 80 times more potent than CO<sub>2</sub> over a 20-year period. Lastly, containerizing organic waste, rather than combining it with other waste in plastic trash bags, will virtually eliminate the city's rat problem.

#### Economic Benefits

The city would save money diverting up to a third of all garbage truck tonnage away from landfills or incinerators. Currently, it spends \$460 million dollars a year exporting its waste to out-of-state landfills and incinerators. Organic composting facilities create good green jobs, twice as many as landfill operations and four times more than incinerators per ton of trash. Let us not forget the economic savings that would be derived from mitigating the aforementioned rat problem. In a similar vein, landlords, co-op boards and homeowners would have less expenditure on pest control (separating trash from organic waste reduces the number of rats, mice, and insects).

#### Social Justice Benefits

Landfills are generally located in low-income communities and communities of color, who suffer from a range of serious health issues because of exposure to environmental toxins. Diverting organic waste from landfill and incinerators also means less waste is trucked to the City's waste transfer stations, located in environmental justice communities, where residents are subjected to unhealthy levels of air and noise pollution.

Not only has the back-and-forth on this issue been consuming the government's resources, but even more importantly, cutting out composting altogether would be a terrible waste of the tremendous amount of resources the city has invested over the past several years to successfully build momentum and infrastructure for composting. Please help New York City catch up to so many other cities around the world who have had mandatory curbside composting for many years. It is a clear win-win for all communities and supported by an overwhelming majority of people you are serving as elected officials.

Sincerely,

Rana Sioufi, PhD  
Steering Committee Member  
Uptown Progressive Action



March 4, 2022

**Founders**

Vernice Miller-Travis  
Peggy M. Shepard  
Chuck Sutton

WE ACT for Environmental Justice  
1854 Amsterdam Ave, 2nd Floor  
New York, NY, 10031  
646-983-0224

**Board of Directors**

*Chair*

Jeff Jones

**RE: Clean streets and expanding vital sanitation service**

*Secretary*

Nancy E. Anderson, Ph.D.

Dear Committee Chair Sandy Nurse and Committee on Sanitation and Solid Waste Management:

*Treasurer*

Ken P. Mak

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on the matter of clean streets and expanding vital sanitation services.

*Members*

Lakeisha M. Aquino  
Peter Bokor  
Dennis Derryck, Ph.D.  
David Evans, Ph.D.  
Abiola Fasehun, Esq.  
Eric A Goldstein, Esq.  
Neetin Gulati  
Christy Loper  
Sarangi Iyengar  
Marielle Villar Martiney  
Crystal Romeo Upperman  
Vernice Miller-Travis  
Phillip Morrow  
Dart Westphal

WE ACT for Environmental Justice, an organization based in Harlem, has been fighting environmental racism at the city, state, and federal levels for more than 30 years. We have used collaborative problem solving techniques to address the problems of inappropriate garbage disposal and rampant rodent and roach infestation in Northern Manhattan in order to reduce negative health impacts from garbage and pests in this community.

I am Lonnie J. Portis, Environmental Policy and Advocacy Coordinator at WE ACT. I routinely analyze New York City policies and programs for equity and climate justice and co-lead a group of community members mobilized around waste and sanitation problems in Northern Manhattan.

In 2017, food scraps accounted for 21 percent of the city's residential waste, a larger portion than any other type of waste. Much of this goes to landfills, where it releases methane, contributing to climate change. In 2020, then-Speaker Corey Johnson released a comprehensive City Council [plan](#) to combat climate change. That plan recognized that a "key strategy" for the city was to "mandate citywide curbside organics separation and collection."

*Executive Director*

Peggy M. Shepard

WE ACT was disappointed to hear that The City plans to suspend the expansion of its composting program. Food attracts rats that tear open bags – leaving litter on streets. Improved sanitation has significant impacts not only on health, but on social and economic development. Residents of Northern Manhattan need more sanitation pick up, better receptacles for trash and compliance by owners that they keep the sidewalks clean. We urge the Committee on Sanitation and Solid Waste Management to:





- **assess the city’s previous pilot curbside composting programs** for what went right and what went wrong and consider lessons from successful mandatory curbside composting programs in other jurisdictions;
- **develop an equitable, comprehensive plan** to get organics out of trash bags and pilot solutions for all types of buildings, especially under-resourced buildings with insufficient labor or space and;
- **address the inequities in street and sidewalk cleanliness** throughout the city.

Our members have consistently mentioned the stark difference between the cleanliness of the streets and sidewalks of the Upper East and West Sides and Northern Manhattan (Harlem, Washington Heights and Inwood). As one member put it, **“Enough is enough and totally unfair that Harlem is neglected when many other parts of Manhattan are provided better sanitation services”**.

In October 2021, for a similar oversight hearing, our members identified some of the dirtiest blocks in Northern Manhattan that are littered with black garbage bags containing food waste, overflowing trash bins and animal waste. This list along with photos have been submitted in my written testimony.

Thank you again, Committee Chair Sandy Nurse and Committee on Sanitation and Solid Waste Management for holding this hearing and allowing WE ACT to testify on such an important topic.

Lonnie J. Portis

Environmental Policy and Advocacy Coordinator  
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646-866-8720  
[lonnie@weact.org](mailto:lonnie@weact.org)



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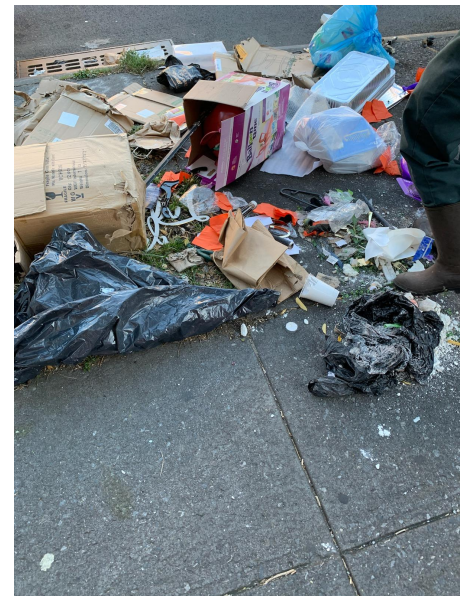
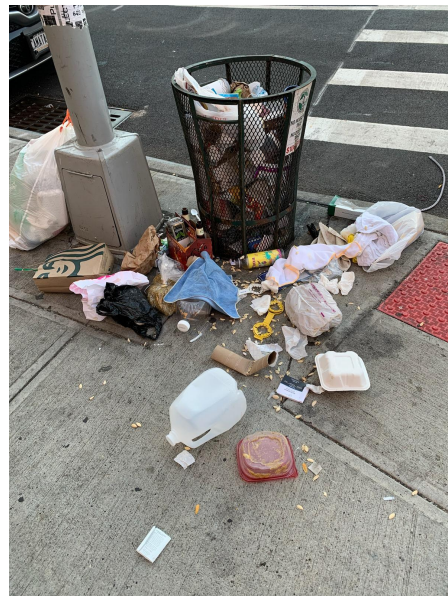
### **Northern Manhattan's Dirtiest Blocks**

Our members identified some of the dirtiest blocks in Northern Manhattan that are littered with animal waste, litter, and overflowing trash bins:

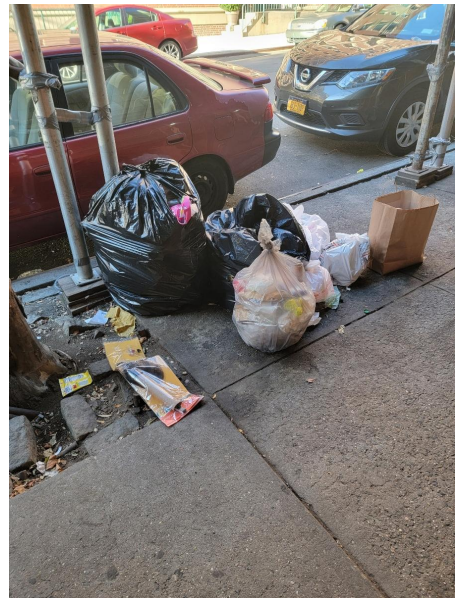
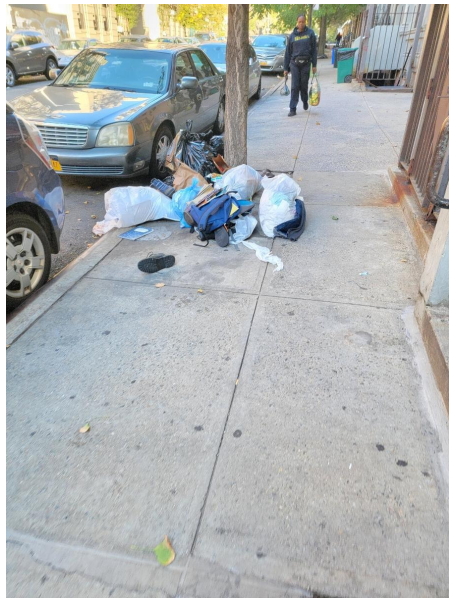
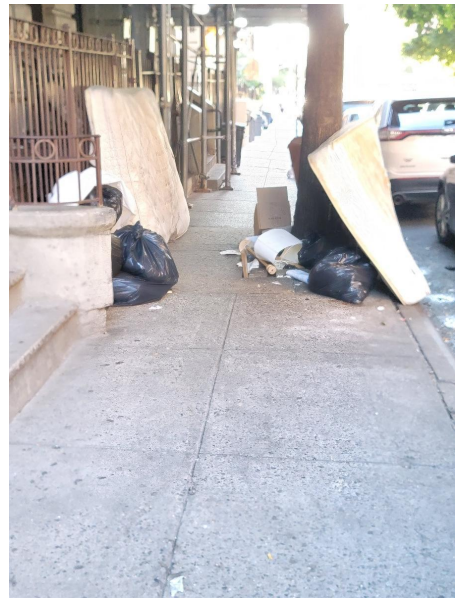
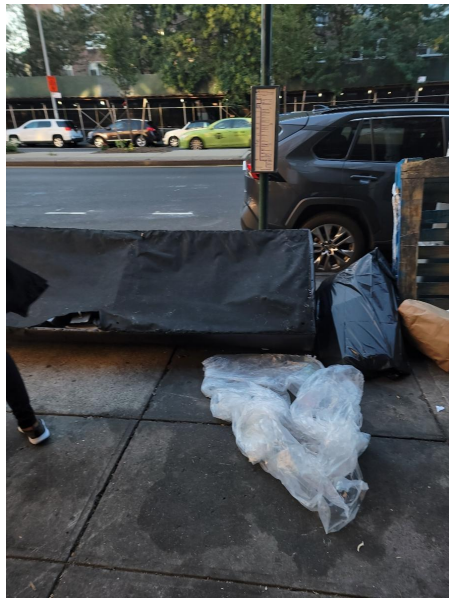
- West 141st-145th Streets between 7th and 8th Avenues
- West 135th Street between 7th and 8th Avenues
- West 132nd Street between Lenox and 5th Avenue
- La Salle St between Amsterdam Ave and Broadway
- West 145th Street between Broadway and Amsterdam
- 132nd Street between Lenox and 5th Avenues
- Lenox Avenue between 126th and 127th Streets
- West 140th Street between Amsterdam and Convent Avenues
- West 145th Street between Amsterdam and Broadway (south side of street)
- East 99th Street between 1st and 2nd Avenues
- Cabrini Blvd at 179th Street
- West 173rd Street between Amsterdam and Audubon Avenues
- Fort George Hill

### **Uptown's Dirtiest Blocks**

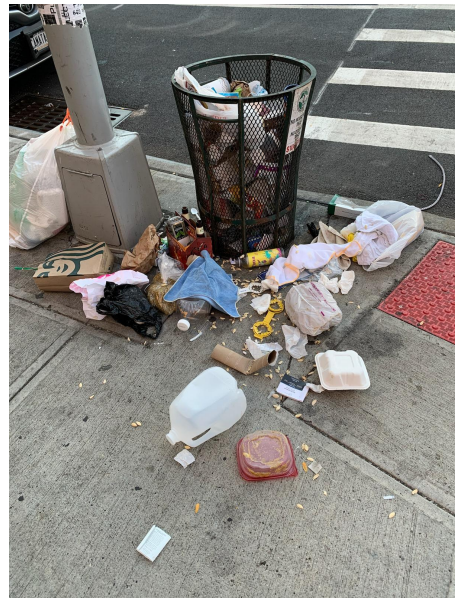
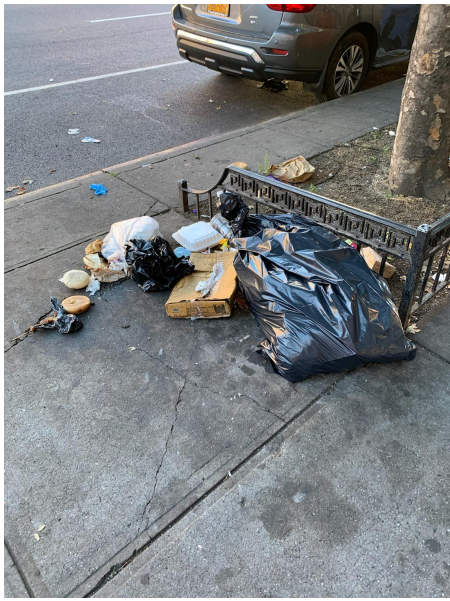
Photographs from our members' daily commute documenting the condition of Northern Manhattan streets and sidewalks.











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**From:** NYC Council Hearings  
**Sent:** Monday, March 7, 2022 4:41 AM  
**To:** 'Mary Mckenna'  
**Subject:** RE: [EXTERNAL] Submission of testimony for sanitation council hearing on March 4, 2022

Thank you for writing. Your statement will be added to the legislative record.

Very Best,  
New York City Council

-----Original Message-----

**From:** Mary Mckenna <membead@icloud.com>  
**Sent:** Friday, March 4, 2022 4:36 PM  
**To:** NYC Council Hearings <hearings@council.nyc.gov>  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Submission of testimony for sanitation council hearing on March 4, 2022

Hello,

I am Mary McKenna, a member of 350NYC and am part of the social and environmental justice committee at my church.

I want to urge Mayor Adams to reconsider cutting climate and composting from his budget but instead increase the compost drop off sites and curbside composting.

I know there are so many things to fix in our City but I firmly believe that it is now the time to make climate our number one priority. It is dire that we start fixing our earth. People have got to understand how serious the climate situation is and Mayor Adams cutting the climate from his budget only shows it is something they can deal with later. We really can't delay!

Composting can help to try to start to balance the scale of the disproportionate affects of the climate change for many communities of color and low income people since they so often live near landfills and incinerators and also in flood zones. These are two areas that composting can help.

Landfills and incinerating the city's waste lead to more greenhouse gas emissions specifically methane which is 84 times more potent as a greenhouse gas than carbon dioxide when measured over a 20 year period and a significant contributor to climate change

Aerobic composting reduces or eliminates the release of methane.

Composting also enhances the soils ability to retain water making it an especially valuable tool for flood mitigation.

Other benefits of composting:

organic composting creates green jobs, twice as many as landfill operations and 4 times more than incinerators per ton of waste.

Organic waste is rich in nutrients and can be used to enrich the soil in parks, community gardens and street trees.

The biggest drawback for cutting composting for me is that it is something everybody can do, if they choose to, we all can be a part of the healing our city and thus the earth.

Mayor Adams please don't cut composting. We need it so badly. Please hear our plea!

Thank you for your time and attention. I trust you will do the right thing.

Sincerely,

Mary McKenna

Sent from my iPad

Committee on Sanitation and Solid Waste Management

March 4<sup>th</sup> Hearing

Support for Keeping Composting/Curbside Organics and expanding city wide

To: Sanitation and Solid Waste Management Committee Chair

From: Alma Melendez

Dikeman Street

Brooklyn, NY 11231

Date: March 4<sup>th</sup>, 2022

Dear Committee Chair,

It is imperative that the city keeps and expands the existing composting programs. The amount of useful, organic waste that the current program has already diverted from landfills is massive, and the soil that the program creates is in high demand. After the first year or so of the program, there was a Staten Island to pick up of "free dirt" advertised- the result of the compost collection pilot- the line to get to the landfill was so long, it stretched back onto the SI Expressway, for an hour or more. That's the beauty of compost, it creates something people want out of what they think of as garbage. We can't lose the opportunity or momentum in getting more people informed and involved in a program where there is great demand and interest. Friends and neighbors who were previously always aware of composting but participated either sporadically or not at all, took it up composting consistently and regularly when the curbside organics collection came to their neighborhoods.

I compost because of the current curbside organics program, and my friends and neighbors do as well. Composting is low-hanging fruit in the realm of environmentally sound policies and legislation. For NYC to abandon the plan for city-wide organics collection signals that NYC is not a friend to the environment and does not prioritize the health of the planet, the city, the people. Why would we go backwards and abandon the progress that has already been made on a critical service like composting? It would be a terrible loss and undo years of work and progress in making this city healthier and greener. The program was paused during the height of the pandemic because of budgetary reasons but the city found a way to reinstate it because of the demand and Brooklyn's environmental concerns. Going back to throwing our food scraps and other organic matter back into landfills is not only bad for our planet and our city, but a huge disregard for NYC residents and will not fare well for Mayor Adams politically.

Thank you for your time.

Best,

Alma Melendez



Committee on Sanitation and Solid Waste Management

March 4<sup>th</sup> Hearing

Support for Keeping Composting/Curbside Organics and expanding city wide

To: Sanitation and Solid Waste Management Committee Chair

From: Alyce Erdekian, Red Hook, Brooklyn Community Resident

Date: March 4<sup>th</sup>, 2022

Dear Committee Chair,

I'm a decades-long resident of Brooklyn who has been composting since I moved here in 2000. The city has always had ways to compost if individuals were willing to put in a lot of effort to utilize, but none has made it so easy, and more importantly, widely adopted, as the recent Curbside Organics pilot programs.

It is imperative that the city keeps and expands the existing composting programs. The amount of useful, organic waste that the current program has already diverted from landfills is massive, and the soil that the program creates is in high demand. After the first year or so of the program, I was one of the people who went out to Staten Island to pick up some "free dirt"- the result of the compost collection pilot- the line to get to the landfill was so long, it stretched back onto the SI Expressway, for an hour or more. That's the beauty of compost, it creates something people want out of what they think of as garbage. We can't lose the opportunity or momentum in getting more people informed and involved in a program where there is great demand and interest. Friends and neighbors who were previously always aware of composting but participated either sporadically or not at all, took it up composting consistently and regularly when the curbside organics collection came to their neighborhoods. In my building in Red Hook, the amount of "regular" garbage that is left on the curb is greatly reduced when the Curbside Organics program is in effect. This is a trend that we need to see reflected throughout the city.

Composting is low-hanging fruit in the realm of environmentally sound policies and legislation. For NYC to abandon the plan for city-wide organics collection signals that NYC is not a friend to the environment and does not prioritize the health of the planet, the city, the people. Why would we go backwards and abandon the progress that has already been made on a critical service like composting? It would be a terrible loss and undo years of work and progress in making this city healthier and greener.

**To:** Honorable Councilmember and Committee Chair Sandy Nurse and all Esteemed Members of the Committee on Sanitation and Solid Waste Management

**Re:** City Compost Programs

My name is Amy Plattsmier, and I appreciate the opportunity to submit my testimony to this committee today. I am writing this to the committee to let you know how deeply disheartened I have been since learning that Mayor Adams is reversing his campaign promise to expand curbside compost collection. During the campaign, Mr. Adams claimed universal composting was a key tenet of his climate agenda, yet now he calls curbside composting “symbolic.” He claims to be committed to healthy food and nutrition education for our city’s children, yet neglects to connect the dots to essential gardening and composting programs in schools. Food and yard scraps make up about a third of the city’s waste stream and are a potent source of greenhouse gas emissions when left to rot in landfills. Composting is a vital part of the city’s “Zero Waste” initiative, which calls for cutting waste sent to landfills by 90 percent by 2030. This goal will not be met without a robust commitment, including infrastructure and public education, in schools, businesses, residences, everywhere for composting programs.

I’m a passionate home composter who has also dedicated innumerable hours for over a decade to composting education in schools, synagogues, and my neighborhood. The first Participatory Budgeting project I ever worked on was a 2011 winner for an industrial shredder to be installed on the site of an NYC Salt Lot and managed by the Gowanus Canal Conservancy’s composting program, the purpose being to have a way to compost lunch trays from local schools who were dedicated to getting rid of styrofoam years before the city ban but who had no place to ecologically process the compostable trays. It seemed impossible back then that we might even have a curbside compost pickup option, but then it happened. For just a few years, we had a place for the organic materials that couldn’t be composted at home to go. Those brown bins were thrilling because it felt like a little victory after so many dogged and committed citizens’, teachers’, and environmentalists’ persistent advocacy – our work was finally adding up.

Convincing folks to change their habits and their mindset around waste requires patience and time and is incremental work requiring multiple fits & starts before the gears begin to move and momentum takes over. Just this week I have been advocating as a Participatory Budgeting delegate, yet again, for composting education in my home neighborhood of Kensington. Our neighborhood did not meet the cutoff threshold of interest to get curbside pickup reinstated after it was canceled during the pandemic. This feels like environmental discrimination to me; our neighborhood has a lot of immigrant families whose native languages are not English, but there is deep interest in caring for our planet, gardening, and composting. Asking people to have to opt in to a program online and not getting the word out seemed to be an intentional way to cut the program and claim disinterest. It’s not only a false assumption, it is backtracking on commitments to mitigate climate change.

I am deeply dismayed by the short-sightedness of the Mayor’s plan to cut support for anything related to the City’s Zero Waste mission, but losing composting cuts deepest because it is so

personal. After so many years of work we were finally reaching a tipping point where waste separation and mindfulness were becoming a part of our citizens' daily habits. When the pandemic pause put the brakes on the momentum it was disheartening, but I understood that the city was suffering and workers were sick. But not reinstating and expanding the program would not just cause us to lose a vital waste diversion; it would also be flushing down the already overloaded combined sewer overflow the hard work of volunteers and educators and the personal investment into composting that the citizens of New York have made these past several years. Community composting programs are essential and had been, finally, after so much education and labor, part of the fabric of daily life in NYC. The City has experienced such tremendous loss already, and we desperately need to hold onto the simple routines of our daily lives, especially the ones that give us the agency to actively make our world a better place.

I recognize the urgent need for budget cuts and cost-savings due to COVID-19, but we cannot afford to reverse progress on the larger, longer-term crisis: climate change. Composting is one of the most basic things that every person can do to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and have a positive impact on the environment. Maintaining funding for community composting; investing in education programs that focus on healthy eating, gardening, and compost's role in soil health; and, yes, providing universal curbside compost pickup will provide continued access to essential composting service for New Yorkers. One thing I do agree with the Mayor on is with limited compost pickup, it is a waste to send around diesel trucks. So let's invest in some electric vehicles to pick up, create more local sites like the Gowanus Canal Conservancy, and get creative.

In this time of great uncertainty, we need programs that contribute to a more sustainable future. Composting programs give people hope that, through collective action, our individual choices can make a difference. We need this kind of hope.

Councilmember Nurse, I laud your commitment to composting programs, and I implore you and the Committee on Sanitation to do whatever you can in the Council to make sure the mayor's proposed cuts do not stand, and to increase Community Composting and all Zero Waste Programs.

Sincerely,

**Amy Plattsmier**

**## Chester Avenue, Brooklyn 11218**

The Composting program makes a difference in people's lives when there is easy access to a place where one can drop food waste for composting. It is one sustainable way to support the environment. We know that removing food waste from the landfills reduces the amount of methane being released as well as other gases. Using compost as fertilizer it also considered more effective than chemical fertilizers most of the time. The composting program budget in New York City should not only be reinstated, but actually increased because in addition to having all the sites available and easily accessible funds are needed for a major education campaign on the benefits to ourselves, the environment and in general the health of the city dwellers. Our city is very susceptible to the effects climate change and the composting program is a tangible and accessible way by which every person, young or old and across any spectrum can contribute to the city, so taking the funds away would not benefit anyone. The reality is that we need to work together in concerted action and what better way than to engage all in the city through this program. I look forward to continuing to support the Composting program in my neighborhood and help it advance even more.

Respectfully,  
Ana Vasquez

Hello,

I am an 8th grader living in Jackson Heights. I compost myself and my neighborhood does not have city-run composting. This budget cut is very bad for the environment, and on top of this,  $\frac{1}{3}$  of NYC's waste is organic, and most of it goes into landfills, releasing methane. Methane is a greenhouse gas that is up to 80 times more potent than carbon dioxide. On top of this, composting projects will save the city money and create good green jobs. Please do not cut the composting budget, as it will hurt both the economy and the climate.

Thank You, Anand Maru

To Whom It May Concern,

My name is Andreas Petrossiants—I am a life-long Brooklyn resident, apart from the three years when I lived in Italy where composting organic waste has been organized municipally and common practice in most cities for decades.

After returning to NYC in my early twenties, I started to volunteer at many community gardens helping with composting waste given how important it is for the environment. It is a key strategy that **MUST** be used in the fight against climate collapse, for many reasons:

1. When organic matter is dropped into a landfill and not given proper oxygen to decompose, it releases methane, creating an additional problem for the accumulation of greenhouse gases in addition to making mountains of waste;
2. We should be limiting how much trash is produced and instead use organic matter to produce soil for greater agricultural production, locally;
3. Composting makes people more aware about how much trash is produced by every household;

Now, when the global environment is worsening by the day—while Oceans acidify and fill with plastic, while fires spread over the world and force extinction of many species, as greenhouse gases accumulate in the environment—composting must become a priority of any city that wants to be a part of the solution and not the problem. Mayor Adams cutting the budget for composting is a gross attack not only on important municipal services, but also on our air, water, and food.

In the 1970s Mierle Laderman Ukeles became the artist in residence at the Department of Sanitation. As part of her residency she shook the hand of every sanitation worker and said: “Thank you for keeping New York Alive.” This understands the vital and crucial role that a properly funded sanitation department has in a city of millions. They must have proper funding to make sure that **ALL** organic waste is composted rather than thrown into a landfill or burned.

Sincerely,  
Andreas Petrossiants  
Brooklyn, 11238

TESTIMONY OF ANDREA SCARBOROUGH  
179<sup>TH</sup> STREET ADDISLEIGH PARK NY 11434

HEARING ON CLEAN STREETS & EXPANDING VITAL SANITATION SERVICES

Food waste is responsible for at least eleven percent of methane emissions generated from landfills, an amount equivalent to the emissions of about 3.4 million vehicles. Continuing along this trajectory will lead us to a place of increased waste to landfills, streets that remain the hunting ground of rodents and an inability to get to the NYC Department of Sanitation goal of zero waste by 2030.

As a resident of Southeast Queens, Community Board 12, my community was never included in the curbside composting program which was later suspended in May 2020. Our community was never given the opportunity to participate nor were the residents of CB 12 asked if they wanted to participate in the program. Rather we were just overlooked, therein lies one of the flaws in the original roll out of the initial curbside organics program. My community of Southeast Queens is being overlooked once again, along with the rest of Queens. At present curbside organics pickups is currently relegated to seven community boards which reside in Brooklyn, Manhattan and the Bronx. It is disappointing that no consideration will be given to allow any Community Boards in Queens the opportunity to participate. The solution must be to roll out a curbside organics program that includes education to the communities where it is needed, an effective marketing program that engages all of NYC residents and increasingly implement policies that will reduce and divert food waste.

My community of Southeast Queens has traditionally had to contend with waste transfer stations, garbage dumps, and other environmental hazards that can be deemed an environmental injustice community. Community composting presents an opportunity for our residents to participate in green initiatives and take more responsibility for our environment. Additionally, if New York City abandons community composting, it has already become clear that commercial carters are prepared to fill the vacuum, only creating an additional hardship in my community.

As a result, I urge the City Council to rescind the Mayor's budget cuts to the Sanitation Department and to expand the composting program to Queens and in particular to my community of Southeast Queens. This must include an education and outreach initiative to inform our residents of the benefits of composting. Environmental fairness demands that these steps be taken.

Andrea Scarborough  
Concerned Resident  
Member – Addisleigh Park Civic Organization  
Member – Queens Solid Waste Advisory Board



## City Council

The environment is a long lasting part of our community that needs to be looked and cared after under all means. It is a fraction of our livelihoods that is deteriorating due to increased pollution and global warming. Composting is something that should not have a 50% decrease in funds.

Cutting funds under what needs assistance won't do anything but cause harm to our lives. In the long run, it won't be beneficial at all to cut these funds. It would inflict more harm upon our communities, especially the low income BIPOC communities that you had sworn to protect, since they are most impacted by waste and pollution within the city.

The issue does not lie within increased composters, the issue does not lie in greener communities. So why is that being brought down? 98.5 billion dollars here for the city this year. Why not allow for less than 0.0001% of that to go into assisting for the existence of a greener, healthier New York.

Food waste is a grand issue here. 12,000 tons of food waste are produced by New Yorkers weekly. This is 24,000,000 pounds. These numbers alone are terrible but when you have composting, those numbers are lessened whether in large or small quantities. The amount of money placed into ensuring that these issues are limited is not enough, we as a city need a leader who will ensure that our blocks are less contaminated with litter and rats. We need workers to collect and process scraps, we need richer and more organic soil for the city, we need greater funds.

- Angelina Santos from BK Rot

NYC COUNCIL HEARING COMMITTEE ON SANITATION AND SOLID WASTE  
MANAGEMENT

3/4/22 AT 10:30AM

Oversight - Clean streets and expanding vital sanitation service

Anita Chan's Testimony

My name is Anita and I am advocating against halting the planned expansion of the curbside composting program and cutting the budget for community composting programs. In order to achieve better living conditions for everyone and cleaner streets, we need to do better with waste management. About a week ago, a friend and I were standing on the sidewalk and witnessed trash bags being picked up. We spoke about how it's crazy that there are always piles of bags of trash on the street. He pointed out the grounds are always stained from the bags. That is most likely liquid coming from the bag containing organic waste and has a hole in it because a rat went in. This is why we need to separate food scraps from trash and keep them in secure curbside receptacles and not black plastic bags.

Compostable materials make up 1/3 of the trash New Yorkers generate. Composting is absolutely necessary in reducing greenhouse gases and combating climate change. It should be mandatory and accessible for all. It has been repeated over and over that when organic waste is in a landfill, it creates methane which is much more potent than carbon dioxide, and then on top of that, carbon dioxide that is produced when transporting the organic waste so far away to get landfilled. Composting and using compost locally makes NYC landscapes healthier, grows food, and sequesters carbon right where people live, work, and play. Mayor Adam's criticism of the current organics curbside program isn't completely wrong, but that doesn't mean the budget should be cut, it means that we need to ramp up education and make it mandatory, not voluntary. Right now it is just too easy for someone to just put all of their organic waste and recycling into a black plastic bag and it gets picked up. Instead of having two trash days, dedicate one to organics.

We need to immediately work towards

- (1) Mandatory curbside composting for all of NYC
- (2) Restore funding for the planned expansion of the Curbside Composting program to additional community districts.
- (3) Continue to fund Community Composting and DSNY Zero Waste partner programs at the current level of \$7 million

There are also many other communities all across the world that are already successfully composting much of their organic waste. NYC must not take two steps in the wrong direction and continue dragging behind. This is a grand opportunity to prioritize a just transition, creating green jobs, engaging the community, and demonstrating NYC as a climate leader.

Sincerely,  
Anita Chan

March 6, 2022

There is a very heavy infestation of rats in NYC . The restaurant sheds have created an opportunity for rats to thrive and multiply beyond what we were already dealing with 2 and 3 years ago.

Please do not DE-fund the sanitation department. This unsanitary situation will create illness, disease, and will drive customers and tourists away from the restaurant sheds as the rats become more comfortable around people.

I implore you to establish a special COMMERCIAL compost program to accommodate the needs of NYC restaurants. Restaurant food waste MUST be contained in rat-proof containers until pick up. Today, food waste is torn out of the plastic bags by the rats and is oozing out onto the streets.

Rats cannot get into the composting brown bins used for residential buildings. There must be some way that restaurants can use similar, larger bins and keep the sticky smelly mess out of the plastic bags and off our streets.

Please consider re-funding the \$47.8 million you have taken from the Sanitation Department of NYC.

Anne Dardis

annedard@gmail.com

Hello esteemed members of the NYC City Council,

During his mayoral campaign, Mayor Eric Adams promised New Yorkers to expand the curbside organics collection program, which was something millions of us in the city have been wishing our mayor would fulfill. Former Mayor de Blasio failed to fulfill his promise to make this program a reality for ALL New Yorkers, and we fear that the newly elected mayor is furthering this legacy of [failed promises](#) by mayors to take critical climate action through an essential program that all New Yorkers have a right to access and participate in.

There is a misconception that there is low participation by New Yorkers in this program - I reside in Bayside and have requested over and over for the program to return to my neighborhood. Many tenants in residential buildings request their building managers to sign up for this program and face resistance and pushback. The demand is here! We definitely **want and need** this program, and as an Asian American I want to speak up with my fellow communities of color (and speak up for low-income communities) who are disproportionately impacted by the effects of climate change.

This week the IPCC released its [most recent report](#) which [in a nutshell](#) warns humanity that we have NO time to waste. As the biggest city in the country (who had the largest curbside organics collection program in the US), we have a responsibility to do our part to take climate action and take tangible steps to becoming the “zero waste” city we claim we are striving toward. What’s great about composting is that **every** NYC resident has the ability to participate if given the opportunity, from people living in single- to multi-family units, to residential apartment complexes, to those who are working in commercial buildings. NYC can make a monumental impact on combating climate change if we have the opportunity to preserve (or better yet, expand) our city’s composting infrastructure.

I join millions of other New Yorkers in support of the #SaveOurCompost movement to respectfully urge the Council Member who serves my district (Vickie Paladino) and everyone else on Council to push the Mayor to:

1. Continue fully funding community composting programs at the current level of \$7 million
2. Restore funding and invest in the curbside organics collection program, which includes expanding this program in underserved and/or environmental justice neighborhoods
3. Require universal organics ([mandatory composting](#)) for NYC, as this is already implemented in other cities in the US, such as San Francisco all the way back in 2009. We need to catch up!

Please reconsider cutting the sanitation department's FY23 budget and preserve the community composting budget.

Regards,  
Belinda Chiu

Testimony to NYC council, our local councilperson Julie Won, and open letter to Mayor Adams.

Woodside, Queens 03/07/2022

"Delay means death" were the words of the UN secretary general just a few days ago; in reaction to the latest IPCC report (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, which reviews PAST science on climate change).

I am Benjamin Lucas, from Woodside Queens, NYC, and am writing this testimony in support of increasing funding for Composting initiatives in NYC, instead of an outrageous cut of funding for the program.

At the risk of sounding condescending, I'd like to remind NYC Mayor Adams and NYC council that we are living in a major city of the world, in the year 2022, in the anthropocene, the new geological age marked by the human caused destabilization of ecosystem services - or as I prefer to call them "spaceship earth life supports". This decision of cutting funding for composting is absolutely mind boggling, instead of the pragmatic decision to greatly increase the composting budget. This decision comes right around the release of the sixth assessment report from the IPCC (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change) Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability, which says "**There is a rapidly narrowing window of opportunity to enable climate resilient development.**" (IPCC AR6 WGII Summary For Policymakers , SPM.D.1.1, page 32) To be noted, the IPCC report does not uncover new science, but merely reviews and reports the PAST peer reviewed evidence.

NYC's Mayor and council members have a duty to NYC residents to plan for long term solutions to adapt to climate change and greatly reduce greenhouse gas emissions (IPCC AR6 WGII Summary For Policymakers SPM.C.4, page 30 SPND5 page 37) and avoid maladaptation (adaptations that create lock in vulnerability such as sea walls). Expanding composting programs is one such climate resilient adaptation which the pragmatist should seriously consider, as it greatly reduce risks of greenhouse gas emission (less waste-mile, less methane/CO2 emission from the waste itself, produces a carbon rich soil amendment that can itself increase plant /soil health and therefore increase the effectiveness of soil/plant CO2 sink). Finally, here is a non-exhaustive list of facts that should sway pragmatic decision makers.

- 1/3rd of NYC's waste stream is composed of organic waste. Most ends up in landfill, which emits methane, a greenhouse gas 80X more potent than CO2 over a 20 year period. Expanding food waste composting would help mitigate these emissions and reduce NYC's carbon footprint, reducing the risks of flood, heat wave and so on.
- Landfills are generally located in low income communities and communities of color, who suffer from a range of serious health issues as a result of exposure to environmental toxins. The principles of environmental justice/equity dictate that we reduce the exposure of the most vulnerable.
- Diverting organic waste from landfill and incinerators also means less waste is trucked to the City's waste transfer stations, located in low income communities, where

residents are subjected to unhealthy levels of air and noise pollution due in large part to the trucking itself. Once again, this would help reduce NYC's carbon footprint.

- The City spends \$460 million dollars a year exporting its waste to out-of-state landfills and incinerators, greatly expanding composting could greatly reduce this cost and emission associated with waste transport.
- Organic composting facilities create good green jobs, some of which within the city walls with proper planning, twice as many as landfill operations and four times more than incinerators per ton of trash.
- Organic waste is rich in nutrients and can be used to enrich the soil in parks, community gardens, and street trees. This would save the parks department the cost of buying and importing compost from far away, saving CO<sub>2</sub> emission further.
- Compost also enhances the soil's ability to retain water, making it an especially valuable tool for flood mitigation. (See: [Let's Talk About Compost and Flooding](#)).
- Compost increases soil organic matter and feeds the soil ecosystem, which in turn enhances the ability of plants to capture carbon dioxide out of the air, further positively affecting the carbon balance.
- The surplus of compost produced could be used by the farms who produce regionally some of the food that New Yorkers consume, further reducing the regional CO<sub>2</sub> footprint and enhancing carbon sinks.
- Containerizing organic waste, rather than combining it with other waste in plastic trash bags, will help mitigate the city's rat problem. Further the proper treatment of the food waste greatly reduces the attractiveness of said waste to rodents.

I will end this testimony in sharing our pandemic experience.

AS the brown bin program was abandoned in the early months of the pandemic, The Woodside Sunnyside Composting crew ALL VOLUNTEER RUN, and so many others in the city saw a surge in food waste brought to their community composting site. THERE IS A REAL DEMAND FROM NYC RESIDENTS. In our particular case, we have seen a sustained 8 fold increase since then, and have to divert scraps collected to Big Reuse to avoid running out of space in our volunteer run space. I know from personal communication with multiple other groups that our experience is not isolated, on the contrary. The need for climate adaptation through simple resilient solutions such as composting, is clearly understood by many New Yorkers.

Dear New York City Council,

I am dismayed to hear that the Mayor has plans to slash the city's compost budget in half. I urge the city to continue funding compost services at the current cost of \$7 million. This represents a small fraction of the city's budget but is significant for keeping essential compost drop-off sites running. I call on the city, also, to fund the promised expansion of the Curbside Composting program, and continue working towards a goal of mandatory compost pickup. It would be a shame if, in this day in age, NYC supposes this is not possible, while other global cities easily manage such affairs.

When the former mayor defunded compost during Covid, my neighborhood arose to divert as much food scrap waste as possible at community gardens. At the peak of this project, I coordinated a group of nearly 40 volunteer compost workers who were not content to throw food in the trash. However, this volunteer armies was quickly overwhelmed by the local demand, and this time around it will not be possible to pick up the city's slack due to more limited time of volunteers who have returned to work from furlough. It should not be the job of the citizenry to arise when the city fails to provide basic sanitation services.

Diverting food scraps from the waste stream by composting makes for more rat-proof disposal methods on city streets, and it keeps harmful methane out of the atmosphere. Turning food waste into compost provides much needed green jobs for New Yorkers and generates free organic matter to ameliorate the soil of New York's many city parks, beautification projects, and tree pits, which saves the city money on materials. Soil restoration, in turn, promotes greater carbon sequestration by allowing healthier plants to draw down more carbon from the atmosphere, and provides beneficial microorganisms and plant-disease fighting power to plants, potentially reducing plant deaths and replacement costs.

The cost of exporting New York trash is rising, and citizens in states like Alabama have had enough of it. Our city needs a plan for how to build self-reliance and resiliency when costs continue to rise, or localities close their doors to our waste problem. As food waste makes up  $\frac{1}{3}$  of all New York trash, an essential component of that solution will be securing funding to compost services and hiring New Yorkers to process food waste within our municipality.

Please continue funding compost at the current levels. We can't keep waffling on what is undoubtedly a good investment for this city, the climate, and workers. Keep it funded.

Thanks,

Caitlin Castelaz  
[caitcastelaz@gmail.com](mailto:caitcastelaz@gmail.com)  
Manhattan, CB 12



There is a sanitation crisis in New York City. The budget cuts to DSNY have led to increasingly dirty streets, an exploding rat population, and lower quality of life for all New Yorkers. Meanwhile, the city spends millions of dollars shipping its waste to out-of-state landfills and incinerators.

Organics currently account for one-third of NYC's waste. NYC's new preliminary budget slashes funds allocated for community composting in half from \$7m to \$3.5m and suspends the expansion of curbside composting.

I believe Community Composting and DSNY Zero Waste partner programs must continue to be funded at the current level of \$7 million, at a minimum, and funding must be restored for the planned and promised expansion of the Curbside Composting program.

Compost, which is made from organic waste, is a soil-regenerating tool. Composting greatly reduces the emission of greenhouse gases and our reliance on fossil fuels, as less energy is needed to run landfill and incinerator equipment.

At a time when our communities are facing an overwhelming and growing litter and rodent problem, our city needs more frontline sanitation workers to support the neighborhoods that urgently need more essential services.

Cutting organics collection may save a few dollars today, but it will lead to increased costs in the long term, both from waste export costs and climate change exacerbated by landfilling and incineration. NYC already spends \$500 million to export our waste out of state—and that cost increases each year. Composting will reduce that expense by diverting organics waste, which accounts for a third of all NYC's waste.

Diverting organic waste from trash bags into containers means less food readily available for rats on our city streets. A robust organics program would also create secure, green, local jobs.

Locally composting organics alleviates the burden on communities near waste transfer stations, incinerators and landfills, cuts the costs and emissions of waste export, and closes the loop, bringing nutrients back to local gardens instead of attracting rats and littering streets!

All communities deserve to have clean and safe streets. We need to equitably restore and expand sanitation funding and services to all neighborhoods across the city. Time is running out for the city to meet its Zero Waste and environmental justice goals. We cannot afford to backtrack.

Caitlin Van Dusen  
Prospect Lefferts Gardens

3/2/22

There's a lot going on right now, so it's understandable if you missed the latest report from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change last week, written by leading experts from across the globe who unequivocally wrote, "starting today every action, every decision matters". It matters because the subway door of opportunity is quickly closing to mitigate climate chaos. Last year we saw that in real time with Hurricane Ida's deadly floods, the smoke of western wildfires that filled our skies and our lungs, and record breaking summer temperatures...and we aren't even at 1.5 degrees of warming yet. Stand clear, the experts are screaming, because if we don't board this train, the ones directly behind it are express routes to an unthinkable future.

So today I write this to appeal to you not as public officials, but as future ancestors. I am appealing to you as parents and future great great grandparents who will be held accountable by those you love the most. Do you want them to tell the story of how you rose to the occasion to save their future, implementing climate conscious initiatives or do you want them to curse your name as they run for high ground, desperately filter drops of contaminated drinking water, and struggle to grow food in a dead earth?

From reducing greenhouse gas emissions in landfills to helping us regenerate our contaminated soil, absorbing storm water, building community, and helping New Yorkers grow plants, composting is a full out win. I know that last one may seem trivial, but in community gardens, on apartment windowsills and in boro backyards, a great many New Yorkers use NYC compost to grow food, medicine, and verdant beauty that directly impact their physical and mental well being. As we've seen with the isolation brought about by the pandemic, mental health is directly tied to public safety and crime reduction, which I know are big goals for this administration. Hell, compost even produces chemical compounds that have been proven to make us happier. Who couldn't use more free organic antidepressants right about now?

The arguments against composting are few and feeble. If your concern is vermin, I offer that our rat problem has long been fed, literally, by the fact that we do not separate and isolate our food waste from the municipal trash supply. Citywide brown bin implementation would reduce rat access to food scraps-- just ask Canada and the northern European countries who have been doing organics collection for decades. If your concern is compliance, then why not build a climate education job corps and call on the many environmental based non-profits who eagerly do this work every day. Together we can restore NYC's former composting program, making it not only the biggest, but the best.

To say that citywide composting is too expensive is renter thinking, an understandable mindset given how many of us live, struggling from paycheck to paycheck, but it will not

serve us in the long term. It may feel too expensive to make a down payment for a better future, impossible even, but we must dare to take the risk if we hope to have any sort of quality of life, long term. Balancing budgets is hard, but leaving out composting will put us in the red, literally. Invest in healthy communities and cleaner streets by restoring-- and expanding-- the citywide composting budget, and it will return dividends in the form of a stable climate, a vibrant people, and a just and equitable city.

Stop playing.

Candace Thompson

Brooklyn, NY

**Submitted by:** Caroline Mwaniki

**Hearing:** Friday March 4 @ 10:30 am Committee on Sanitation and Solid Waste Management

**Email:** [cmwaniki@gmail.com](mailto:cmwaniki@gmail.com)

**Zip code:** 11226

**New York City should be working on becoming more climate resilient.** Extreme heat and flooding are already adversely affecting New York city residents, and unsurprisingly, low income and houseless New Yorkers are bearing the largest burden. The young, the elderly, ethnic minorities and Indigenous people are also disproportionately bearing the burdens of climate change. The planet is already 2 F warmer, 33% of heat related deaths can now be attributed to climate change and there were 15 times more deaths from floods and storms in highly vulnerable regions in the previous decade between 2010 and 2020.

**Composting is an easy way to increase New York City's climate resilience.** Reducing greenhouse gasses, according to the UN, is the only way to limit the impact of climate change. When food scraps are composted less methane, a greenhouse gas, is released into the atmosphere. As a New York resident, I've experienced the effects of climate change over the past fifteen years through intense heat, intense storms and flooding. This motivates me to think about my neighbors living with limited access to cooling centers, those living in flood zones, and those without access to stable housing. Doing my part to reduce greenhouse gases means composting my food scraps, limiting my use of fossil-fueled vehicles and reducing my overall consumption. My actions will have a more meaningful impact when supported by citywide action on climate change, including mandatory composting and switching fossil-fueled activities to more sustainable energy sources.

**Funding a citywide organics collection would make the city budget climate resilient and provide cost savings.** According to the independent budget office, when the city prioritizes large scale organics collection by increasing participation, processing costs can be reduced making the process not only environmentally friendly, but cost effective as well. Funds for composting are an investment in the people of New York City and the planet.

**New York City cannot afford to stop composting as we figure out how to do so sustainably.** I'm asking that funds be restored to the existing composting program, as imperfect as it is, while the city works on expanding and mandating the program. It may seem like a choice now, but in a decade, we will all look back and either criticize the decision to cut funding for compost or praise the decision to keep composting.

Hello,

My name is Caroline Ciferno, I am a resident of Crown Heights, Brooklyn. I'm writing today to testify against the proposed budget cuts to the Curbside Composting program.

Mayor Adams made a promise during his mayoral campaign that he would expand the curbside composting program - a promise that previous mayors failed to reach.

The mayor's campaign even stated the facts itself: "methane from organic waste is destroying the environment and speeding climate change." The mayor's chief climate officer pledged that climate impact would be taken into account in every city decision.

It seems that mayor Adams views the program as "broken" because "participation is too low to justify providing the service" Meanwhile, other US cities (Seattle, Portland, San Francisco) are composting 70-80% of their landfill waste, as NYC ships out 12,000 tons of landfill waste per day.

I would argue that this administration is full of broken promises when it comes to bringing NYC to its zero waste goals.

DSNY states that "they are committed to make Curbside Composting an efficient and wide-reaching program." The restoration of the program has been neither efficient nor wide-reaching. To achieve efficiency or even interest, the city needs to provide clear instructions on how curbside composting works. Making the program voluntary, with an ambiguous sign-up process, is the perfect deterrent. If NYC wants to even remotely reach its zero waste goals, we need to go all-in on funding and mandating curbside composting, with clear instructions in a variety of formats.

Answering questions such as:

Where do the bins go?

What's the best way to transport the organic waste from their apartment to the bin?

What can they put in the bin?

When do the bins get picked up?

How to use the locking mechanism on the bin?

Where is the organic waste being taken and what will it be used for?

I say this as a person who is deeply involved in the compost community in NYC. I have heard personally from residents who are currently enrolled in the program that it is confusing and they don't know how it works. People want curbside composting. People who know about this are excited about the program, and when people learn about it, they are also excited, they say, "that's really cool, I'm glad our city has this opportunity and is making the effort."

I was recently standing waiting for the bus, next to boxes full of celery. Just bags and bags of celery out on the curb for the garbage truck to pick up.

I see this all of the time —ripped open trash bags on the sidewalk from rodents, organic waste that is perfectly compostable either littering our streets and or being sent to the landfill to take up space and continue to kill our planet, rather than being sent to the compost facility right here in NYC. It's very easy. It's very simple. And rather than spending millions of dollars shipping landfills outside of the state, NYC would save money by composting right in our community. You just have to put in the work to make it happen.

NYC cannot meet its zero waste goals without it.

And so I ask, why go partially into it? Why only offer it to a few areas in NYC? I know we have more than enough money and resources to make it happen. So make it happen. it's astonishing that you people who claim to be the leaders of "the greatest city in the world" aren't doing absolutely everything in your power to make that happen.

Thank you for taking the time to address my testimony.

Sincerely,  
Caroline Ciferno

Hello-

I'd like to add my voice in support of saving funding for NYC composting programs.

I've only become an urban composter in the last two years - it's been made increasingly easy where I live (in Chelsea) - but I already can't imagine going back to "before". The impacts on my and my partner's health have been noticeable: we purchase and consume more fresh produce because prepping vegetables is now easier and cleaner (all scraps go in an odor-absorbing canister that can be emptied nearby, whenever, 24/7 – so no rotting veg in our apartment or in our building's trash room. Amazing! We also buy more responsibly as we're more aware of our waste.

More profoundly, the act of walking our food scraps to neighborhood collection bins has deepened our sense of community and civic pride. I almost never deliver our food scraps without having a brief conversation – a little moment of goodwill – with either other New Yorkers doing the same, or curious passers-by who ask what I'm doing.

One morning last May I stood stock-still, along with two high-schoolers (I think they were cutting school, lol) and we watched, as an enormous Monarch butterfly alighted on top of one of the open bins on eighth Avenue and 23<sup>rd</sup> Street. It was a beautiful sunny day, but the intersection was loud and congested. Traffic was backed up: angry drivers blared their horns and maneuvered recklessly, giant trucks idled, spewing exhaust and blasting their horns. But there was the three of us, paused, caught in this moment together - not wanting to move or even speak - even though the sidewalk was also bustling. We stood, hushed, exchanging looks with each other that said, Wow, cool... The two teens held hands. And for what felt like an age, the butterfly, perched in the sunlight on the side of the bin, did this crazy, slow-motion, up-and-down thing with its wings — unaware, or determined to ignore, the commotion.

When the butterfly finally took off, fluttering over the roof of a magazine stand and out of sight, one of the teens asked me about the bins full of food scraps. I explained. He thought for a second, then said, "It's like, good garbage. It even smells good, like... earth."

Our city needs a new normal. If my neighborhood is anything to go by, we need to feel safe again, we need to get back to the business of working and living, and we also need to feel connected – to each other and to our natural environment.

Please protect the city's composting program from budget cuts. It needs promoting and expanding, not reducing.

Sincerely,

Caroline Wood

W 22<sup>nd</sup> Street, NYC, 10011

March 3rd, 2022

To the Committee on Sanitation and Solid Waste Management:

I am writing to express my opposition to the mayor's proposed cuts to the curbside composting program. I am a strong supporter of composting in NYC, and believe it is a critical part of the city's commitment to sustainability. My neighborhood, Crown Heights, has never received curbside compost collections. Instead, I have brought my food scraps to neighborhood drop-off sites run by GrowNYC – at Grand Army Plaza and the Franklin Ave subway station. When that funding was cut in 2020, I relied on my community garden to keep my composting routine going.

Any cuts to the compost budget threaten to undo the progress the city has made in incorporating composting into resident's routines. For New York to truly be a model of 21st century sustainability – like San Francisco and cities across the world – funding for compost has to be incrementally increased until it is as universal as recycling. I have seen in the last few years how passionate NYC residents can be about closing the loop on organic waste. Please help keep the momentum going by funding the program fully.

Thank you,

Chris Black  
Brooklyn, NY



March 3, 2022

TO: New York City Council

RE: SAVE OUR COMPOST PROGRAMS

Submitting online testimony for March 4th 10:30am hearing  
Committee on Sanitation and Solid Waste Management

Dear New York City Council and leaders,

Please do everything to support a citywide food scrap and organic collection for compost program.

Previous studies show nearly one third of the NYC waste stream is composed of organic waste such as food scraps, grass clippings and fall leaves, all of which can be removed from landfill.

This testimony is to request your support and funding of a citywide compost program.

The support of a compost program would work beneficially toward the following:

- Eliminating waste from nearly one third of NYC's stream,
- Keeping valuable organics out of landfill where they produce methane gas, which is worse for the environment than CO2.
- Returning valuable nutrient-rich organics back to the soils when scraps and clippings are processed into compost which will aid stormwater retention on land and reduce pollutant runoff into the nearby waterways,
- Reducing rats that look for food in curbside trash bags on the sidewalks leaving mostly dry trash within curbside trash bags which are not desired by rats,
- Returning valuable nutrient-rich compost to neighborhoods throughout New York to support healthy landscapes, educational teaching gardens and support biodiversity.

Through partnerships with Big Reuse, GrowNYC and LES Lower Eastside Ecology Center our neighborhood has diverted more than 220,000 pounds, or 110 tons, of food scraps from landfill and once processed returned that nutrient-rich compost into our soils landscapes, tree pits, household plants and teaching gardens for school age children and their families and friends.

Please do everything in your power to return the compost program to NYC.

Sincerely,  
Christina Delfico  
New York, New York 10044

Dear Councilpeople;

Composting is one of, if not the only actual good use of our tons of garbage. As a concerned member of the citizenry, I ask that you fight for the continuance of this program, but rather, enhance it! Educate all New Yorkers as to its value and efficacy. It is something that can be taught in school, it is an example of renewable energy, and it connects us to our food use, our health, and our environment on the local and global scale.

Sincerely,  
Cynthia Wright  
raecw@aol.com

March 3, 2022

Dana Davis  
### Union St  
Apt #  
Brooklyn NY  
11215

To the Committee on Sanitation and Solid Waste Management:

I am writing as a citizen of Brooklyn, NY and want to express my concerns about the idea of eliminating the curbside composting program. Composting is an effective way of eliminating food waste from heading to the landfill. Organic waste in landfills generates methane, a potent greenhouse gas. By composting wasted food and other organics, methane emissions are significantly reduced.

Please do not eliminate this program!

Our earth depends on us to act now!

Sincerely,  
Dana Davis

Dear City Councilmembers-

It was disheartening to hear that you removed composting from the annual city budget. As science has told us time and time again, climate change is real and we aren't acting fast enough. Composting is a way that we can have a positive impact on the environment. I live in Brooklyn and compost every day. While I walk once a week to take my compost to a specific site, this is not feasible for all New Yorkers. We need to make it easy to allow them to compost like it is to recycle and throw away trash. Climate change is real and we must address it now. Please keep funds for composting in the budget.

Sincerely,  
Danielle Naven

**Restore funding for compost, expand the compost program and mandate citywide composting now**

Dear Mayor Adams,

**New York City should be working on becoming more climate resilient.** Extreme heat and flooding are already adversely affecting New York City residents, and unsurprisingly, low income and houseless New Yorkers are bearing the largest burden. The young, the elderly, ethnic minorities and Indigenous people are also disproportionately bearing the burdens of climate change. The planet is already 2 F warmer, 33% of heat related deaths can now be attributed to climate change and there were 15 times more deaths from floods and storms in highly vulnerable regions in the previous decade between 2010 and 2020.

**Composting is an easy way to increase New York City's climate resilience.** Reducing greenhouse gasses, according to the UN, is the only way to limit the impact of climate change. When food scraps are composted less methane, a greenhouse gas, is released into the atmosphere. Composting is extremely important to me personally. I am a Master Composter, trained by the NYC Compost Project. I have also volunteered over the years at community drop off sites, such as Compost for Brooklyn, Q Gardens and Shore Road in Brooklyn. Unfortunately, due to my current work schedule, I am unable to volunteer at these sites but still bring my scraps all the way from Brooklyn to Union Square Greenmarket each week. **That is how important composting is to me.**

**Funding a citywide organics collection would make the city budget climate resilient and provide cost savings.** According to the independent budget office, when the city prioritizes large-scale organics collection by increasing participation, processing costs can be reduced making the process not only environmentally friendly, but cost effective as well. Funds for composting are an investment in the people of New York City and the planet.

**New York City cannot afford to stop composting as we figure out how to do so sustainably.** I'm asking that funds be restored to the existing composting program, as imperfect as it is, while the city works on expanding and mandating the program. It may seem like a choice now, but in a decade, we will all look back and either criticize the decision to cut funding for compost or praise the decision to keep composting. The decision is in your hands Mr. Mayor.

Respectfully,

Denise Lekowski, Esq.  
Shore Road  
Brooklyn, NY 11209

## Testimony of Support for NYC's Composting Program

My name is Derina Man, a resident of Woodside, New York, and I am writing this testimony in support of increasing funding for composting initiatives in New York City. **Composting is an accessible, tangible way that all New Yorkers can reduce the volume of waste going to the landfill (by up to 1/3) and cut methane emissions**, which is a powerful greenhouse gas. Given the climate crisis that we face, it is important to address all the “low-hanging fruit” emission reductions such as waste, knowing that there are more challenging hurdles that face us (e.g., transportation, building heating and cooling).

The potential diversions are significant – last year, **my household of two people diverted 325 pounds of organic waste from the landfill** and into local composting initiatives (i.e., community gardens). I volunteered in two communities that did not have access to curbside composting – East Harlem and Woodside – and I want to communicate that there is strong interest for composting. However, these communities rely on volunteer-run initiatives, which are not scalable and not always easily accessible. **A more comprehensive, DSNY supported program is needed to enable more New Yorkers to compost, especially given the size and density of New York City.**

I strongly urge the city to reconsider the budget cuts to the composting program, which represent a relatively miniscule savings in overall spending. New York has been a progressive leader on climate for the past two decades and I hope that we continue to show leadership on this issue.

Thank you for your consideration.

I am Elise Dahan from Hell's Kitchen, NYC, and am writing this testimony in support of increasing funding for Composting initiatives in NYC, instead of an outrageous cut of funding for the program.

At the risk of sounding condescending, I'd like to remind NYC Mayor Adams and NYC council that we are living in a major city of the world, in the year 2022, in the anthropocene, the new geological age marked by the human caused destabilization of ecosystem services - or as I prefer to call them "spaceship earth life supports". This decision of cutting funding for composting is absolutely mind boggling, instead of the pragmatic decision to greatly increase the composting budget. This decision comes right around the release of the sixth assessment report from the IPCC (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change) Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability, which says "**There is a rapidly narrowing window of opportunity to enable climate resilient development.**" (IPCC AR6 WGII Summary For Policymakers , SPM.D.1.1, page 32) To be noted, the IPCC report does not uncover new science, but merely reviews and reports the PAST peer reviewed evidence.

NYC's Mayor and council members have a duty to NYC residents to plan for long term solutions to adapt to climate change and greatly reduce greenhouse gas emissions (IPCC AR6 WGII Summary For Policymakers SPM.C.4, page 30 SPND5 page 37) and avoid maladaptation (adaptations that create lock in vulnerability such as sea walls). Expanding composting programs is one such climate resilient adaptation which the pragmatist should seriously consider, as it greatly reduce risks of greenhouse gas emission (less waste-mile, less methane/CO2 emission from the waste itself, produces a carbon rich soil amendment that can itself increase plant /soil health and therefore increase the effectiveness of soil/plant CO2 sink). Finally, here is a non-exhaustive list of facts that should sway pragmatic decision makers.

- 1/3rd of NYC's waste stream is composed of organic waste. Most ends up in landfill, which emits methane, a greenhouse gas 80X more potent than CO2 over a 20 year period. Expanding food waste composting would help mitigate these emissions and reduce NYC's carbon footprint, reducing the risks of flood, heat wave and so on.
- Landfills are generally located in low income communities and communities of color, who suffer from a range of serious health issues as a result of exposure to environmental toxins. The principles of environmental justice/equity dictate that we reduce the exposure of the most vulnerable.
- Diverting organic waste from landfill and incinerators also means less waste is trucked to the City's waste transfer stations, located in low income communities, where residents are subjected to unhealthy levels of air and noise pollution due in large part to the trucking itself. Once again, this would help reduce NYC's carbon footprint.
- The City spends \$460 million dollars a year exporting its waste to out-of-state landfills and incinerators, greatly expanding composting could greatly reduce this cost and emission associated with waste transport.
- Organic composting facilities create good green jobs, some of which within the city walls with proper planning, twice as many as landfill operations and four times more than incinerators per ton of trash.

- Organic waste is rich in nutrients and can be used to enrich the soil in parks, community gardens, and street trees. This would save the parks department the cost of buying and importing compost from far away, saving co2 emission further.
- Compost also enhances the soil's ability to retain water, making it an especially valuable tool for flood mitigation. (See: [Let's Talk About Compost and Flooding](#)).
- Compost increases soil organic matter and feeds the soil ecosystem, which in turn enhances the ability of plants to capture carbon dioxide out of the air, further positively affecting the carbon balance.
- The surplus of compost produced could be used by the farms who produce regionally some of the food that New Yorkers consume, further reducing the regional CO2 footprint and enhancing carbon sinks.
- Containerizing organic waste, rather than combining it with other waste in plastic trash bags, will help mitigate the city's rat problem. Further the proper treatment of the food waste greatly reduces the attractiveness of said waaste to rodents.

Thank you for doing the right thing and increase the composting budget instead of slashing it.



March 4, 2022  
Committee on Sanitation and Solid Waste Management Hearing

Dear members of the City Council,

I strongly urge you to push back against the Mayor's recently proposed budget cuts to DSNY's curbside composting program. Not only does this proposal go directly against the Mayor's promise to continue expansion of the project after extreme cuts during the pandemic, it is also a critical component of the City's plan to tackle climate change and address social and environmental issues.

Firstly, organic waste currently makes up about one third of our municipal waste which we spend millions of dollars to dispose of each year. Keeping that material within the boundaries of the city and utilizing it for its fertilization potential in our parks and public spaces which would greatly benefit from it, makes a lot more sense than paying for it to be transported to landfills where it will produce methane and increase our City's contribution to climate change.

Secondly, not only does the expansion of this program (if only back to its previous scale of operation under a limited \$7 million budget) contribute to our efforts to combat climate change, it also makes sense for everyday New Yorkers. We have always struggled with rodent problems in this city of over 8 million people and these challenges have only worsened throughout the pandemic. Reducing - or eliminating entirely through mandatory composting - the amount of food waste present in our black bag trash at the curb, will have a major impact on this issue. It only makes sense to align these overlapping issues and advocate for the salvation and expansion of this critical waste system program.

Additionally, some have attempted to make the argument that there is limited interest in public participation in this program. This is fundamentally false. Not only are there numerous organizations and advocacy groups that have campaigned for years on this issue and garnered major community support, any gaps in participation should not be seen as an opportunity to scale back this work. Instead this growing interest should be seen as a rationale for continuing the momentum of this program and not losing the ground we have gained.

Knowing what we do about the benefits of a citywide composting program, we cannot afford to put it on hold by cutting the program's budget, squandering the work of many DSNY staff members and other stakeholders that have spent years building upon efforts to expand this program and public awareness of it. These are not systems that can be turned back on overnight when we "have enough money", they must be considered as top priorities in the City's budget if we are to take solid waste management and climate change seriously in this city.

I sincerely hope that you will take my concerns and the concerns of so many of my fellow citizens into consideration and advocate for investment in this important program.

Thank you for your time and all of your hard work for the residents of this city.

Sincerely,  
Elisia Langdon

Elvia Pyburn-Wilk  
### Lincoln Place  
Brooklyn, NY 11238

March 2, 2022

Dear New York City Council:

I was dismayed to learn of Mayor Adams' severe cuts to composting in the city's budget. Composting is one of the most effective ways for urban areas to cheaply cut down on dangerous pollution and greenhouse gas emissions. It is an absolute shock to me that government leaders would back out of this basic obligation to the public to keep our groundwater, soil, and air safe.

When organic matter is thrown in the landfill, it not only adds to an enormous trash heap, it is unable to decompose properly and ends up releasing harmful methane. Therefore the problem is not only throwing waste that could become valuable soil into a landfill, but what happens when this waste ends up in the landfill: pollution and global warming.

My community garden, Prospect Heights Community Farm, stepped in during the pandemic to collect compostable waste from the public when the city system shut down. We began by collecting what our small composting operation could handle, but were overwhelmed by the demand from the community. We ended up collecting hundreds of pounds of compost a week and eventually partnering with a large operation so we could respond to demand.

From my experience working on my community garden compost team, I learned that New Yorkers desperately want access to composting. People were willing to walk a half hour just to drop off a few bags of banana peels.

It was disgraceful for the city to suspend composting in 2020, and it is disgraceful to cut funding now.

Composting is not a minor or symbolic issue: it is about keeping our city, our water, our soil, and our air clean and safe.

Please don't hesitate to get in touch with any questions.

Best regards,  
Elvia Pyburn-Wilk

Hello,

I am an 8th grader living in Jackson Heights. I compost myself and my neighborhood does not have city-run composting. This budget cut is very bad for the environment, and on top of this,  $\frac{1}{3}$  of NYC's waste is organic, and most of it goes into landfills, releasing methane. Methane is a greenhouse gas that is up to 80 times more potent than carbon dioxide. On top of this, composting projects will save the city money and create good green jobs. Please do not cut the composting budget, as it will hurt both the economy and the climate.

Thank You,  
Emily Herra

Dear Department of Sanitation:

Pre-pandemic, NYC was running the largest municipal composting program in the country at \$28 million annually.

NYC's new plans to cut the budget down to \$3.5 million are far too low to maintain NYC's goal of net zero.

The city's composting programs must continue to be funded by a minimum of \$7 million annually.

NYC already spends ~\$500 million to export its waste to out of state incinerators and landfills. Organics accounts for about 1/3 of the total NYC waste, and the city will not only save money by managing its waste locally but will also reduce GHG emissions significantly by removing food waste from landfills.

Waste equity is also an issue that can be resolved with good planning around an expanding composting infrastructure.

Removing organic waste from trash bins and securing it in closed brown bins can reduce the likelihood of rats ripping into trash bags and can reduce litter on streets.

There are a number of reasons to maintain NYC's composting infrastructure and to invest in its expansion. Please continue with the city's net zero plans and keep compost expansion as a priority.

Thank you and best,  
Emily Kichler

Sources:

Department of Sanitation: Using the Infusion of Federal Funds and Rebooting the Organics Program <https://ibo.nyc.ny.us/iboreports/department-of-sanitation-using-the-infusion-of-federal-funds-and-rebooting-the-organics-program-june-2021.pdf>

Dear Sanitation Committee,

Thanks for receiving my testimony. I have been a resident of New York City for more than 20 years, and I am writing to express my hope that the Committee will push for increased funding for the citywide compost program.

Composting is a vital program, for a number of reasons: It reduces the city's impact on the climate crisis, it turns an environmental problem into an agricultural asset, and it can provide cost savings for the city.

No doubt the committee members have heard these arguments. I would also appeal to the committee's sense of what it means to be a New Yorker, and what it means to be in public service. We live in an age where many despair in the face of the climate crisis and other problems, and many believe government can only offer failure and mediocrity.

Composting is a modest goal, but if done right it can also be a visible reminder that New Yorkers know how to work together, implement bold solutions, and provide an example to the rest of the country. Your fellow New Yorkers are counting on you.

Thank you,  
Francis Hwang

Testimony of Gabriel Hertzberg  
Clinton Hill, Brooklyn  
Sanitation Hearing 3/4/2022

I wish to make two points.

1. The city is not allocating enough resources toward sanitation. The city is overrun with trash on sidewalks, curbs and along the major roadways like the FDR and West Side Highway, particularly at major intersections and bridge/tunnel approaches. This is a major quality of life issue. The amount of trash strewn about on my street, Washington Ave bt Fulton and Atlantic, in Brooklyn, is appalling. I pick up trash every day. Filthy standing water lines the curb like an open sewer. I don't want to raise my children in a city that looks like this. Please shift more resources toward sanitation.
2. The composting program is one of the few bright spots the city has implemented in the last few years. It helps reduce rodent infestation in the general refuse bins, which reduces trash leaking out of bags onto the sidewalk when rats tear open bags. Plus, it's an environmentally friendly way to reuse and recycle food scraps. We can introduce our children to the importance of re-use through participation in the program. It's very important that this program be continued, marketed, and expanded.

Respectfully  
Gabriel Hertzberg

Dear Council Members;

Composting is one of, if not the only actual good use of our tons of garbage. As a concerned member of the citizenry, I ask that you fight for the continuance of this program, but rather, enhance it with education for all New Yorkers as to it's value and efficacy. It is something that can be taught in school, it is an example of renewable energy, and it connects us to our food use, our health, and our environment on the local and global scale.

Sincerely,

Giacoma Bonello

[giacomabonello@gmail.com](mailto:giacomabonello@gmail.com)

To whom it may concern,

I am writing to urgently advocate on the behalf of expanding and protecting the city's initiative to compost organic waste.

Organic waste currently makes up  $\frac{1}{3}$  of the entire waste in NYC. Accessible composting sites and curbside compost needs to continue and should be prioritized. Composting reduces CO2 emissions and moves the city into greener and more ethical practices.

As a resident of Astoria. Composting here is very accessible thanks to the work of grassroots organizations and has helped transform the town. It should be made accessible to all residents in NYC. It is environmental equity that everyone has access to compost sites that will enrich our environment. The city must move to adopt green practices and realize the climate crisis is here now. The city cannot ignore the real global crisis and must do everything it can to prevent it from worsening.

There is money for everything else in NYC and corporate pockets remain fat and lined. There is definitely money for sanitation to continue the important composting and should be expanded.

With urgency  
Giselle



To the Committee on Sanitation and Solid Waste Management,

I'm writing to encourage the city to keep and expand the curbside composting program.

The idea that we would put biodegradable food scraps into single-use plastic trash bags and have it sit in a landfill when we have the infrastructure for a composting program available is completely short-sighted.

Our city spends millions of dollars to send our garbage to landfills away from New York. Most garbage is food scraps, which can be locally composted. It doesn't matter if the program pays for itself right now or not—it will in the future, and we need to be creating habits and behavior around composting now if we're serious about addressing our climate goals.

The curbside service is incredibly important. I can speak from firsthand experience that any low participating is primarily caused by the new opt-in strategy—landlords are not interested in doing anything they think is “extra work” and unfortunately, the new opt-in system means that tenants have to ask their landlords to participate in composting. Composting should be the same type of program as our municipal recycling program—we should not put the impetus on the individual to do what's right for the environment. This also means that these issues become luxuries for middle and upper-class New Yorkers who have the time, resources, and financial leverage to get recycling set up for their buildings.

Composting is actually an amazing process and learning about and talking about how food grows and is disposed of is something that connects every New Yorker. We should all have access to this service. Not only is it just the right thing to do for the environment, it reflects our values as a city and continues to make us a leader—and a place where people want to live.

Thank you,

Grace Robinson-Leo

To: Councilmember and Committee Chair Sandy Nurse and Members of the Committee on Sanitation and Solid Waste Management

Re: City Compost Programs

My name is Jenna Fox, and I appreciate the opportunity to submit my testimony. I am writing to let you know how deeply saddened I am that Mayor Adams is reversing his campaign promise to expand curbside compost collection. I was thrilled and relieved when our neighborhood finally qualified for curbside pickup before the pandemic. It was important to me that we, as a family, did our part to help minimize greenhouse gas emissions by not adding food scraps to landfills. We helped spread the word to friends and neighbors, making sure that everyone knew how easy and impactful the action of composting was.

We understood when the city paused the curbside pickup during the pandemic. Sadly, this pause seems to have allowed people to reverse their habits again. Our neighborhood, Kensington, in Brooklyn did not have enough residents “opt-in” to reinstate curbside pickup. People are busy and are not necessarily paying attention to this issue. That said, when the program was in effect, people were complying and composting. Composting should be made simple. It should be picked up just as garbage is in order to have the largest impact. My family takes our compost on Saturdays to a neighborhood site but we are in the minority. Not having curbside pickup dramatically affects the amount of food waste that is diverted.

I recognize the urgent need for budget cuts and cost-savings due to COVID-19, but we cannot afford to reverse progress on the larger, longer-term crisis: climate change. Composting is one of the most basic things that every person can do to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and have a positive impact on the environment.

Councilmember Nurse, I laud your commitment to composting programs, and I implore you and the Committee on Sanitation to do

whatever you can in the Council to make sure the mayor's proposed cuts do not stand, and to increase Community Composting and all Zero Waste Programs.

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing to protest the upcoming funding cut to NYC's composting program rollout, in the hopes that this funding may be reinstated.

Quite simply, composting is one of the simplest ways for NYC to reduce climate impact, and a citywide program would make it easy for everyone to participate. Mass participation is what will make the difference for halting global warming as part of NYC's Zero Waste Goals. Creating compost helps NY grow plants food, reduces methane emissions, and reduces our reliance on fossil fuels and landfills. Having a mandatory composting program will actually save the city money, reducing the cost of exporting our waste out of state. 1/3 of NYC trash is organic and could be composted instead! This would combat the yearly-increasing expense of exporting our trash. And getting organic waste out of trash bins will help with our rat and litter problem, provide secure/green/local jobs through the organics collection program, and make a healthier NYC for NYers to live in now—and in the future—by reducing pollution and contamination.

Especially after the most recent landmark report released which reveals that we have even \*less\* time than we thought to halt global heating to not go past 1.5 degrees Celsius, NYC should be a leader in finding real, everyday ways to help this happen. With our commitments to holistic health in NYC through initiatives like OneNYC, cutting funding for the continued rollout of the composting program seems hypocritical, and more importantly, will have truly devastating effects on the lives of NYers if we don't succeed at fighting climate change's current trajectory.

This is the moment where we \*must\* focus preserving a livable city; none of the other educational, social, equity, economic, or other items receiving city funding instead will even be relevant, should natural disaster and chaos take over our city due to climate catastrophe. This is not hyperbole, this is science. The time is now. Please bring back our composting program — a simple, but very effective way to serve and engage NYers in protecting our safety and health, and the safety and health of future generations.

Thank you,  
Julia Barry

Testimony to NYC council, our local councilperson Julie Won, and open letter to Mayor Adams.

\*\*\*\*\* go to file and save a copy to make it your own ! \*\*\*\*\*

<https://council.nyc.gov/testify/>

03/07/2022

Dear Council member Won and Mayor Adams,

My name is Kaitlin Rees and I live in Sunnyside, NYC. I am writing to voice my strong support for increasing the Composting initiatives in NYC. The proposed cut for funding this program is deeply disturbing and simply irresponsible. Our city needs to participate in the kind of responsible decision-making that is needed to offset our current climate disasters.

NYC's Mayor and council members have a duty to NYC residents to plan for long term solutions to adapt to climate change and greatly reduce greenhouse gas emissions (IPCC AR6 WGII Summary For Policymakers SPM.C.4, page 30 SPND5 page 37) and avoid maladaptation (adaptations that create lock in vulnerability such as sea walls). Expanding composting programs is one such climate resilient adaptation which the pragmatist should seriously consider, as it greatly reduce risks of greenhouse gas emission (less waste-mile, less methane/CO2 emission from the waste itself, produces a carbon rich soil amendment that can itself increase plant /soil health and therefore increase the effectiveness of soil/plant CO2 sink).

Currently, my family and I bring our weekly compost to a volunteer-run neighborhood site in Sunnyside. We need a city-wide program that will support NYC residents to make responsible decisions about what to do with their organic waste.

Some facts that must be considered:

- 1/3rd of NYC's waste stream is composed of organic waste. Most ends up in landfill, which emits methane, a greenhouse gas 80X more potent than CO2 over a 20 year period. Expanding food waste composting would help mitigate these emissions and reduce NYC's carbon footprint, reducing the risks of flood, heat wave and so on.
- Landfills are generally located in low income communities and communities of color, who suffer from a range of serious health issues as a result of exposure to environmental toxins. The principles of environmental justice/equity dictate that we reduce the exposure of the most vulnerable.
- Diverting organic waste from landfill and incinerators also means less waste is trucked to the City's waste transfer stations, located in low income communities, where residents are subjected to unhealthy levels of air and noise pollution due in large part to the trucking itself. Once again, this would help reduce NYC's carbon footprint.

- The City spends \$460 million dollars a year exporting its waste to out-of-state landfills and incinerators, greatly expanding composting could greatly reduce this cost and emission associated with waste transport.
- Organic composting facilities create good green jobs, some of which within the city walls with proper planning, twice as many as landfill operations and four times more than incinerators per ton of trash.
- Organic waste is rich in nutrients and can be used to enrich the soil in parks, community gardens, and street trees. This would save the parks department the cost of buying and importing compost from far away, saving CO<sub>2</sub> emission further.
- Compost also enhances the soil's ability to retain water, making it an especially valuable tool for flood mitigation. (See: [Let's Talk About Compost and Flooding](#)).
- Compost increases soil organic matter and feeds the soil ecosystem, which in turn enhances the ability of plants to capture carbon dioxide out of the air, further positively affecting the carbon balance.
- The surplus of compost produced could be used by the farms who produce regionally some of the food that New Yorkers consume, further reducing the regional CO<sub>2</sub> footprint and enhancing carbon sinks.
- Containerizing organic waste, rather than combining it with other waste in plastic trash bags, will help mitigate the city's rat problem. Further the proper treatment of the food waste greatly reduces the attractiveness of said waste to rodents.

Thank you for doing the right thing and increasing the composting budget instead of slashing it.

Sincerely,

Kaitlin Rees

Kaitlyn Flannagan

Regarding Committee on Sanitation and Solid Waste Management

March 4, 2022

Thank you for the opportunity to testify regarding sanitation and solid waste management. My name is Kaitlyn Flannagan and I am a resident of New York City currently living in Crown Heights, Brooklyn. I'm testifying today in support of restoring and expanding funding for community composting.

As a city resident, I am concerned about the possibility of a decrease in funding for Community Composting and DSNY Zero Waste partner programs. Personally, I have not been fortunate enough to live in a neighborhood that has a Curbside Composting program. Though I've taken measures to participate in food scrap drop-off, I recognize that this can be burdensome and inaccessible for many city residents.

Composting—which is the process of recycling organic waste—provides a range of environmental and economic benefits for our city and would also improve our overall quality of life.

First, Community Composting initiatives provide incredible environmental benefits. These programs reduce the waste we create as a city, and if we want to achieve our zero waste goals, mandatory curbside composting is a crucial step. Made from organic matter, composting not only gives us an opportunity to reduce methane emissions, but compost itself functions as an incredibly nutrient-dense soil regeneration tool. Additionally, composting allows us to reduce our reliance on the fossil fuels needed to run landfill and incineration equipment.

Second, Community Composting initiatives will create economic benefits. By composting, we can reduce our waste stream, thus saving the city money. New York City spends a tremendous amount of money annually exporting our waste and the cost to do so increases every year. Furthermore, an organics program in our city has the opportunity to create local jobs that are secure as well as green.

Last, the benefits of Community Composting programs extend to quality of life in New York City. By storing our organic waste in secure bins, we lessen the likelihood that pests—like rats—will

rip into trash bags. This will not only help with the city's ongoing rat problem, but also reduce the amount of litter on our sidewalks and streets.

It is for these reasons that I support continuing to fund Community Composting and DSNY Zero Waste partner programs at the current level of seven million dollars, at a minimum. Thank you so much for the opportunity to testify, I very much appreciate your consideration of these matters.



Thursday march 3, 2022.

Testimony for NYDS

I live in the Longwood section of the Bronx, off of Leggett Avenue. The trash outside of the public schools, as well as the apartments are attracting rats. Everyday I see rats chewing holes in the bags to eat food waste. During the summer months, the smell of the garbage and the rat situation gets worse.

Also, on the CSX train tracks, off of Leggett Ave, have a terrible odor from the garbage being hauled out on the trains in the warmer months. Sometimes the smell is so bad, that I have to keep my windows closed. - I cannot afford to keep my Air conditioning running all day long. This is a problem that affects my health and well being.

Thank you,  
Karen Schuld

Thursday march 5, 2022.

Testimony for NYDS

I live in the Longwood section of the Bronx, off of Leggett Avenue. The trash outside of the public schools, as well as the apartments are attracting rats. Everyday I see rats chewing holes in the bags to eat food waste. During the summer months, the smell of the garbage and the rat situation gets worse. There is no accountability for all of this food waste. This neighborhood desperately needs a compost drop site and/or a brown bin pick up, as well as out reach to educate. Also, on the Hunts Point side of Leggett Avenue, there is so much food waste dumped by trucks - This is an industrial area that seems exempt from proper city clean-up. This smell of food rot permeates into residential areas. The only way to properly dispose of this waste is through composting. It is irresponsible to just throw away in a landfill.

On the CSX train tracks, off of Leggett Ave, have a terrible odor from the garbage being hauled out on the trains in the warmer months. Sometimes the smell is so bad, that I have to keep my windows closed. - I cannot afford to keep my Air conditioning running all day long. This is a problem that affects my health and well being. I've seen where the smell is so bad that the school children cannot go outside to play.

Thank you,  
Karen Schuld

Hello,

My name is Katie Zwick. I'm a resident of Greenpoint, Brooklyn and the coordinator of the North Brooklyn Compost Project (NBK Compost). We are a grassroots, volunteer-led community composting initiative that collaborates with Big Reuse to collect and process thousands of pounds of food scraps each week. We operate two weekly drop-offs in Greenpoint – at McGolrick Park and Transmitter Park. Since we started in June of 2020, we have collected food scraps from thousands of our neighbors and have diverted over 200,000 lbs of organic waste from landfills.

I am proud of the work that NBK Compost has done to reduce waste in the community, combat climate change, and educate residents about the importance of composting. But community-scale organizations are only part of the bigger picture in addressing the immediate threat of climate change and the ongoing, pervasive environmental racism experienced by thousands of New Yorkers each day.

I am calling on the City to support widespread, mandatory composting for every household across the five boroughs. At the start of this year, the State of California enacted mandatory composting for its nearly 40 million residents. New York cannot continue to lag decades behind its West Coast counterparts. We have all witnessed the dramatic, deadly effects of climate change across the county – thousands of homes, towns, and lives lost. And locally, we have seen the climate crisis manifest in startling ways – just a few months ago, Hurricane Ida tore through the streets of New York City, killing or harming dozens of people and destroying the homes of many more. In a city surrounded by water on three sides, storms like these will continue to cause destruction season after season, year after year. If the City continues to consider composting as a symbolic service that can be cut to reduce costs, we will soon find ourselves underwater and more lives will be lost.

Organic waste rotting away in landfills is responsible for 15 percent of the greenhouse gas emissions in the United States. New York City should be leading the charge on transforming the waste stream by creating what would be one of the country's largest mandatory organic waste recycling programs. We implore our City Councilmembers to push for the expansion of funding for organics recycling and to enact a mandatory organics program citywide.

Thank you,  
Katie Zwick  
Greenpoint Resident  
Coordinator, NBK Compost

I, Kaylee Knowles, am writing to express that it is vitally important not only that the city not cut the budget for composting, but that we should actually increase it beyond the current \$7 million. Organics account for a third of NYC's waste, and rather than these items going in the trash, where they attract rats on the street and release methane from landfills, the organics could be recycled into compost, which helps regenerate soil and reduces fossil fuel emissions. We should be expanding the curbside composting program, especially into underserved communities, rather than cutting it. Composting is important for public health, and increasing the composting program will also reduce expenses related to exporting our trash. Composting is important in terms of reducing our harmful impact on the climate, improving public health, and reducing our trash and landfills. We should be increasing the budget allotted to composting well past \$7 million rather than cutting it.

To whom it may concern:

Mayor Adams proposed budget and program cuts to sanitation and compost should not be allowed to move forward. At a time when weather is more erratic than ever and scientists are pleading for us to take measures to reduce our strain on the environment and do everything in our power to mitigate damages we've already caused, now is the time to invest in these programs.

Food scraps and yard waste are the largest portion of NYC's waste stream. It is so antiquated that we haven't mandated this in our city yet. We can't afford to be penny wise but pound foolish when it affects future generations of New Yorkers. Investing in compost will pay dividends down the road in garbage savings and, hopefully, in preventing further ocean temperature rise thus slowing the effects of climate change.

With regards to the trash, not only is this a health and happiness issue, it's just plain embarrassing. Our sanitation workers work relentlessly and we should do what we can to make their jobs easier so we can all enjoy a cleaner city. We should be investing here, also, to make pick up of trash and recycling easier. Other cities have creative, efficient, and effective systems. Why are garbage bags on the curb the best we think we can do?

Furthermore, NYC always has the chance to be a shining example that other cities will look to. If we can do it here, they can do it anywhere!

This all goes to say, investments in our city should be in these programs that keep are communities happy, clean, and safe from climate change.

Thank you,  
Kristine McCarthy

To whom it may concern,

I am beyond disappointed that the mayor decided not to keep one of his campaign promises to expand the city's compost program. It's a shame that as the biggest city in the country, we are so behind other places in terms of our compost infrastructure. We are also behind and will very likely not meet our proposed sustainability goals. The decision to cut compost expansion will contribute to the failure to meet our goals.

NYC will continue to contribute massive amounts of greenhouse gas emissions due food waste going to landfills, instead of that waste contributing to the health of our city and planet by being turned into compost. It is a shame that our current mayor is so short-sighted and willing to sacrifice such an essential and important service.

I am asking that the decision to cut compost expansion be reversed. If anything, it needs to be fully funded to make compost a mandatory service for every building (residential and business) in this city. So far, every administration seems to view compost as an expandable service that can be cut because it's not seen as important as other services. This in my opinion could not be more wrong and backwards. Nothing is more important than the health of our city and our planet.

I urge you to please fully fund composting for New York City.

Sincerely,  
Laura Corona Rios  
(Concerned resident)

March 6, 2022

Please consider the importance of New York's participation in finding our way to a sustainable future. We should be leaders in this and be setting an example. Instead we fall behind and think of cutting funding to an essential program that is the norm in Europe.

Composting is the solution to abating our city's out of control rat problem that is finally being acknowledged. Instead of cutting back we should require all restaurants to bin and compost their food waste. Rat populations fluctuate according to the garbage they have access to. This is not speculation it is proven fact.

Compost waste is binned waste. It takes food waste out of easily accessible plastic curbside bags.

Sincerely,  
Lorraine Forte  
E. 12th Street  
New York, NY 10009

To Whom It May Concern,

I am submitting testimony in favor of restoring the city's funding for curbside composting and composting education.

In today's current climate situation, reducing opportunities to compost does not make sense at all. If anything the mayor's proposed cuts to NYC's curbside composting program will move NYC backwards in the green initiatives it has put forth.

When compared to cities such as San Francisco we are so far behind when it comes to composting.

Composting the city's food scraps has numerous benefits including creating green jobs for our fellow New Yorkers.

Here are a few points that the Save Our Compost Coalition points out that I feel are worth mentioning.

- Diverting organic waste from landfill and incinerators also means less waste is trucked to the City's waste transfer stations, located in environmental justice communities, where residents are subjected to unhealthy levels of air and noise pollution.
- The City spends \$460 million dollars a year exporting its waste to out-of-state landfills and incinerators.
- Organic composting facilities create good green jobs, twice as many as landfill operations and four times more than incinerators per ton of trash.
- Organic waste is rich in nutrients and can be used to enrich the soil in parks, community gardens, and street trees. Compost also enhances the soil's ability to retain water, making it an especially valuable tool for flood mitigation. (See: [Let's Talk About Compost and Flooding](#)).
- Containerizing organic waste, rather than combining it with other waste in plastic trash bags, will help mitigate the city's rat problem.

The processes of sending food waste to our landfills creates methane gas whereas the process of composting our food scraps creates a rich material that can be used to benefit our soils. It does not make sense to me that the mayor would choose the poisonous option for our city.

I urge Mayor Adams to reverse the cuts to the NYC composting program and bring our great city forward and not backwards.

Sincerely,  
Madelene DeLeon  
Queens NY



3/2/2022

Maria Fernandez  
#### 37<sup>th</sup> Street  
Astoria, NY 11103

To: Committee on Sanitation and Solid Waste Management

Re: Testimonial to Restore and Expand Community Composting

Thank you for accepting my written testimonial.

Citywide composting cuts **4 billion pounds** of carbon dioxide per year, which equals to 385,000 cars off the road. This is just one of the many reasons why composting is vital for a better future for all.

If funding is cut in half from \$7 million to 3.5 million, this threatens the 200+ current food scrap drop off sites throughout the city.

Composting our organic waste locally in New York City **will save the city money**.

New York City already spends \$500 million dollars to export our waste to out of state incinerators and landfills. Organics is around 1/3 of the total New York City waste.

The cost to export our trash is becoming more expensive by the year.

Mandatory curbside composting for all of New York City must be the ultimate goal if New York City to head towards the right direction in achieving its Zero Waste goals.

In order to work towards zero waste in 2030 as Department of Sanitation has been advocating, Community Composting and DSNY Zero Waste Partner programs must continue to be funded at the current level of \$7 million, at a minimum.

Do the right thing, and do not cut funding for Community Composting.

I appreciate your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,  
Maria Fernandez

07 March 2022

Dear New York City Council,

My name is Mary Jo Burke, and I am a resident of the Lower East Side in Manhattan. I have been a devoted composter since 1998, when I discovered the Lower East Side Ecology Center's (LESEC) compost drop-off program in the NYC Greenmarket in Union Square. Prior to the pandemic, I also "shared the bin" of a neighboring coop to compost organic material not accepted by the LESEC. Because of the LESEC's compost program, I have had very little organic waste since 1998. With the addition of the DSNY program, I had no organic waste.

There are many positive aspects of composting:

- Organic materials are not waste, but valuable resources to create compost and/or energy. Organic material makes up approximately 1/3 of NYC's waste stream.
- Reduces the weight of material being tipped at the landfill, which reduces the tipping fees.
- Reduces the weight of the material being transported to landfills, which reduces the number of trips, gas consumption, wear and tear on vehicles, and the energy required to incinerate the material.
- Composting the organic material locally will create green jobs for New Yorker City residents.
- Separating organic waste from the waste stream, and putting it into bins with latching lids, will reduce the food stock of rats.
- Removing organic material from landfills will reduce methane production. Methane is a short-lived climate pollutant and is 86x more potent a heat trapping greenhouse gas than CO2 over a 20-year period. Reducing methane now will quickly have a large impact on the reduction of GHG emissions.

I am asking for the following:

- The Community Composting and DSNY Zero Waste partner programs maintain their \$7 million dollar funding, at the bare minimum.
- Funding for the planned and promised, by candidate for Mayor and now Mayor Adams, expansion of the Curbside Composting program must be restored.
- Financial planning to implement city-wide mandatory curbside composting, including NYCHA Housing, in the next 2-3 years.

Thank you for taking the time to read and consider my testimony.

Sincerely,

Mary Jo Burke

Please save composting!

Eric Adams' stated reasoning behind this is that the program has low participation rates. However, anyone who composts knows that it was difficult to get a bin after the city cut the program during COVID—and the new compost program is opt-in only and bins have to be requested and approved by landlords, and are only available in select neighborhoods. Eric Adams said he would expand the citywide program on the campaign trail and is now reversing his position.

It feels completely insane in this day and age of climate change to not have our city enact a simple, proven, helpful, accessible program like composting. Composting should be city-wide and mandated like our recycling program.

Additionally:

—The idea that we would put biodegradable food scraps into single use plastic trash bags and have it sit in a landfill is horrible.

—Composting actually helps the rat issue in the city as, if fully enacted, it means that food scraps sit in secure brown bins instead of trash bags on the street

that can be chewed through

—Little Island cost \$260 million dollars to build and composting only costs \$15 million dollars a year.

—Composting is actually an amazing process and learning about and talking about how food grows and is disposed of is something that connects us and we should all be a part of!

Thank you for considering this message.

Best,

Matthew Israel

I am a concerned citizen, residing at Carroll Street in Brooklyn,

I am writing to ask that you **reverse** the harmful cuts to our community composting program and announce a plan to scale up to a citywide, universal compost collection program that enables \*all\* New Yorkers to compost their food scraps. The Mayor's proposed cuts would save little (less than 1.3% of the overall Sanitation budget) but would do serious damage to public confidence in the City's recycling and climate change programs.

The climate crisis cannot wait. Methane from landfilling organic waste accounts for 17% of US methane emissions. Methane has more than 80 times the warming power of carbon dioxide over 20 years.

It is unjust for NYC to continue landfilling and burning our waste in low-income communities and communities of color, when much of it can be composted, recycled, or donated.

We call on the City to include the following in the FY2023 budget:

1) **Fully fund Department of Sanitation (DSNY) Community Composting programs** which provide over 200 Food Scrap Drop Offs throughout the city and local composting sites that produce compost for our Parks and community gardens. The Community Composting should not only continue to be funded at the current level of \$7 million, but also be expanded to meet the increasing demand for these programs with additional funding to equitably locate community composting sites in communities that do not have one.

2) **Restore funding for the planned expansion of the current opt-in Curbside Composting program, ensuring that environmental justice communities are included and prioritized.**

3) **Require the City to develop a plan for developing a citywide curbside compost program by 2025.** Provide mandatory citywide curbside composting so New Yorkers in all residential buildings and schools can compost as easily as they can recycle.

The planet, and our children, are counting on us.

Sincerely,  
Melanie Glass Smith

Thank you City Council for your time. My name is Melissa, and I am a long time Manhattan resident. I have been composting my food scraps for almost 10 years now and I was thrilled to learn of the composting program when it first started, but disappointed when I realized that my neighborhood could not participate, and even more disappointed when it was discontinued during the pandemic, and then reinstated and only to be discontinued or not expanded again.

The benefits of composting program is a no-brainer. There are economic benefits as well as ecological. I know that many people before me have listed all of them, so I won't repeat it. We cannot afford to NOT act on our city's efforts to combat climate change. Continuing and expanding the compost program would go a long way towards this goal.

Please do not cut the budget for the program. In fact, please expand it, make it mandatory and help make this city a cleaner, greener place to live.

Thank you for your time,

Melissa Chow

Testimony following 3/4/22 Committee on Sanitation and Solid Waste Management hearing

I am a resident of Kensington, Brooklyn. For years I have been separating my food scraps from other refuse, storing them in my freezer, and bringing them to collection sites during neighborhood greenmarkets once every week or two. Like many New Yorkers, I have a solid habit down that has resulted in my contributing far less waste to landfills. I join countless neighbors in calling now for the restoration and expansion of composting programs.

According to the Department of Sanitation, "organic waste, including food scraps and yard waste, is the most significant contributor of waste-related greenhouse gas emissions—and is also the largest fraction of New York City's waste stream, one-third in total." The litter and rodent situation in our neighborhoods is bad and will get worse as the summer comes in. All communities need access to environmentally just solutions such as food scraps collections. Waste export costs and climate change exacerbated by landfilling and incineration will be the result of short-sighted cutting of composting.

We need to move forward with existing (and new) initiatives that will help the city meet its Zero Waste and environmental justice goals, and these initiatives need to be expanded rather than cut.

Sincerely,  
Melissa Morrone  
Kensington, Brooklyn

To the committee members of the Committee of Sanitation and Solid Waste Management,

My name is Mikayla Madigan and I've been a Brooklyn resident for the last 5 years, and resident of New York City for the last 10. I'm currently employed in New York as an Art Director for a social media advertising agency.

I'm also extremely passionate about environmentalism and sustainability, especially here in our lovely city of New York. I've been composting through various methods for the last 5 years. I started by utilizing the brown bins in my neighborhood of Bay Ridge. My building did not qualify for a brown bin at the time so a lovely neighbor let me contribute to hers in the winter when our green market drop-off was closed. Then the pandemic hit and I was at a loss for composting services. I started my own worm bin, which only took care of a small percentage of my food, and then signed up for an independent program.

I have recently moved into a building with a brown bin that is no longer active. I've been trying to get my building owner to sign up again, but have been unsuccessful.

What people don't realize is the importance of organic waste in managing sustainable systems.  $\frac{1}{3}$  of the city's waste is organic waste, all that is easily compostable and made into useful soil for NYC parks and land. This  $\frac{1}{3}$  of waste is going to our landfills, releasing methane gas, contributing to our greenhouse gas production, and furthering us from making large strides in overcoming the climate crisis. All of that can be solved through easy, accessible, composting services.

When I speak to my friends and coworkers who reside here in NYC about composting, they all share with me the same sentiments. It's too difficult, my building won't implement the brown bins, I don't know how, I don't live near a green market, etc. Accessibility is the #1 reason people don't compost. YOU can change that and actively make it easier for people to make a difference in the city and for our environment.

With that I ask you, to not only restore the \$7M dollar budget, at minimum, but further to expand that. As well as making curbside composting for ALL of NYC mandatory, including corporate buildings and restaurants, if we want to achieve NYC's zero waste goals. In the end this doesn't only help the environment, but would save the city money by reducing the amount of waste we need to export. This was a promise made by Mayor Eric Adams during his campaign, and a reason I voted for him.

It is the responsibility of all members of NYC to make a difference for our environment. Us as residents and you as government employees and city council members. We can't participate if the program isn't functional.

Thank you,

Mikayla Madigan, Brooklyn Resident & Compost Program Participant



Dear Sanitation and Solid Waste Management Committee,

Mayor Adams' proposed budget would cut funding for curbside composting and halt the planned expansion to make the program citywide. This is a shortsighted and shameful proposal, and needs to be reconsidered.

**I'm writing today to demand that the city restore the funding for curbside composting and invest in expanding the program to mandatory city-wide composting now.**

There are so many good reasons to do this now:

### **Fighting Climate Change**

One third of NYC's waste stream is organic waste, most of which currently ends up in landfill, emitting methane, a greenhouse gas 80X more potent than CO2 over a 20 year period. Compost helps our soil retain water for flood mitigation, and the separating it from other waste help mitigate the city's rat problem. Our government has an obligation to provide clean air and clean water under the NYS constitution and the CLCPA.

### **Health & Environmental Justice**

Landfills are generally located in low income communities and communities of color, who suffer from a range of serious health issues as a result of exposure to environmental toxins. Directing organic waste to composting instead of landfill and incinerators will reduce the waste trucked to waste transfer stations, which are also located in environmental justice communities and produce unhealthy levels of air and noise pollution.

### **Economic Benefits**

Organic composting is also good for the economy. It can help cut the \$460 million currently spent annually exporting waste to out-of-state landfills and incinerators. And composting facilities create good green jobs—twice as many as landfills and four times more than incinerators.

My wife and I are thrilled to have curbside composition in our building. Clearly the current program needs improvement. But the benefits are too great to walk away from the commitment the city made. Instead, it's time to make the program more robust and expand it to benefit all New Yorkers.

Thank you for your consideration,

Miles McManus  
E 22nd St Apt  
York NY 1001

Molly Oliver Culver  
Testimony for 3/4/22 Hearing  
Description: NYC COUNCIL HEARING  
COMMITTEE ON SANITATION AND SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT  
3/4/22 at 10:30am

**Greetings, all. My name is Molly Culver. I'm a Brooklyn resident, small business owner, and former community organizer and urban farmer. I continue to teach Soil Science and Composting for Master Gardener certificate programs at Brooklyn Botanic Garden, and the New York Botanical Garden. I've taught hundreds of New Yorkers the how's, why's and concrete skills for how to make compost since 2012.**

Thank you Commissioner Grayson, Committee Chair Nurse, and all Councilmembers for hearing and/or reading my testimony. It's clear that so many on this call are very passionate about solving the puzzle of creating successful municipal composting, and that is encouraging.

**Like many composting advocates in NYC, I've led personal volunteer efforts on my home block, local community garden, and in local schools to build knowledge and hands-on skills in composting. I didn't come by this knowledge because it was taught in school. I didn't major in any science related field in college.**

It was here in New York City, thanks to the sweat equity of community gardeners and the leadership of local residents and CBOs advocating for composting and farmers market drop offs that created the possibility for me to learn and make a behavior change. I actually *had a place* to bring my compost, once I developed very real eco anxiety as a young person, and learned how vital it was for limiting climate change back in 2004 in my early 20s.

One of the greatest A-HA moments for me as a young adult, as a consumer and city dweller was learning how much less the trash under my sink smelled once I started separating my food waste. That alone might have swayed me, but it was also learning about how it works that inspired me, and made me feel more connected to the natural world and less helpless in the face of climate disaster.

It was due to DSNY's funding of community composting initiatives that I was able to become a knowledgeable composter myself, to eventually be hired by Earth Matter NY in 2011, and then advocate and organize around this very essential human responsibility later in my professional career.

However, despite the fact that I was lucky to receive education and training due to the presence of some compost education funding available in the past, by today's urgent global warming standard, it was not then and not now nearly enough.

Like many of you, I'm saddened today to have to be taking the time to submit testimony, in support of fully re-instating – and expanding – the city's budget for community composting. There are many pressing issues facing our city – from increased gun violence to continued lack of affordable housing and so much more.

Somehow the intensifying existential threat of climate change – and the ways it intersects with equity issues – does not seem to cry loudly enough to the Adams administration. It's my belief that if we do not address climate change now – today – the many justice and equity issues we all care about, from housing to education to food and mass incarceration – will become far worse.

Just this past Monday Feb. 28th, the headline in an [article](#) in the NYT read, "*Time Is Running Out to Avert a Harrowing Future, Climate Panel Warns.*"

A few quotes from this VERY recent article, written by [Brad Plumer](#), [Raymond Zhong](#) and [Lisa Friedman](#):

*“In the coming decades, as global temperatures continue to rise, hundreds of millions of people could struggle against floods, deadly heat waves and water scarcity from severe drought, the report said.*

*People unable to adapt to the enormous environmental shifts will end up suffering unavoidable loss or fleeing their homes, creating dislocation on a global scale, the authors said.*

*Many leaders, including President Biden, have vowed to limit total global warming to no more than 1.5 degrees Celsius compared with preindustrial levels. That’s the threshold beyond which scientists say the likelihood of catastrophic climate impacts increases significantly.*

*But achieving that goal would require nations to all but eliminate their fossil-fuel emissions by 2050, and most are far off-track. The world is currently on pace to warm somewhere between 2 degrees and 3 degrees Celsius this century, experts have estimated.”*

The Commissioner, everyone on this City Council committee and testifying today clearly understands the facts, that full and expanded funding for our organic recycling and community composting programs constitute a very immediate and impactful way to meet our city’s zero waste goals.

Waste management processing plants and the increased truck traffic emissions they create disproportionately affects poor communities and communities of color. The disparities in the ways pollution and climate change and their ill effects such as higher asthma rates, odor issues and property values hit home right here in NYC. When I lived in the South Bronx for three years in the early aughts, I worked alongside organizers at several environmental justice organizations working hard to bring attention to the ways greening and sustainability initiatives were needed badly to grow green jobs, improve quality of life, and reduce asthma rates.

Most of us know this, but perhaps it begs repeating – that roughly 30% of our city’s waste is compostable, organic waste. We send our city’s waste to landfills, often far beyond our state borders. Not only do we waste fossil fuels in shipping away our waste, but we increase the amount of methane gas going into the atmosphere, a much more powerful greenhouse gas than Carbon Dioxide.

We have a responsibility, as humans and as a city, to deal with our waste in the most efficient way possible. We have an imperative based on science. Young people in our city depend on us adults to be leaders in this initiative for human survival. The very ability of humans to live for generations on our planet is at stake.

**As someone who came to learn about composting later in life, and who has had the experience of meeting hundreds of New Yorkers hungry to understand soil, compost and how and WHY to use their brown bins, I believe that success will require investment in community education on a very local, block by block level.**

**When New Yorkers don’t have composting education or access to composting drop off sites or bins, their brown bins go unused, and their food ends up in trash bags, which does attract rodents and creates smells.** When we do not have fully funded community compost programs, the basic science, the how’s and why’s of compost doesn’t reach average New Yorkers’ ears and we have a whole lot of disinformation about what composting is and how it benefits our neighborhoods and our planet.

My suggestions / demands, as a human, New Yorker and a small business owner (a sustainable florist) who desperately seeks a way to compost the weekly waste I create are as follows:

- **Do not delay fully funding Community Composting and Zero Waste initiatives at the current level of 7 million, at a minimum.**
- **Reinstate the planned and promised expansion of the Curbside Composting program.**

- **Make curbside composting mandatory, as it is essential for New York City and our country to achieve its zero waste goals.**
- **In addition to restoring, expanding and mandating curbside composting, please provide funding for block associations or community-based organizations to hire master composters – trained at BBG, NYBG and elsewhere - to teach their neighbors the basics how's and why's of composting. This way we can inspire more behavior change, and increase success and use of the brown bins in homes across the city.**
- **Make composting education a mandatory part of public school science curriculum**
- **Provide a mechanism / program for small businesses – restaurants and florists – to compost their waste. Charge a nominal fee to collect compost from small businesses. Many like me are eager for a way to grow more sustainable businesses, which our customers want.**

**With all due respect, and as someone who did not understand how composting works and what the barriers to wide scale implementation were until later in life, I offer the following “Composting 101:”**

Human beings are a part of a food web. Plants – all living green plants – are producers in this system. They are the only creatures on earth capable of making their own food through the process of photosynthesis. All animals and humans are consumers. We rely on green plants to live. Either we are vegetarians, pescatarians, carnivores or omnivores. But regardless of whether we nourish ourselves with green smoothies, salads and acai bowls, or burgers, or a combination of all of these delicious foods – we could not survive without plants. Burgers, of course, come from cows. Cows depend on grass and grain – PLANTS.

In the natural world, it is decomposers – millions per teaspoon of bacteria and fungi who take manures and once-living things (plants/trees/food waste/dead animals and insects) and recycle that organic waste back to the earth so that the nutrients can be recycled to grow more plants that we humans rely on for survival.

In composting, humans create the ideal conditions to attract decomposers and thus have the ability to speed up natural processes of decomposition to make compost. Professional community composters across this city and in our surrounding rural areas understand how to build and create the right conditions for decomposers to do this work in such a way that there are no odors or rodents. Many cities across the US have implemented municipal composting as they understand how vital it is that we take responsibility for the waste we can organically process, so that we can do our small but essential part in reducing the warming of our planet.

Composting involves 4 main ingredients: air, water, greens (protein for microbes) and browns (carbohydrates for microbes). Proper management involves ensuring a balance of these 4 ingredients. When properly managed, there is no smell, and no rodents or flies. Skilled composters know how to do this, and we have hundreds of Parks-certified Master Composters here in NYC who could be employed on a stipend or very part-time basis to educate their neighbors on Brown Bin use and Composting 101.

This is the kind of block by block education required to ensure the success of the Curbside Composting program. When people don't understand compost – which they largely do not - they have no incentive to use the bin. They feel inconvenienced rather than inspired or motivated. I can speak from experience.

Mayor Adams, let your legacy be that you ENDED the debate on the necessity of municipal composting. History will not look kindly upon leaders in 2022 who, in spite of the glaring emergency, reversed progressive policies that were needed 3 decades ago. Please think of the young people.

At your service should my skills be of help in this endeavor,

Molly Culver

[molly@mollyoliverflowers.com](mailto:molly@mollyoliverflowers.com) /

*Transcript of Statement Given 3.4.22*  
*Nora Tjossem*

I have the privilege of working with BK ROT, a composting microhauler serving Bushwick, Bed-Stuy, Williamsburg, Ridgewood, and north Crown Heights, that was founded in the knowledge that Black and brown and immigrant communities are most often at the frontline of critical effects of the climate crisis, and the least served by design. No one wants waste and emissions stockpiled in their community. What we need is to invest in dignified wages, working conditions, and infrastructure for hauling organics sustainably. This is the model that BK ROT takes: paying young workers ages 16-25 from the neighborhood to haul organic waste on bicycles from local residences and businesses, processing it locally, and returning high quality compost to gardens and neighbors.

When we talk about sanitation, we are talking about the values of our city. When we talk about green jobs, we are talking about investment in our workers, our young people, and our local economy. When we talk about composting, we are talking about the need to shift our practices away from disposability and toward regeneration. The stakes are this high when we talk about the need to invest in organics recycling.

The current curbside composting program is yielding results that make it seem “symbolic” because it is optional, excludes many disenfranchised environmental justice neighborhoods, and is rolled out and rolled back in a confusing way. And most community composting runs on volunteers, without sufficient space or funds to take it seriously as a sanitation solution. But look at what an organization like BK ROT can do: last year alone, we diverted over 163 tons of organic waste from landfills through our food scrap drop-off and sliding scale pickup service, while committing to fossil-fuel free hauling and paid labor.

Imagine what it could look like if instead of cutting back the budget for composting initiatives, the city were to step forward and commit to focusing on these local, low-emissions responses to hauling. Imagine if the city were to pave the way in modeling what a mandatory organics recycling policy could look like for a city of 8 million. It’s not only through imagination – look at the examples you have in your backyard. There are hundreds of food scrap drop-offs and a handful of non-profits funded through DSNY, and more local composters who do not yet receive this much-needed support. Our fellow microhaulers, composters, and future composters need more support, not less, to take strides toward a just transition.

Paige Williams

39<sup>th</sup> Place

Sunnyside, NY 11104

March 7, 2022

Chair Nurse and members of the Committee:

My name is Paige Williams and I am a thirteen-year Queens resident. Thank you for creating the opportunity to speak with you all today about composting in our city and my support for the full funding of the New York City Compost Project.

I have followed my interest in composting from simply dropping off food scraps at my local greenmarket to changing careers into the field of urban sustainability. On that path, I have met many amazing, passionate people, working diligently to inform, educate, and empower New Yorkers to participate in composting efforts any way they can. I wouldn't have believed that I could pursue a new field or find a new use for my skills without the encouragement and guidance of the incredible people who work and volunteer in the city's composting programs.

And for all the work that is being done by these compost advocates, there is still confusion and frustration among New Yorkers over its many programs. Disbelief, ambivalence, and downright detraction runs rampant through the city. On almost every level, from concept to practice, New Yorkers are baffled about these programs. In the face of the hard work I see being done every day in offices, gardens, and schools, somehow, the city's residents are not getting the correct information on composting, its benefits, and why it affects all New Yorkers, those with sprawling lawns or studio apartments.

When one looks at the recent history of the city's composting programs, it becomes clear how this paradox exists. With yo-yoing budgets, muddled marketing, and city actions falling well short of public promises, it is no wonder New Yorkers don't trust or understand the programs being provided to them. These programs are not buttressed by strong budgets or supported by the kind of enthusiastic, closed door rallying necessary to make them the facets of New York life that they should be. In short, when the city does not throw its full strength

behind its composting programs, they collapse under the weight of its citizen's indifference.

That is why this budget is vitally important. It is proof of the commitment this city has for composting. It's an investment in its future and the only way residents will feel confident in it is for the city to go all in. This back and forth, the undermining of the city's own efforts by its lack of support must stop. It cuts the legs out from under the determined people working every day to make these programs work.

I ask the Chair and this committee to stop giving New Yorkers mixed signals. Stop thwarting the vital work of the people it needs the most. Support the city's composting efforts and fully fund the New York City Compost Project in the upcoming fiscal year.

Thank you,

Paige Williams

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**From:** Glaser, Pamela (HPD) <GLASERP@hpd.nyc.gov>  
**Sent:** Friday, March 4, 2022 5:48 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** composting

hi, I live in 11125 and am lucky to have the walkable volunteer maple st garden compost option and the walkable nurture bk volunteer compost location. sadly, I've never had the option of the dsny brown containers. organic garbage has to be dealt with one way or the other. it's nonsense to put it in heavy plastic bags for rats to gnaw on and for trucks to pick up and put into landfill instead of more localized convenient boro based composting for everyone. if the current dsny options aren't working, let's look at alternatives. those underground bins I've read about are suitable for some school/nycha/campus/ institutional settings maybe, and maybe semi weekly supervised morning drop off bins at subway entrances? there must be cost effective ways to manage this organic waste so that it's composted.

thanks,  
pam



## Committee on Sanitation and Solid Waste Management Hearing 3/4/22

### Rachana Shah Testimony

40% OF ALL FOOD IN AMERICA IS WASTED.  
([SAVETHEFOOD.COM](https://www.savethefood.com))

Food waste in landfill causes the release of methane.

Methane is 86x more potent in causing climate change than CO<sub>2</sub>.

The [IPCC Sixth Assessment Report](#) has just been released and the warnings are the most dire they have ever been.

“Any further delay in concerted global action will miss a brief and rapidly closing window to secure a livable future.”

It is important to start a cascading series of actions in the US and NYC can be one of the first and biggest dominoes to motivate other cities to act fast on this low hanging fruit.

Plus, we already have infrastructure in place to build off of. The demand is stronger than city agencies may know. The fractured nature of offerings since the pandemic forced many places to close and then did not give them ample time or resources to start up.

If you talk to some of the organizations that compost in the city like the Lower Eastside Ecology Center, Queens Botanical Garden, and Governor’s Island, they all have gotten more requests than they can handle. Look at the amount of requests for city collection at residences where the response was “we are not servicing your area yet but will let you know when we are.” Look at the SmartCompost box pilot in Astoria and how many people have signed up for and use that service. The demand is there.

Why wouldn’t the city use this opportunity to create infrastructure and norms around eradicating food waste when it will save money every year, cause less pollution, and make us a leader that shows other cities: If a heavily-populated city like NYC can divert food waste from the landfill, than so can we!

March 4, 2022

To whom it may concern:

I'm a resident of Sunnyside, Queens, strongly in favor of increasing composting in NYC, and definitely not cutting it. I was very disappointed in Mayor Adams' plans to reduce its funding.

I have noted that I am contributing much less garbage to the landfill since I started composting several years ago. The composting at the farmers' market has been convenient, and other neighborhood locations make it even easier to make sure the food waste gets out the door and into the hands of composters and gardeners. If composting becomes more available, it makes it easier for all NYC residents to participate, to keep the landfills clearer and the gardens supplied with nourishing fertilizer.

In addition, during the pandemic, our local composting gardens grew a tremendous amount of extra food to feed hungry New Yorkers. Composting is an absolute no-brainer, and should be expanded, not cut.

Sincerely,

Renee Fleysher  
Sunnyside, NY 11104

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**From:** treborarch@aol.com  
**Sent:** Saturday, March 5, 2022 11:48 AM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] SAVE NYC'S COMPOST PROGRAM!

To whom it may concern:

Mayor Adams has announced drastic budget cuts to NYC's composting program with funding for food scrap drop-off sites cut in half and the planned expansion of the curbside organics program being suspended. In our neighborhood, Astoria, we've been waiting for YEARS for access to the brown bins.

The cost of the planned curbside compost expansion for next year would only have been \$18 million (0.02% of the City's \$98 million dollar budget).

Mayor Adams said he cared about health and environment, as shown with his plant-based food programs across schools and hospitals. However, reducing funding for composting, an essential part of mitigating climate change, means going backwards.

Indeed, compost is essential to reach the zero waste goals the city was planning on. How can we be a model for the rest of the country in terms of sustainability if we don't even provide this basic service? 1/3rd of NYC's waste stream is composed of organic waste. Letting it go to landfill emits methane. And these landfills are generally located in low income communities and communities of color, who suffer from a range of serious health issues as a result of exposure to environmental toxins.

Diverting organic waste from landfill and incinerators also means less waste is trucked to the City's waste transfer stations, located in environmental justice communities, where residents are subjected to unhealthy levels of air and noise pollution.

The City spends \$460 million dollars a year exporting its waste to out-of-state landfills and incinerators.

Organic composting facilities create good green jobs, twice as many as landfill operations and four times more than incinerators per ton of trash.

Organic waste is rich in nutrients and can be used to enrich the soil in parks, community gardens, and street trees. Compost also enhances the soil's ability to retain water, making it an especially valuable tool for flood mitigation.

Please do not let our city down and restore funding for the composting programs!

Thank you,  
Robert Muggeo

To the Committee on Sanitation and Solid Waste Management,

If biodegradable foods are put into the trash, they are put into a landfill—If they are put into a landfill, they create methane, a greenhouse gas, which is bad for the environment and speeds up global warming. This happens because food waste has very little oxygen around it when it is buried in a plastic trash bag in a landfill. This lack of oxygen kills beneficial bacterial that would normally, in composting, break down the food waste. Instead, the food waste breaks down anaerobically, meaning without oxygen, and this creates methane. This unnecessary creation of greenhouse gas is totally avoidable, and easy to cut down, by allowing people who want to compost to compost. This is a relatively cheap city-wide program for what it achieves—If anything, it should be getting more money to be spent on education for New Yorkers on the composting program and it's effects, so more New Yorkers that are interested in disposing of their food waste this way have the opportunity to do so.

Thank you for your time, and I hope you consider keeping this program.

Robert Matthews

Roslery Ubinas  
McDonald Street  
Bronx, NY 10461

New York City Hall  
City Hall Park, New York, NY 10007

Dear New York City City Council,

My name is Roslery Ubinas, and I am submitting this statement as my online submission testimony for the Committee on Sanitation & Solid Waste Management Hearing. It is imperative for New York City to get on board with a robust composting program. The immediate and long time effectiveness of augmenting the budget will be appreciated by all constituents of this city. In the immediate, proper composting bins reduce vermin like rats and raccoons but ensuring the food waste is properly stored away, reducing broken and leaking garbage bags. This in turn helps garbage men do their job easier by making pick up easier, and make building super and maintenance men lives easier because the vermin do not leave a mess for them to hose down in the mornings. Which also affects water use but that's another conversation for another time.

Composting bins reduce food waste, increase awareness on food storage means less waste in the nuclear, household level. Once homes are accustomed to composting, it will be very easy to make that transition to businesses even further lessening food waste. With the cost of food now being so high, the extra income afforded to families due to proper food education can go to other household needs.

In essence, the composting program is much larger than just putting food scraps in a bin. It is about the re-acculturation of a people, to change our ways of interacting with our natural environment, and in the city, we could use more green parks per capita. The money the city will save by NOT cutting this composting budget, investing in the city, its people and nature, the positive repercussions of this are abounding.

In conclusion, I vote against cutting composting budget and propose additional funds be added to ensure the success of the program.

Sincerely,  
Roslery Ubinas

Hello,

My name is Sabrina Katz and I am a constituent of Brooklyn, NY. I am calling on our leaders to reinstate funding for the NYC organics/brown bin composting program. As one of the most wasteful cities in the world, New York City has a responsibility to lead on sustainability initiatives such as citywide composting, and not give up when we haven't invested enough resources into making the program viable. It's going to take education (we should add this + recycling to school curriculums to teach children from a young age) and infrastructure (investing in workers to pick up composting) to make this program work. By defunding this program, we are sending a message to the citizens of this city, and the world, that the environment is not a priority. Studies show that New York City is one of the most vulnerable to the climate crisis because of our proximity to the ocean. We **MUST** invest in green infrastructure if we want a chance at combating the worst of the climate crisis - which is already **HERE AND NOW**. As your constituent, I urge you to please reconsider investing in this program, as well as other city services (eg. education, urban gardens, social workers) to ensure today's youth have a chance at a healthy future.

Thank you.

Dear Committee,

Please allocate adequate funding for curbside and community composting and all city composting projects. The fate of our environment is crucial and composting is a practical solution and doable in our city. Our lives depend on it.

Thank-you,

sandy renz

Ps I'll volunteer.

Dear Committee,

New York may adopt what *should be* a great new policy called Extended Producer Responsibility. Please help make that a reality.

*Passing a weak, ineffective EPR bill like the Governor's current proposal will set us back years and prevent the progress we need to make right now. I urge the Speaker to reject this budget proposal and, instead, to support the Engelbright EPR and Bottle Bill proposals."*

That policy is supposed to make producers of packaging “pay the environmental costs associated with a product throughout the product life cycle... to increase the amount and degree of product recovery (recycling) and minimize the environmental impact of waste materials.” **Unfortunately, the Governor's and Senate's proposals being considered do not do enough and will not work. They are extremely favorable to and give the plastic and packaging industry the power to make up the rules and define who is held accountable, if anyone.** It will force New York on the wrong path for up to a decade before this failed policy could be corrected.

These proposals create nearly-complete self-regulation by industry, which is failing in other similar systems. *Why set ourselves up for failure when we know what the solution is?*

**New York must regulate businesses that create polluting products, not the other way around.**

We need an Extended Producer Responsibility system run in the PUBLIC INTEREST, which mandates better recycling, expands the bottle deposit bill to include non-carbonated beverages and increases the deposit to ten cents to better incentivize return, and with focus on reduce, reuse, and refill that establishes a market for recycled materials by requiring they be used in new products.

Help us get the system we need to actually solve the current plastic pollution, recycling, and waste crisis.

*Passing a weak, ineffective EPR bill like the Governor's current proposal will set us back years and prevent the progress we need to make right now. I urge the Speaker to reject*



*this budget proposal and, instead, to support the Engelbright EPR and Bottle Bill proposals."*

Give us a real EPR, or none at all.

Sincerely,

Sandye Renz

My name is Sarah Nolan, I have been a resident of Carroll Gardens, Brooklyn since 2005 with my husband and two children now 9 and 11. I submit this testimony to express strong support for the composting program in NYC and to object to the proposed budget cuts that would eliminate it. We have been fortunate that our neighborhood was one of the first to have the city program and we have been avid composters ever since it began. Through the program, my children are learning to compost as a green habit that they will continue throughout their lives. We believe strongly that composting is an essential part of a plan to make NYC more sustainable place to live and a key component to addressing climate change. I understand the City has cited the low participation in the composting as one reason to cut it. Rather than cutting the program, NYC should make composting mandatory, as is paper and plastic recycling, which would ensure that this program is more utilized. The program should also be expanded to additional neighborhoods. To stay strong, NYC must remain at the forefront of progressive climate and social policies and continue to invest in its composting program. Thank you.

Hello,

I am a resident of Jackson Heights, Queens, and a parent and doctor in the neighborhood. The threats of climate change are extremely concerning for myself, my children and my community. I see composting as one critical piece in our fight against climate change. One third of NYC's waste stream is composed of organic waste. Most ends up in landfill, which emits methane, a greenhouse gas 80X more potent than CO<sub>2</sub> over a 20 year period. Landfills are generally located in low income communities and communities of color, who suffer from a range of serious health issues as a result of exposure to environmental toxins. Diverting organic waste from landfill and incinerators also means less waste is trucked to the City's waste transfer stations, located in environmental justice communities, where residents are subjected to unhealthy levels of air and noise pollution. My family and I also spend time working in a community garden, and thus we know the value of compost. Organic waste is rich in nutrients and can be used to enrich the soil in parks, community gardens, and street trees. Compost also enhances the soil's ability to retain water, making it an especially valuable tool for flood mitigation.

Please consider this decision seriously—we need to expand composting in NYC, not cut it.

Sincerely,  
Sheela

City Council Members, Chair Nurse,

As a member of a community garden and a volunteer at one of the local community compost drop-off sites, I urge the committee to strenuously object to Mayor Adams' elimination of the curbside compost program. Instead, the curbside compost program should be enhanced so that it can work effectively. Mandatory composting in latching containers would be the most effective and successful way for the program to be realized. Composting and separating garbage streams will go a long way to improve our lives by decreasing methane gases in landfills, prevent the overabundance of rats that dine nightly by ripping open plastic garbage bags, creating even more work for sanitation workers and unsanitary conditions on our city streets. As an added bonus, composted organic material is useful, not garbage!

As a city, we have committed to zero waste goals by 2030. In order to achieve this goal, we must think seriously about taking measures to reach these goals. The time to make a real commitment to composting is NOW.

Thank you,  
Stefani Mar  
For El Sol Brillante Jr Garden

From: Stephen Lurvey  
Subject: Keep our Composting!

I am a Brooklyn resident and my household relies heavily on composting. It is a great way to keep our trash can fresher for longer, which has reduced the presence of pests like mice and flies in our living space. Composting also creates cleaner dumpsters, which don't attract rats, who rip up and drag trash around from whatever they get into. In addition, composting helps eliminate greenhouse gases and creates a natural fertilizer to reinvest into our parks and greenspaces. I am convinced that while composting does cost money for the city, the positive effects it contributes will save money in the long run and create a cleaner environment. Ignoring composting will cost the city much more when it has to deal with the repercussions in the long run. It is one necessary step of many to creating a more sustainable and eco-friendly world.

—Stephen  
stephen.lurvey@gmail.com,

## **Restore and Expand Community Composting Funding**

RE: Testimony for Committee on Sanitation and Solid waste management.

March 4, 2022

The IPPC report has made it clear- the time is now. We have no time to waste to address climate change. The proper disposal of food waste and yard scraps may seem unrelated to climate change and the resilience of New York City- but it is not. The two are inextricably linked. The benefits to properly composting our food and yard waste are clear- and a clear win, win, win, for NYC.

The benefits are Environmental:

- We will drastically reduce the emission of methane from our landfills.
- Composting creates a soil regenerating tool that can be used to support the storm event resiliency of NYC.

The benefits are Economic:

- Composting our organic waste locally will save the city money.
- We will save on the ~500 million we spend to export our waste- by reducing it by 1/3 (which is the equivalent of our organic waste)

The benefits are Social:

- A robust organic program in NYC would create secure, green, local jobs.

I call on Mayor Adams and the NYC council to:

1. maintain full funding for community composting programs
2. restore funding for the curbside organics collection program
3. require universal organics collection in our city

The Department of Sanitation supports the Curbside Organics Collection program. We have no time to waste.

Sincerely,  
Susan Boyle  
#### Dean Street  
Brooklyn, NY 11238

# SYDNEY PEREIRA

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BROOKLYN, NY | [SYDNEYP1234@GMAIL.COM](mailto:SYDNEYP1234@GMAIL.COM)

MARCH 7, 2022

TO: The New York City Council Committee on Sanitation and Solid Waste Management

SUBJECT: Testimony for Committee Hearing Held 10:30 a.m. on March 4, 2022

Dear Committee Members,

My name is Sydney Pereira. I am a 26-year-old Brooklyn resident living in the 40th District with deep concerns for our city's future if climate change is not tackled head-on, from the ground up, with adequate city resources and funding. **I am writing on Monday, March 7, 2022 to express my opposition to the proposed budget cuts for the Department of Sanitation's curbside composting program expansion.**

Organics collection and composting is a critical part of our waste management infrastructure that will help the city reach its zero waste goals,<sup>1</sup> reduce the five boroughs' contribution to greenhouse gasses by way of methane-producing landfills<sup>2</sup>, and improve city residents' quality of life.

When organics are transported to incinerators and landfills, we are contributing an unnecessary burden on communities outside of New York City to process our waste through methods that harm our planet.<sup>3</sup> But when our food scraps and yard waste are composted, that waste can be turned into a valuable new resource: nutritious soil<sup>4</sup> to feed our street trees, thriving greenery in city parks and community gardens, urban farms, and more. Composting "closes the loop" between what we eat and the greenery around us—whether it is the basil in our windowsills or urban trees that mitigate the heat island effect.<sup>5</sup> Composting is also a quality of life issue. Getting food scraps out of garbage bags that take up public sidewalk space can reduce rats and other vermin that plague our city streets while creating more room for pedestrians to safely get to their destinations.

Already, curbside composting reaches too few communities<sup>6</sup>, leaving mostly neighborhoods of color to rely on drop-off sites, often operated with minimal hours by volunteers only.<sup>7</sup> One of those collection sites—Nurture BK Compost<sup>8</sup>—is where I have been a volunteer since June 2021.

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<sup>1</sup> [The City of New York's One New York: The Plan For a Strong and Just City](#)

<sup>2</sup> [U.S. Environmental Protection Agency: Basic Information about Landfill Gas](#)

<sup>3</sup> [City Limits](#), Life Near a Landfill: The Towns and People Who End Up with NYC Trash, May 22, 2015.

<sup>4</sup> [U.S. EPA: Benefits of Composting](#)

<sup>5</sup> [Bulletin of the American Meteorological Society](#), Mitigating New York City's Heat Island: Integrating Stakeholder Perspectives and Scientific Evaluation, September 1, 2009.

<sup>6</sup> [DSNY](#)

<sup>7</sup> [DSNY](#)

<sup>8</sup> [Nurture BK Compost Instagram Profile](#)

# SYDNEY PEREIRA

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BROOKLYN, NY | [SYDNEYP1234@GMAIL.COM](mailto:SYDNEYP1234@GMAIL.COM)

We collect food scraps from residents mostly in Prospect Lefferts Gardens and Flatbush, where no curbside composting option exists.<sup>9</sup>

Though I am writing on behalf of myself, not the group as a whole, our work is one small part of a broader effort to mitigate climate change and contribute to a more sustainable society. I thank Committee Chair Sandy Nurse for her support, advocacy, and leadership on organics collection so far. **I ask that the City Council now, collectively and in partnership with Mayor Eric Adams, do its own part to mitigate climate change by funding compost programs.**

The United Nations' Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change issued dire warnings last month for our planet's future: climate change is harming people's health, the impacts are getting worse, and any efforts to adapt to changes have been "fragmented" and "incremental."<sup>10</sup> **For the City of New York to be a leader in creating a more resilient future, fully funded compost programs are crucial. The City Council must ensure funding allocations are restored to the previously planned and promised expansion of the curbside composting. Further, curbside composting should be available to all New Yorkers with additional funds for local compost facilities. A citywide education campaign about organics collection must also accompany increased funds and resources to ensure a successful rollout.**

Thank you for your time and consideration of my testimony.

Respectfully,

Sydney Pereira

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<sup>9</sup> [New York Magazine's The Cut](#), One Neighborhood's Trash Is This Woman's Treasure, September 27, 2021.

<sup>10</sup> [New York Times](#), 5 Takeaways From the U.N. Report on Climate Hazards, February 28, 2022.



## Testimony

My name is Thomas Langdon

I want to urge that the city Sanitation provide for the ability for kitchen scraps and grass, leaves etc. to be collected and turned into fertilizer. It seems a great win for the city, to save the expense of shipping it out of town and for us, to provide for our gardens a good fertilizer. It would be simple to ask residents if they want this and if they already had the brown container. I and my family and neighbors are eager for this to happen.

Thanks much.

Tom

Hello, my name is Travis Amiel. I live in Bushwick, District 34, and I'm writing to implore the city to develop a robust comprehensive organic waste collection program.

At the very least, do not cut this program's budget.

I believe the city should be moving towards a mandate for organics recycling, that covers residents and businesses. While this will be a change for many people, it is an important one to make to mitigate climate change and environmental catastrophe.

Rather than slowly test interest, the city should (as recommended by the NRDC in their recent blog posts) set a date for a mandate, and roll out collection, educate people, and publicize the positive change this will have for all.

Thank you,  
Travis Amiel

Hello,

I am an 8th grader from Queens and I really think that New York City needs more funding for compost, NOT LESS. 1 third of New York city's waste stream comes from organic waste. Curbside composting still hasn't come to our neighborhood. Cutting costs won't help that. The city even spends 460 million dollars a year exporting its waste to other landfills. Wouldn't you like to cut those costs by composting more? Organic composting facilities create good green jobs, twice as many as landfill operations and four times more than incinerators per ton of trash. Please increase the budget for composting.

Thanks,

Umed Maru

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**From:** Victoria Adler <vadler4444@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Thursday, March 3, 2022 2:10 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Testimony - Victoria Adler

To Whom It May Concern,

I started composting around 5 years ago, and since now I am a convert. It's the kind of habit that, once established, is very hard to break. Over the years, I have benefited from the availability of a weekly compost drop-off site at my local Farmers Market in Jackson Heights. I cannot overemphasize the deep satisfaction I've derived from this basic weekly act. In a world where so much is out of my control - and our politicians are working far too slowly to address the devastating effects of climate change - it has given me great pleasure to help the environment in this concrete way. Composting has also transformed the way my children view food. I'm always talking to them about the environment, and am never sure how much I get through to them, but when it comes to composting, they are converts. This habit has become so ingrained in them that when we are on vacation in places that don't have compost, my children become visibly upset. My sixteen-year-old daughter recently said (I quote her verbatim), "It literally pains me to throw out food!" I want to emphasize that my kids are not particularly environmentally aware - they got hooked for the same reason I did. There's a lot of pleasure in composting, and through this daily habit, they have become much more aware, on a daily level, of what it means to live sustainably.

I am also a teacher in a local elementary school, and as an educator, I have seen the benefits of teaching children about composting. Children are stunned to learn that rotting garbage produced dangerous levels of methane, and are excited that composting offers a way for them to be a part of the solution.

It is a great shame that the city is considering slashing the budget for composting at a time when the program should be expanded. We are all in agreement about the peril that climate change poses to our world and our children's futures. Our city should be moving to expand the brown bin program (as of now, it is only in the wealthiest zipcodes) and ultimately make it mandatory. The city wastes money shipping our garbage to other states; and to cut a program that it took decades to build would also waste money.

Composting represents hope. When I compost, I know I am enacting a magical transformation - transforming garbage into gardens. At a time like this, we need all the hope we can get. Shame on you for taking it away.

Victoria Adler  
Jackson Heights, Queens  
11372

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**From:** Virginie Martin <viriniem75nyc@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Saturday, March 5, 2022 11:46 AM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] SAVE OUR COMPOST PROGRAM!

To whom it may concern:

Mayor Adams has announced drastic budget cuts to NYC's composting program with funding for food scrap drop-off sites cut in half and the planned expansion of the curbside organics program being suspended. In our neighborhood, Astoria, we've been waiting for YEARS for access to the brown bins.

The cost of the planned curbside compost expansion for next year would only have been \$18 million (0.02% of the City's \$98 million dollar budget).

Mayor Adams said he cared about health and environment, as shown with his plant-based food programs across schools and hospitals. However, reducing funding for composting, an essential part of mitigating climate change, means going backwards.

Indeed, compost is essential to reach the zero waste goals the city was planning on. How can we be a model for the rest of the country in terms of sustainability if we don't even provide this basic service? 1/3rd of NYC's waste stream is composed of organic waste. Letting it go to landfill emits methane. And these landfills are generally located in low income communities and communities of color, who suffer from a range of serious health issues as a result of exposure to environmental toxins.

Diverting organic waste from landfill and incinerators also means less waste is trucked to the City's waste transfer stations, located in environmental justice communities, where residents are subjected to unhealthy levels of air and noise pollution.

The City spends \$460 million dollars a year exporting its waste to out-of-state landfills and incinerators.

Organic composting facilities create good green jobs, twice as many as landfill operations and four times more than incinerators per ton of trash.

Organic waste is rich in nutrients and can be used to enrich the soil in parks, community gardens, and street trees. Compost also enhances the soil's ability to retain water, making it an especially valuable tool for flood mitigation.

Please do not let our city down and restore funding for the composting programs!

Sincerely,  
Virginie Martin, Astoria

To the Committee on Sanitation and Solid Waste Management,

Please consider preserving and expanding the curbside composting program. If we believe in a future of sustainability, reducing the trash and rat problem, and educating people on where their food comes from and ends up, we need to keep this service accessible and with a low barrier to entry. The new opt-in system makes composting inaccessible and a program for only the middle and upper-class New Yorkers who have the time and resources to participate. Composting should be a program for all residents of this city.

Thank you,

Will Kortum

To: New York City Council and Mayor Eric Adams  
via <https://council.nyc.gov/testify/>

March 07, 2022

I am William Franke from Woodside, Queens, and am writing this testimony in support of increasing funding for composting initiatives in NYC, including the resumption—not cutting—of curbside organics collection.

All the climate scientists say it is well beyond the time to adopt bolder strategies if we want to reverse climate change. One third of the City's solid waste is organic waste. Curbside organics collection would cut down not only methane emissions from landfills, but also on emissions and costs of trucking greater quantities to waster transfer stations. It is incumbent upon NYC's Mayor and council members to plan for long-term solutions to adapt to climate change and greatly reduce greenhouse gas emissions. It is dangerously short-sighted to cut these programs instead of expanding them.

I was disheartened when the city canceled collection during the pandemic in May 2020. As you know, it was supposed to resume in June and then October of 2021. Having jumped through all the hoops to have service resume, I feel it is disingenuous of the City to claim there is not enough buy-in. It is time to resume service and make it available—if not mandatory—for all residents and businesses of NYC.

When service was suspended in 2020, I began volunteering at a local neighborhood composting site. From several months of that experience, I know these volunteer sites cannot continue being the composting solution for the entire neighborhood. In an effort to take some pressure off of them, my 42-unit building has been processing our own compost on-site for almost a year, but this, too, is unsustainable.

Thank you for doing the right thing and increasing the composting budget instead of slashing it.

s/  
William Franke

To the Department of Sanitation,

I am a climate scientist who was born and raised in New York. It is imperative that we increase, rather than cut, funding for the citywide compost program. It is an important step that the city must take to address environmental risks. Here are some of the reasons that it is so important.

- Organic waste in landfills generates methane, a potent greenhouse gas. By composting wasted food and other organics, methane emissions are significantly reduced.
- Compost reduces and in some cases eliminates the need for chemical fertilizers.
- Compost promotes higher yields of agricultural crops.
- Compost can help aid reforestation, wetlands restoration, and habitat revitalization efforts by improving contaminated, compacted, and marginal soils.
- Compost can be used to remediate soils contaminated by hazardous waste in a cost effective manner.
- Compost can provide cost savings over conventional soil, water and air pollution remediation technologies, where applicable.
- Compost enhances water retention in soils.
- Compost provides carbon sequestration.



To the Department of Sanitation,

I am a former city planner residing in New York City. It is imperative that we increase, rather than cut, funding for the citywide compost program. It is an important step that the city must take to address environmental risks. Here are some of the reasons that it is so important.

- Organic waste in landfills generates methane, a potent greenhouse gas. By composting wasted food and other organics, methane emissions are significantly reduced.
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- Compost can be used to remediate soils contaminated by hazardous waste in a cost effective manner.
- Compost can provide cost savings over conventional soil, water and air pollution remediation technologies, where applicable.
- Compost enhances water retention in soils.
- Compost provides carbon sequestration.

Additionally, steps must be taken to not just educate, but incentivize participation. Depending on education and altruism alone will not help us reach our goals and create a robust, efficient, and beneficial citywide compost program.

I live in an apartment building in Jackson Heights, Queens, a building which is not yet serviced by the City for composting. I think that perhaps nowhere in Queens does this service exist. I saw a video recently about a quite amazing compost service elsewhere in NY City! But anyway, not in Jackson Heights. Apparently wider service is in the plan for the future, but now that the Sanitation budget is to be cut, that future will be even further away from us. We will continue to take our scraps up to Travers Park every Sunday. We are retired and healthy, so it's a nice walk, but it's not an option for everyone and will never benefit the whole city. I'm not sure where the money is going instead, but Sanitation services are important, and NYC should be setting the standard, not bringing up the rear!

Dear City Council Members,

As a New Yorker, and in fact as a human being, I am acutely aware of the climate crisis we are facing. I am also aware that there is very little individuals like me can do without a systemic change.

Composting organic waste is one of those few things that we can all do and actually helps reduce GHG emissions. With good infrastructure, composting in New York can be scaled and can have an even bigger impact.

Through the pandemic, when these services were first cut due to emergency budgetary constraints, many New Yorkers refused to stop composting and have relied on non-profits and a number of smaller neighborhood community gardens have stepped up to the plate. It is incredible and demoralizing that the budget cuts also contemplate decreasing support for those programs.

The ridiculous budget savings that will derive from cutting these programs will have negative impacts on Mayor Adams' stated (but clearly symbolic) commitment to address climate change. All the work that has been done in educating and convincing New Yorkers that their individual actions count will be undone as people go back to old, convenient habits.

It is 2022, and as we face a climate emergency, New York should be **increasing** the budget for these programs and mandating composting throughout the city. That would demonstrate that a well-run, funded program that empowers individual participation, far from being symbolic, can have real impact.

Thank you very much for considering my comments.

Dear Committee,

I find it disheartening that as "the greatest city in America" we cannot do the bare minimum to help stop climate change. Even beyond all the big talking points such as climate change, how this will help reduce the rat population in the city, how it costs so much money to export our trash and so on, it's just the common sense thing to do.

Shame on Mayor Adams and honestly anyone who doesn't think this is an endeavour worth investing in. I have been SO fortunate to live in a community where volunteers are providing composting services just blocks away from my apartment, but if I didn't have that service, I would bike, I would walk, I would do whatever I could to get to a composting site where I could do my little part to help the planet, but in the "greatest city in America" how is this even something I have to consider? How is it possible that this was a service that we had, and then was ripped away from us as if it didn't matter.

I implore you to do your job, be the creative problem solving people that you are and help us do the smallest of things that can make a huge impact on the city's future health, and be a beacon of how to be a good environmentally conscious city to other cities.

Thank you, and please at the bare minimum bring back the composting that we had and if possible expand on it, New Yorkers deserve this service!

What to do about dog poop?

During the pandemic more people are working from home and acquiring animals to keep them company. We see a huge increase in the dog population in our neighborhood, Forest Hills. But what to do about the dog poop?

On my block, you cannot walk three feet without seeing these colorful bags with dog poop in the ground, or sometimes in recycle containers. This is a serious sanitation issue as well as a quality of life issue. I am grateful to those who do pick up after their dogs, but then they need to walk for blocks carrying their dog's waste. We need garbage cans at least at major intersections which can be used for dog poop?

FUND the sanitation department to keep our city clean and safe.

To whom it may concern

I am a homeowner in north Brooklyn and I support the compost program. It's important to me that our city of NY do their job in preventing climate change by managing the city's food waste. Food waste, when handled poorly, leads to nasty smells, vermin population growth, disgusting trash filling our sidewalks and carbon emissions. The cost of the program is negligible to the city's overall budget. It's run by many volunteers who care about the community that we live in and want to make this place more beautiful and sustainable.

Not supporting this program will lead to irreversible environmental changes that the city should feel responsible for.

I'm a concerned individual who cares about taking small initiatives to change how we live. I care about the health and safety of our community and the way I think it can be done is through these community programs that build a shared goal.

I am a resident of Queens and a new homeowner. I know that addressing food waste is a top solution to climate change. And I love NYC for so many reasons, a main one being that we lead the nation on climate issues. We are an example to so many other cities. But on organics collection, we're falling behind. We simply cannot be a climate leader and achieve our climate goals without offering curbside collection to every NYC resident.

Every Thursday, I walk 20 minutes each way to drop off my food scraps at the Wilson Avenue train stop. I have the luxury of time to do this, but most do not. If we want more participation, we have to make composting easy for our residents, and we cannot afford to only offer this service in some neighborhoods.

When we landfill materials that could have been composted or recycled, we waste all the embedded resources in those materials; and when we landfill organics like food waste, we create methane, a climate pollutant up to 80 times more potent than carbon dioxide.

Better food and waste management is key to combatting climate change, protecting our natural resources, and supporting thriving communities. Turning food scraps and yard waste into compost not only helps to reduce climate emissions, it also creates a powerful soil amendment and it creates jobs – composting and other types of recycling create more jobs than landfills or incinerators.

There's no time to waste with the recycling of organic waste. Let's show the rest of the country that we're still a leader on climate change and environment, and we care deeply about our communities.

I myself was dropping off my food scraps from kitchen to drop off site at Fort Greene. That was the only waste I generated; rest was all getting recycled. Organic waste is one-third percentage of the total waste stream which can be easily composted has applicability in various places, be it parks, farms, community gardens, individual pots, urban agriculture. Compost is also definitely better for the soil and ecosystem, why rely on chemical fertilizers. NYC Sanitation composting programme was making very good progress. To reduce methane emissions from organic waste, composting is the most economical and already much expanded know way. Good for everyone, budget cut will reduce it widespread expansion. To achieve 2050 goals, methane has to be zero. This is a completely wrong way forward. This is truly very upsetting.

**NO TO BUDGET CUTS FOR NYC SANITATION COMPOSTING!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!**



## **Testimony: Committee on Sanitation and Solid Waste Management Hearing**

March 4, 2022

Cutting the curbside compost program is a mistake, and begs the question: why does NYC set “climate targets” when our city leadership is not willing to take action to reach them—in this case by investing in a simple, proven solution like composting?

As *The New York Times* reports, climate experts agree that expanding composting “is one of the easiest ways to reduce New York’s planet-warming emissions” ([New York Was Set to Expand Composting. Now It’s on the Chopping Block](#), 2/17/22). They also report that Eric Adams has pledged to make addressing climate change a priority of his administration. The mayor’s office must recognize that they cannot in good faith set “targets” and claim to care about reducing emissions while also cutting curbside composting, which is a critical component of the shift towards a more sustainable waste management system in NYC.

Yes, it will take some time for residents to become educated about this option and change their habits. But we can no longer wait to invest in change. We see clearly how climate instability is causing destruction around the world and in our city in ceaseless disasters, such as Hurricane Ida, which brought catastrophic flooding to the Northeastern US only six short months ago. And we are in this position because our past city, state, and federal governments, for over half a century, decided not to respond to scientists’ warnings about climate change and the threat it poses for future generations.

Eric Adams’ decision to cut the compost program is about much more than numbers on a spreadsheet. At its core this is a refusal to invest in real change, change that is already coming decades late. However, there is still time for Adams to amend this decision and proceed with the earlier plan to expand composting instead. Our city officials must prove that they are willing to go beyond lip service on climate impact, or they continue on in the long, sad history of leaders who failed to act when they had the knowledge and power to do so.

*This testimony was written by an NYC resident who authorizes resharing by others who agree with it.*

**4 March 2022**

**Re: Committee on Sanitation and Solid Waste Management**

I am writing in response to the proposed budget cuts that will cut composting operations in half and halt all expansion of the city's composting program. Going from a \$28 million/year program to the proposed \$3.5 million budget for composting is a big concern. This is an example of the city administration not taking climate change seriously and not considering climate in their actions.

Composting can help reduce the city's carbon emissions by preventing organic waste from going to landfills and emitting methane. Separating organic waste from refuse can additionally help to keep rats from getting into our trash bags and spreading garbage in the streets. Eric Adams claims the program has low participation, but this participation could be increased greatly if there was more of a budget for the program. Eric Adams also once claimed that he would support a mandated composting program. Not only should the budget not be cut, but the program should be expanded so we can ensure clean and safe streets for all NYC residents and meet the city's climate targets, including a goal of zero-waste sent to landfills by 2030. As a NYC resident, I am extremely disappointed to see our mayor abandon these goals in the proposal to cut the budget for composting.

As a Bronx resident I'm interested in providing curbside composting for all city dwellers. We need to do this for the purpose of saving the planet.

Woodside, Queens 03/05/2022

I am writing this testimony in support of increasing funding for Composting initiatives in NYC, instead of an outrageous cut of funding for the program.

At the risk of sounding condescending, I'd like to remind NYC Mayor Adams and NYC council that we are living in a major city of the world, in the year 2022, in the anthropocene, the new geological age marked by the human caused destabilization of ecosystem services - or as I prefer to call them "spaceship earth life supports". This decision of cutting funding for composting is absolutely mind boggling, instead of the pragmatic decision to greatly increase the composting budget. This decision comes right around the release of the sixth assessment report from the IPCC (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change) Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability, which says "**There is a rapidly narrowing window of opportunity to enable climate resilient development.**" (IPCC AR6 WGII Summary For Policymakers , SPM.D.1.1, page 32) To be noted, the IPCC report does not uncover new science, but merely reviews and reports the PAST peer reviewed evidence.

NYC's Mayor and council members have a duty to NYC residents to plan for long term solutions to adapt to climate change and greatly reduce greenhouse gas emissions (IPCC AR6 WGII Summary For Policymakers SPM.C.4, page 30 SPND5 page 37) and avoid maladaptation (adaptations that create lock in vulnerability such as sea walls). Expanding composting programs is one such climate resilient adaptation which the pragmatist should seriously consider, as it greatly reduce risks of greenhouse gas emission (less waste-mile, less methane/CO2 emission from the waste itself, produces a carbon rich soil amendment that can itself increase plant /soil health and therefore increase the effectiveness of soil/plant CO2 sink). Finally, here is a non-exhaustive list of facts that should sway pragmatic decision makers.

- 1/3rd of NYC's waste stream is composed of organic waste. Most ends up in landfill, which emits methane, a greenhouse gas 80X more potent than CO2 over a 20 year period. Expanding food waste composting would help mitigate these emissions and reduce NYC's carbon footprint, reducing the risks of flood, heat wave and so on.
- Landfills are generally located in low income communities and communities of color, who suffer from a range of serious health issues as a result of exposure to environmental toxins. The principles of environmental justice/equity dictate that we reduce the exposure of the most vulnerable.
- Diverting organic waste from landfill and incinerators also means less waste is trucked to the City's waste transfer stations, located in low income communities, where residents are subjected to unhealthy levels of air and noise pollution due in large part to the trucking itself. Once again, this would help reduce NYC's carbon footprint.
- The City spends \$460 million dollars a year exporting its waste to out-of-state landfills and incinerators, greatly expanding composting could greatly reduce this cost and emission associated with waste transport.

- Organic composting facilities create good green jobs, some of which within the city walls with proper planning, twice as many as landfill operations and four times more than incinerators per ton of trash.
- Organic waste is rich in nutrients and can be used to enrich the soil in parks, community gardens, and street trees. This would save the parks department the cost of buying and importing compost from far away, saving CO2 emissions further.
- Compost also enhances the soil's ability to retain water, making it an especially valuable tool for flood mitigation. (See: [Let's Talk About Compost and Flooding](#)).
- Compost increases soil organic matter and feeds the soil ecosystem, which in turn enhances the ability of plants to capture carbon dioxide out of the air, further positively affecting the carbon balance.
- The surplus of compost produced could be used by the farms who produce regionally some of the food that New Yorkers consume, further reducing the regional CO2 footprint and enhancing carbon sinks.
- Containerizing organic waste, rather than combining it with other waste in plastic trash bags, will help mitigate the city's rat problem. Further the proper treatment of the food waste greatly reduces the attractiveness of said waste to rodents.

I will end this testimony in sharing our pandemic experience.

AS the brown bin program was abandoned in the early months of the pandemic, The Woodside Sunnyside Composting crew ALL VOLUNTEER RUN, and so many others in the city saw a surge in food waste brought to their community composting site. THERE IS A REAL DEMAND FROM NYC RESIDENTS. In our particular case, we have seen a sustained 8 fold increase since then, and have to divert scraps collected to Big Reuse to avoid running out of space in our volunteer run space. I know from personal communication with multiple other groups that our experience is not isolated, on the contrary. The need for climate adaptation through simple resilient solutions such as composting, is clearly understood by many New Yorkers.

I have been personally saving my compost in my freezer to drop off at the Mccarren Park GrowNYC collection for the past several years because my apartment building chose to opt out of composting. Something I'd been waiting all those years to change amidst all the talk of the city's plan to be zero waste. In the meantime, I willingly sacrifice my already miniscule freezer space to keep my scraps, rather than doing the easy thing and dumping them in the trash. It feels too wrong to do that when I know how immediately necessary it is for all of us to be more responsible about our waste. Year round I walk my frozen scraps to the drop off because it is important to me to sustainably and consciously limit landfill waste. This is an effort that I and many of my neighbors take on willingly to preserve our city and our planet, despite its inconveniences.

When Covid caused the city to redistribute its budget in response, city wide compost processing was suspended as was the funding provided to GrowNYC by the city to continue to collect. However, because composting is so important to so many of us, community efforts quickly took up where the city abandoned its green initiatives.

I found out in the summer of 2020 that North Brooklyn Compost was collecting in McGolrick Park. Much farther from my South Williamsburg apartment than Maccarren, I gratefully took my scraps and biked over to drop off. I soon started volunteering and learned about the effort that the organizer, Katie Zwick had taken on to help her community process our compostable scraps. After starting a neighborhood collection, Katie met the needs of the community and expanded to a park collection. Katie organized an all volunteer run operation, with the help of donations from the community, to provide bins, choppers, and gloves for the initial park collection. She then rented a UHaul and, along with volunteers, had to load the pounds of scraps into a truck to transport to Gowanus. There the scraps were unloaded into another truck to be transported to a processing site in New Jersey. Other volunteers collected the emptied bins and stored them in their backyard until the next week's park collection.

This was an elaborate operation but it ran most of the summer because Katie and her community care about composting. As a volunteer I learned and educated my fellow composters every Sunday about what we were able to process without the city's sophisticated machines. I was constantly thanked for providing this service.

When Big Reuse partnered with us later that summer, things became so much easier! They provided larger bins that allowed for more volumes of collection and transported the scraps to their site where the compost went back into the city, not off to another state. To now be told that we could possibly go back to the original plan is disappointing in the least. But if it comes down to it, we will. Because that's how important it is to us.

Now, Big Reuse, although they were granted a 6 month grace period, are still in threat of eviction, after processing much of the city's compost because Sanitation and the Park's Department have abandoned composting. Mayor Adams has gone against his word and decided not to expand composting to make this city service equitable and available to all. And soon these community compost sites may also be ended by the city.

The most disappointing thing is that we now see how clearly our city leadership has zero perspective or consideration for the health of our communities. To take away community composting is hurtful and damaging. Not to mention that it shows just how easily our mayor will abandon the green initiatives that the city desperately needs, that he previously said he would support.

I didn't vote for Mayor Adams, but I wanted to be pleasantly surprised by him. Sadly, after just 2 months in office, he has shown to be not a man of his word and I have zero faith that he knows how to make effective, lasting, structural improvements to our city.

He'll just continue to put band aids on problems and pump the NYPD with more money that will then be paid to the numbers of people who become victims to their egregious, harmful errors, who will continue to win lawsuits against the city, while not changing anything within the NYPD to prevent the cycle. He is setting a precedent that we know things are wrong but we'll allow it because it is too inconvenient to change.

New York needs money to be directed at education and social services to keep people out of harm, not more NYPD baffoons.

Our city is facing an overwhelming and unnecessary trash and rat problem. New Yorkers do not deserve to live like this. Curbside composting means less food will be readily available for rats and other pests on our city streets. Additionally, organic waste is the most significant contributor of waste-related greenhouse gas emissions. We can do better. Composting organics greatly reduces emissions of methane, a powerful greenhouse gas. As a parent and proud New Yorker, I implore you to fund and expand the curbside composting program.



Hello,

I am contacting you to request that the budget for composting be maintained at \$7M/year, if not increased.

When food waste decomposes in landfills, it decomposes anaerobically and produces methane, which is a much stronger greenhouse gas than carbon dioxide. Decreasing curbside compost budget would therefore mean an increase in greenhouse gas emissions since more food that previously was able to be composted would now be put back into landfills. We do not have time to delay when addressing greenhouse gas emissions with climate change already impacting the world and NYC.

It is worth noting that the cost of landfills and incinerators far exceeds the budget allotted to compost. In my personal experience, since I have been able to bring my food scraps to compost collection sites, my trash volume has reduced significantly. It has been shown that convenience is a huge factor in successfully forming new habits. I think that accessibility of curbside compost would encourage a lot more people to participate and therefore would reduce waste going to landfills.

I think that by taking the initiative to restore and expand composting funding, NYC has the opportunity to lead by example to tackle at least part of the climate crisis and reduce the city's environmental impact.

Thank you for taking the time to read this testimony.

Food scrap dropoff is essential. Plain and simple. To slash this service instead of investing additional resources to highlight outreach is an immoral decision that dismisses the very real future of climate change.

It seems the new mayor has seen fit to kill the brown bin composting program that was so effective in Loisaída prior to COVID.

This is a huge mistake; the bins worked well and were very effective in reducing the rat population since it reduced their food sources. Pickups were three times a week and many community gardens made the bins available on sidewalks for folks to drop off their foodstuffs. While entire buildings worked together to keep the garbage off the streets. The program was working.

This is a public health issue, cutting the Department of Sanitation's budget is bad public policy; it's penny wise and pound foolish.

The boldness of rats are outrageous, they run over your feet in broad daylight. The outdoor dining, which is being allowed on public property, streets and sidewalks, without any financial remuneration to the City, contributes to the problem.

Please restore this program, this city produces tons of garbage daily. We can do better.

**Restore funding for compost, expand the compost program and mandate citywide composting now**

Dear Mayor Adams,

**New York City should be working on becoming more climate resilient.** Extreme heat and flooding are already adversely affecting New York city residents, and unsurprisingly, low income and houseless New Yorkers are bearing the largest burden. The young, the elderly, ethnic minorities and Indigenous people are also disproportionately bearing the burdens of climate change. The planet is already 2 F warmer, 33% of heat related deaths can now be attributed to climate change and there were 15 times more deaths from floods and storms in highly vulnerable regions in the previous decade between 2010 and 2020.

**Composting is an easy way to increase New York City's climate resilience.** Reducing greenhouse gasses, according to the UN, is the only way to limit the impact of climate change. When food scraps are composted less methane, a greenhouse gas, is released into the atmosphere. MAYBE BRIEF PERSONAL EXPERIENCE ON WHAT COMPOSTING HAS MEANT TO YOU HERE.

**Funding a citywide organics collection would make the city budget climate resilient and provide cost savings.** According to the independent budget office, when the city prioritizes large scale organics collection by increasing participation, processing costs can be reduced making the process not only environmentally friendly, but cost effective as well. Funds for composting are an investment in the people of New York City and the planet.

**New York City cannot afford to stop composting as we figure out how to do so sustainably.** I'm asking that funds be restored to the existing composting program, as imperfect as it is, while the city works on expanding and mandating the program. It may seem like a choice now, but in a decade, we will all look back and either criticize the decision to cut funding for compost or praise the decision to keep composting. The decision is in your hands Mr. Mayor.