

**Testimony by the New York City Department of Sanitation
December 18, 2020 @ 11:00 a.m.
Oversight Hearing on Community Composting in New York City**

Good afternoon Chairs Reynoso and Koo, and members of the City Council Committees on Sanitation and Solid Waste Management and Parks and Recreation. I am Bridget Anderson, Deputy Commissioner for Recycling and Sustainability at the New York City Department of Sanitation. I am joined today by Gregory Anderson, Assistant Commissioner for Policy and External Affairs and colleagues from the Department of Parks and Recreation. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

Community composting is critical for the city's push to fight climate change and to build more resilient neighborhoods. Over the last three decades, our community compost partners have trained generations of New Yorkers of all ages in sustainability, education, and composting operations. It is thanks to these passionate community composters that we were able to build the momentum that helped us launch and expand the curbside composting program over the last several years.

Despite difficult budget cuts this year, we remain committed to composting as a key component of our zero waste goals and the city's push to fight climate change. Community-scale composting, in particular, allows people to learn about the composting process hands on. It also demonstrates the value that compost brings to our neighborhoods, improving and rebuilding the soils of our gardens, parks and street trees. Now more than ever, we need individuals and communities to help our City be clean, healthy, safe and resilient.

As the Department testified in June, and as is still true through this winter, the COVID-19 pandemic has put immense financial strain on our city and our communities. The Administration continues to have to make difficult budgetary decisions, and those cuts will deepen unless we get the support we need from the federal government. As was released in the November Plan, the suspension of the curbside composting program will be extended by a second year through June 2022 as a difficult, but necessary step for our city to take due to our current budget reality.

I want to thank Speaker Johnson, Chair Reynoso, Chair Koo and others here today for your advocacy to restore \$2.88 million in funding to continue community-scale composting. Currently, our FY22 budget has \$3.5 million allocated for community composting, which we hope will allow us to re-instate some of the educational programming that was suspended during the pandemic.

NYC Compost Project and Community Composting Programs

Founded in 1993 by DSNY, the NYC Compost Project works to rebuild New York City's soils by providing New Yorkers with the knowledge, skills, and opportunities they need to produce and use compost locally. It is held up as a national model for compost education, having cultivated relationships with more than 225 community compost sites and more than 800 community groups, organizations, and institutions to build public knowledge about and support for local composting in all five boroughs.

The Department currently funds seven affiliates at cultural institutions and non-profit organizations to advance the Project's mission leveraging thousands of volunteers each year. Innovation, creativity, and relationships underpin our partners' work.

In addition to training and technical assistance to learn how to compost organic material locally, the Compost Project affiliates distribute finished compost for free to community gardens, parks, urban farms, street tree stewards, and other public greening initiatives. These partners have developed programs familiar to many, including:

- A nationally recognized Master Composter training course;

- A demonstration farm at Queens Botanical Garden that educates about the links between composting and our food system;
- “Zero waste island”, an effort by Earth Matter to close the resource loop on Governor’s Island by composting horticultural trimmings and food scraps on the island;
- Support for garden and greening projects on NYCHA campuses, such as Big Reuse’s work at Ravenswood and Queensbridge Houses; and
- The “original” food scrap drop-off site at Union Square Greenmarket, a truly visionary action by the Lower East Side Ecology Center in the 1990’s.

The impact of the NYC Compost Project activities over three decades have changed lives and transformed neighborhoods. This is a program that we look forward to fully restoring and expanding when we are able.

The most recent addition of activities to receive funding by the NYC Compost Project over the last decade have been local food scrap drop off and high-performing community composting operations. But community scale food scrap composting has been a grassroots activity long before it was funded by the Project. An outcome of the Master Composter Course was a growing number of trained people who not only composted at home or in their communities, but who organized local efforts to capture food scraps for composting.

DSNY, through the NYC Compost Project affiliates and GrowNYC, has experimented with different models to increase access to food scrap drop off opportunities. At its peak in early spring 2020, there were 175 food scrap drop off sites ranging from Greenmarkets, commuter hubs, libraries and other community-hosted sites. At present, there are 99 food scrap drop off sites made possible with this year’s Council funding. The partners are actively looking for community hosts to add more.

DSNY has funded operations at six high-performing mid-scale community compost sites. While DSNY funds the programming, the organizations independently hold the relationships and agreements with the owners of those sites. Community composting is an inherently physical activity. To do their work, these organizations require space to operate. We are committed to working with our partners to find space for them to continue to perform their important role.

Conclusion

Our work to advance zero waste and to fight climate change through improved waste management is far from done, and we are eager to advance programs that will maximize the recovery and beneficial use of food scraps, leaves, woody material.

As we look beyond the COVID-19 crisis, I want to reassure the members of this Committee and all New Yorkers that we continue to be a strong proponent of robust community composting programs and an ambitious city organics recovery plan. While the budget realities have caused unfortunate setbacks, they also offer us an opportunity to plan and, as we recover, to develop an even better long-term composting infrastructure. We continue to welcome the support and leadership of Council on this mutually shared environmental goal and remain committed to working to promote and incorporate sustainable green practices in all communities across the City.

I will now turn this over to my colleagues at the Department of Parks and Recreation, after which I am happy to answer any questions.



December 18, 2020

Committee on Parks & Recreation and Committee on Sanitation & Solid Waste Management

Oversight: Community Composting in NYC

Testimony By: Sam Biederman, Assistant Commissioner for Community Outreach and Partnership Development, NYC Parks

Good afternoon, Chair Koo, Chair Reynoso and members of the Parks and Sanitation Committees. I hope you and your loved ones are doing well in these difficult times. I am Sam Biederman, Assistant Commissioner for Community Outreach and Partnership Development at NYC Parks and I am joined by members of our Government Relations team. We are very pleased to be here today to join our colleagues at the Department of Sanitation to discuss the City's support of sustainable management practices and community composting.

To provide a quick overview, NYC Parks is the steward of city parkland, in accordance with the mandate established by the New York City Charter. Throughout the tenure of this administration, we have focused on addressing issues of inequity in public access to parks for their recreational and open space needs. This includes formal programs like the Community Parks Initiative and Anchor Parks, but we also are constantly identifying park spaces that can be made more accessible to the public, through initiatives like Parks Without Borders. This commitment to equity also encompasses our efforts to make our city cleaner, greener, and more resilient, including support for community composting.

NYC Parks participates in the City's efforts to encourage composting as part of our everyday sustainable management practices. The agency and partners like the Central Park Conservancy and Prospect Park Alliance maintain compost yards in the operational areas of several of our parks. These yards take in leaves and yard waste exclusively from the park to convert into soil for park horticultural use – a “closed loop” system that contributes to the betterment of our parks system while also minimizing impact on our global ecosystem and overburdened landfills.

Additionally, community gardens across the city serve as “hyper-local” sites for the processing of compost, including many of the GreenThumb community gardens that are under Parks' jurisdiction on City property. Generally speaking, these efforts usually involve the composting of internal garden debris and food scraps brought in by the member gardeners, though some of our GreenThumb community gardens are able to accept food scraps from neighbors. Many of



our gardens also host educational programs about the importance of composting, to encourage more New Yorkers to do their part in helping keep our city green.

Also, as our colleagues at DSNY noted, there are collection sites for food waste and other organic materials located around the city, including many farmers' markets or other locations where community partners help to collect food scraps and other waste. The frequency of these collections varies from year-round to once a week, but New Yorkers have hundreds of locations to choose from, including many in parks, so they can conveniently drop off food scrap waste which can then be brought to regional community-scale processing sites where the household waste is converted into soil.

I would be remiss if I didn't mention Mulchfest, an annual tradition where New Yorkers can bring Christmas trees to park locations around the City after the holidays. The discarded trees are converted into wood chips that nourish our tree canopy and make NYC even greener. This great program in partnership with DSNY helped us recycle over 50,000 holiday trees last year, so please help us spread the word that you can drop off your tree at any Mulchfest location between December 26 and January 9.

Lastly, in coordination with DSNY, we have provided space within a few parks for compost processing operations. As you are likely aware, due to recent operational needs and legal concerns, two of these community-scale compost processing sites, which are regulated by the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation as waste facilities, are slated to have their parksite operations disrupted in the near future.

The Lower East Side Ecology Center is a community-based organization dedicated to urban sustainability whose offices are currently located in the Fire Boat House in East River Park in Manhattan. In addition to offering environmental programming for the public, the Center is under contract with DSNY to accept and process residential food and yard waste and provide compost education, and had a license agreement with NYC Parks for a one-acre site within the park, where household waste from across Manhattan is stored and converted into compost. Thanks to \$1.45 billion in federal & City funding, East River Park is being rebuilt and fortified as part of the East Side Coastal Resiliency Project (ESCR), which will protect thousands of New Yorkers against storm surge, sea level rise, and the impacts of climate change. Due to safety



concerns, the Center will not be able to continue its programming or compost operations at this location during ESCR construction, which will begin in East River Park in early 2021. The agency has already prepared alternate programming space for the Center at nearby Seward Park, free of charge, and the Mayor's Office is currently leading an effort to locate and prepare a new site for the Center's composting use. At the Center's recommendation, the City will wetproof the Fire Boat House as part of ESCR, and the City has committed to good faith negotiations with the Center regarding their future in East River Park after ESCR is completed.

Big Reuse is an environmental non-profit engaged in a wide variety of efforts dedicated to environmental advocacy and action, including a contract agreement with DSNY to collect residential food and yard waste. One of the sites they manage has been located at Baby Queensbridge Park in Queens, under the Ed Koch Queensboro Bridge, where significant household waste from across the City, along with park yard waste, is stored and converted into compost. Big Reuse had informally operated within the park for several years, but Big Reuse and Parks formally entered into a temporary license agreement to allow their presence at the site, taking effect in May 2018 and slated to expire at the end of December 2020.

Baby Queensbridge Park is a long-neglected 5 ½ -acre park located next to the largest public housing complex in North America, with almost 7,000 residents. Over the years, Baby Queensbridge had become a forgotten space, full of trash and abandoned vehicles. In the context of our commitment to park equity, Parks has been hard at work making targeted improvements at Baby Queensbridge, but this community deserves a fully reimagined and reinvigorated park. We were thrilled when \$11 million dollars in capital funding in Mayoral funding was provided in 2018 for the transformation of Baby Queensbridge Park, and we look forward to beginning design on the project next month with a public input session, so that the neighboring NYCHA residents can have access to the recreational and open space they need and deserve. In order to make that a reality, our agency will require use of the portion of the park currently used for compost processing for our park system's operational needs, including support for park repairs and maintenance. These regional operations are currently sited on an adjacent portion of the park that we believe can be better utilized as recreational space for the public. Once Big Reuse vacates the area under the bridge, Parks will move our operations into that space, so the rest of the park can be redesigned and rebuilt to provide recreational amenities for the community. While design work is about to begin, I am pleased to report that



we will be able to temporarily extend Big Reuse’s ability to stay in the park for six months, so they can continue operations while the City works with them to find a more appropriate location.

Whether it’s conserving and restoring natural areas, reducing our carbon footprint via our electric vehicles and green roofs, or reducing the impact of climate change through smarter, more resilient park design, we are proud to be a “Green Agency.” Just as importantly, our agency has a City Charter mandate to “to maintain the beauty and utility of all parks and other recreational properties,” as well as a legal responsibility to preserve parkland and open space for appropriate park uses. If we have learned anything during this past year and all of the difficulties of the COVID-19 pandemic, it’s that New Yorkers are more reliant than ever on our city’s parks and open spaces and all of the physical, mental and emotional benefits that they provide. Within this framework, we are dedicated to giving New Yorkers every opportunity to enjoy the best possible parks system we can offer them.

Thank you, Chairs, for the opportunity to testify today. We would be happy to answer any questions you may have.



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Gale A. Brewer, Borough President

December 18, 2020

**Gale A. Brewer, Manhattan Borough President
Testimony before the NYC Council Committee on Sanitation and Solid Waste
Management and the Committee on Parks and Recreation
On Community Composting in NYC**

My name is Gale A. Brewer and I am the Manhattan Borough President. Thank you to Chair Koo and Chair Reynoso, as well as the members of the Committee on Parks and Recreation and the Committee on Sanitation and Solid Waste Management, for the opportunity to testify in support of Resolution 1510 that would encourage DPR and DSNY to allow community composting operations on parkland.

I am a strong supporter of composting. Chair Reynoso is aware of our partnership, along with Councilmember Keith Powers, on Intro 1942 and Intro 1943—the CORE Act that would establish recycling and organics drop-off sites in every community district—and I opposed the FY21 budget cuts that suspended DSNY's residential organics collection program through June 30, 2021.

While curbside organics collection remains on hiatus, community composting sites serve as the only alternative for New Yorkers who wish to continue composting their food waste. Most of these sites are located on parkland and in community gardens, including the compost yard at the East River Park operated by the Lower East Side Ecology Center (LESEC). Over 3,500 households rely on LESEC's composting program.

On a policy level, community composting is integral to New York City achieving zero waste by 2030, as food waste comprises one third of the overall waste generated by New Yorkers. This food waste ends up in landfills if it is not diverted for composting or anaerobic digestion. The City should support the expansion, rather than the elimination, of community composting sites.

Members of the committee may also know that for over a year Councilmember Carlina Rivera and I convened stakeholders, engaged local residents including NYCHA tenants, formed a community advisory group, and retained an independent expert to ensure a wide range of local voices would be incorporated into the East Side Coastal Resiliency (ESCR) design process.

Incorporating community input into final ESCR plans was especially important after the City disregarded three years of prior community planning and opted for a "preferred alternative" that garnered little support from community members. Every level of stakeholder engagement yielded the same response: protect the LESEC compost yard, relocate it to a sensible alternate site during construction if necessary, then return it to East River Park post-ESCR.

I support the goal of ESCR and believe it is important for the City to move forward with using the \$353 million in federal funds before they expire to provide flood protection for New Yorkers living within high-risk flood zones. Yet the City should also provide greater support to LESEC's compost yard and ensure its continued existence during and after the necessary ESCR construction. Coastal resiliency and zero waste strategies are not mutually exclusive. New York City must pursue both to become truly sustainable.

I have also heard from residents of Roosevelt Island, particularly those who are members of the Roosevelt Island Garden Club, who support composting in their community, and they are advocating for more funding for such programs. These active residents also support Big Reuse, the Queensbridge compost site, as I do. Composting belongs in parks and on parkland.

Resolution 1510 proposed by Chair Reynoso calls on DSNY and DPR to "continue to engage and collaborate with local communities to encourage and allow community composting to be carried out on parkland that is safe for residents." This has been the constant call of ESCR stakeholders. I support applying this resolution to the LESEC compost yard and to other community composting sites also at risk of losing their parkland homes.

I look forward to working with members of both committees to protect and preserve the city's community composting sites.

STATEMENT OF THE NATURAL RESOURCES DEFENSE COUNCIL
BEFORE THE NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL
COMMITTEE ON SANITATION AND SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT
COMMITTEE ON PARKS AND RECREATION
RE: OVERSIGHT OF COMMUNITY COMPOSTING IN CITY PARKS

December 18, 2020

Good afternoon, Chair Reynoso, Chair Koo and members of the Committees. Thanks to you and Speaker Corey Johnson for holding this important hearing. And thank you, Chair Reynoso and Councilmembers Van Bramer and Rivera for your sensible and forceful questions to the Parks Department representative earlier in this hearing on behalf of community composting in general and the Lower East Side Ecology Center and Big Reuse in particular.

My name is Eric A. Goldstein and I am a Senior Attorney at the Natural Resources Defense Council (“NRDC”). As you know, NRDC is a national, non-profit legal and scientific organization that has been active on a wide range of environmental and natural resource issues since its founding in 1970. For fifty years, NRDC has had among its priorities safeguarding environmental health and the quality of life here in New York City. We have closely followed waste issues in New York and around the nation and have sought to transform waste disposal policy from reliance on landfilling and incineration to making recycling, composting, waste prevention and equity its 21st century cornerstones.

We are pleased to be here today to testify regarding the Parks Department’s decision to oust the Lower East Side Ecology Center and Big Reuse from their long-running and successful community composting operations on parks properties.

I have been fortunate enough to work on New York City environmental issues for forty years. The Parks Department decision with respect to these two beloved, effective non-profits is among the most unjustifiable and unreasonable city agency actions in memory.

- It is inconsistent with the City Council’s recently enacted landmark climate legislation and with Mayor De Blasio’s 2015 OneNYC sustainability plan, which set ambitious targets for reducing the city’s global warming emissions, including methane generated when food waste is buried in landfills.
- It is inconsistent with Mayor De Blasio’s often-stated sustainability goal of sending “zero-waste-to-landfills” by 2030.
- And it is inconsistent with the Parks Department’s very own 2011 sustainability plan, which committed the Department to “increase the efficiency of its leaf composting program” and “increase capacity for small-scale composting.”

What the Parks Department is really saying is that:

- for Big Reuse, the Department just has other priorities for the Big Reuse site (i.e. vehicle parking and storage, which can and should be relocated elsewhere); and
- for the Lower East Side Ecology Center, the Department just doesn't want to commit either to finding a Lower Manhattan location for LES to continue composting or to welcoming LES back to East River Park after the resiliency project is completed.

The underlying message from Parks is that community composting is not compatible with Park use and should not be a Department priority. But that message is just, for lack of a better word, WRONG. Community composting brings people into parks. Community composting teaches kids about nature. And community composting helps the Parks Department fulfill its responsibility to sustainably dispose of the leaf and yard waste and food scraps produced on Parks properties around the city.

For months, Parks Department officials have pointed to an eight-year old lower court ruling that directed the Sanitation Department to end composting operations at Spring Creek Park on the Queens-Brooklyn border.

But the difference between the facts in the Spring Creek case, compared to Big Reuse and LES Ecology Center, is day and night. The Spring Creek operation was more than 20 times larger than either the LES or Big Reuse sites – both of which are one acre or less. And the court found that the Spring Creek operation was “an unsightly industrial operation” and “generated noise and odors to the surrounding community.” The size, scope and operation of Spring Creek created a nuisance and closed off the park from its community. In contrast, LES and Big Reuse are neighborhood-sized operations, well-maintained, people-friendly, inviting to local residents, consistent with park purposes and indeed enhancing of public use and enjoyment of city parkland.

Finally, the Parks Department's last-minute offer for a six month extension of its license for Big Reuse and a promise to “negotiate” to help LES Ecology Center find another location is not the answer. Kicking the can down the road does not solve the problem.

What is needed now is for the Mayor to step in and provide ironclad assurances that these two non-profits will not be evicted – at least until suitable replacement sites are found in their existing neighborhoods (and after establishing why Big Reuse must in fact relocate at all). The Mayor should also, consistent with his laudable sustainability plan objectives, direct the Department to treat community composting as an important part of its mission and to expand small-scale community composting opportunities on parks properties in all five boroughs.

Thank you for your attention and for shining the spotlight on this important issue.



NYC-EJA Testimony in Support of Big Reuse, the Lower East Side Ecology Center, and Local-Scale Composting in NYC

Joint Oversight Hearing, Committees on Parks and Recreation and Sanitation,
December 18, 2020

Thank you to the Committee Chairs and members, and all who have been testifying and organizing in support of just organics processing in New York City this year.

My name is Dr. Tok Oyewole, and I am testifying on behalf of the New York City Environmental Justice Alliance (NYC-EJA), a non-profit citywide membership network linking grassroots organizations from low-income neighborhoods and communities of color in their fight for environmental justice, founded in 1991.

For decades, NYC-EJA has led efforts for comprehensive policy reforms to address the disproportionate burden of New York's solid waste system on a handful of environmental justice communities. Today, we are testifying as co-organizers of the Save Our Compost coalition in support of preserving the sites of Big Reuse and the Lower East Side Ecology Center, where these organizations have been successfully processing food scraps, yard waste, and wood chips for decades.

These sites are the backbone of the NYC Department of Sanitation's food scrap recycling program, which was partially restored to the amount of \$2.88 million amidst the threat of total budget cuts, in a fight that thousands across the City pushed for in 2020.

Local-scale diversion of organic materials is important for many reasons, including the fact that the impacts of our solid waste system are already greatest in a few low-income and communities of color in New York City where truck-dependent transfer stations are clustered, causing higher rates of health consequences such as asthma, heart disease, COPD, and various cancers. Closing these sites would worsen these disparities within the City, and outside of it; it would result in higher emissions of air pollutants that exacerbate impacts of COVID-19, and higher greenhouse gas emissions from transportation, incineration, and landfilling.

Thousands across the City fought to achieve a concessionary budget win this year, but this small win will be wasted if the administration and NYC Parks - who manages 14% of our City's land - do not provide the space to compost these materials. Closing these sites when city composting is already near its capacity is moving us backwards, and it simply does not make sense for a City to do this while the de Blasio



administration professes commitment to pursuing waste equity, zero waste, and climate justice goals. This year, the administration has eliminated a school organics collection program, a pilot residential curbside collection program, and has lagged behind cities like Seattle in implementing universal organics collection; the administration has not provided sufficient space, supported green jobs, or built the infrastructure required to support composting; and the administration has allowed for polluting, heavy-duty diesel trucks to needlessly cart materials tens of thousands of miles each day. Some of the cuts to organics diversion initiatives this year have been described as austerity measures related to COVID, but these failures were apparent before the pandemic and are a result of the administration consistently choosing not to commit funding and support for these vital programs. So today, we are asking for more than just talk about the City’s climate, waste, and justice goals - we need to see action. The public and these organizations have stated loudly and clearly that these lands should be maintained for the composting sites, and Parks evicting them because of various “needs for this space,” in particular, is an unacceptable abuse of decision-making power. And ultimately, this fight for these two sites, while critical as evinced by the waves of support online and at our press conference earlier this week, is a distraction from broader waste equity goals the City is far from accomplishing.

Today the City can win with an easy fix:

The LES Ecology Center site should be preserved, incorporated into the East Side Coastal Resiliency Project, and moved to temporary space in the interim.

Big Reuse should be allowed to continue composting at their current site under the Queensboro bridge, and should have their license renewed.

This morning, we learned about a possible 6-month license extension for Big Reuse’s Queensboro Bridge site, which is not long enough. If Big Reuse is to be forced out of a site where they have community support and existing infrastructure to complete their work, the license extension should at least last until the City has worked with them and found another site, but the preference is that they are allowed to stay.

Certain adverse outcomes can be avoided by supporting these organizations, allowing them to continue to serve as a model for community composting, green jobs, and environmental education, and offering them permanent homes. This is the exact type of climate solution we should be supporting, and the idea that the City would be closing these sites is frankly ridiculous.

Thank you for your time and consideration.



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

**City Council Joint Hearing
Committees on Parks and Recreation and Sanitation
December 18, 2020**

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 Chairs Koo and Reynoso for holding this important hearing and for the opportunity to testify today.

The unprecedented recession caused by the COVID-19 pandemic has forced drastic cuts to many environmental initiatives and city agencies that are essential to effectively combating climate change, including the Parks and Sanitation Departments. We are staunch advocates for the mission of these agencies, as they provide critical environmental services that keep New Yorkers and the environment healthy.

The organic waste recycling program faced particularly devastating cuts in the FY 2021 budget, with curbside collection suspended entirely and many drop-off sites eliminated. These cuts mean that New York City has fallen even further behind our peer cities in sustainably handling our solid waste. Reducing waste is a crucial aspect of combating climate change that cannot wait for opportunity or convenience. Organic waste encompasses more than a third of New York City's waste stream and when landfilled it releases methane, a greenhouse gas 30 times more potent than carbon dioxide. The city needs to be doing everything in its power to maintain the limited organic waste recycling it still has in order to reduce emissions and best position us to get back on track with our waste reduction goals.

I am here today to voice NYLCV's support for the community compost sites we all at this hearing care so much about. These sites provide a critical service to New York City residents as some of the remaining organic waste drop-off sites. We must find a permanent solution for these sites. We would urge the mayor to direct agencies to work with the LES Ecology Center, Big Reuse, other composting organizations and climate and community advocates to find permanent sites that effectively suit the needs of these projects. The city must be a partner in the fight to solve climate change. I implore the council to help us protect composting in our city so that we can uphold our commitments to the environment and waste reduction.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

**Testimony of Melissa Iachan at
New York City Council Joint Committee on Sanitation and Solid Waste
Management and Committee on Parks and Recreation Oversight Hearing on
Community Composting on Parks Land
Dated December 18, 2020**

Good morning, my name is Melissa Iachan, and I am a Senior Staff Attorney in the Environmental Justice Program at New York Lawyers for the Public Interest. I am here representing NYLPI and the SaveOurCompost coalition to underscore the importance of ensuring that our City diverts waste from landfills, continues to make the necessary investments in a robust organics program to achieve the City's Zero Waste goals, and support—not thwart—the community-based composting programs that are the only ones working to divert our food waste from landfills at the current moment in our City.

A major source of both environmental injustice in our City, and of climate change, is waste; in particular, organic waste comprises more than 33% of our City's waste stream, and this waste is now sent to landfills and incinerators after being trucked into and out of environmental justice neighborhoods in our City. At incinerators, the trash-burning -- which uses fossil-fuels to co-fire -- releases particulates and toxic chemicals that pollute the lungs of those in surrounding neighborhoods, and in some cases even drift back into New York City. Recognizing these facts, the Mayor made expansion of organics collection his number one solid waste objective for addressing climate and sustainability in his 2015 OneNYC sustainability plan, OneNYC 2050: Building a Strong and Fair City (2015). (See Vol. 7 at 19.)

We strongly support moving towards a citywide organics recycling program as soon as possible. Organic matter decomposing in anaerobic conditions in landfills is a major source of methane emissions, and recycling this material via composting or controlled anaerobic digestion processes is essential to reducing our City's greenhouse gas emissions. However, we also understand that DSNY faces significant budgetary challenges which led to the total suspension of the curbside organic waste recycling program, eliminating all food waste diversion efforts by the City. This is why those non-profit organizations, who have stepped up to accept food scraps and yard waste to recycle into nutrient-rich compost, which in turn is

provided to our parks, community gardens and urban farms, are to be honored and treasured for their important work for our City at this urgent moment—not treated like the very trash they turn into beneficially useful compost!

And yet, as of today, two of the largest community compost organizations who have stepped up in a big way to keep processing food scraps in the absence of the City doing its part are facing existential threats by the very same mayoral administration. Two of only eight non profit community organizations who recycle food waste by composting it and donate the finished valuable compost to community gardens around the City are facing eviction from the sites they rely on to process this compost. The two sites they operate on—one has been operating at its site for almost three decades, and the other, almost half a decade—belong to the Department of Parks and Recreation (“Parks”), who have thus far ignored the organizations’ pleas to remain in their current spaces, at least long enough until the City begins to collect organic waste and process it again, or until Parks together with the Mayor’s office finds suitable alternative sites for the organizations to remain working with their communities.

The most concerning aspect of this is there really is no legitimate reason the administration is taking such a tough position. While certain Parks communications have pointed to concerns regarding a legal decision from 2013 in a case known as *Raritan Baykeeper v. Spring Creek*, as many legal experts have pointed out, that precedent is inapplicable and inapposite for a variety of reasons, so much so that no judge would ever find that either community composting site (or other similarly situated community composting facility) would be an alienation of parkland in violation of the public trust, which was the finding in Spring Creek.

The key factors the Court in that case looked at were

- The size of the facility (Spring Creek was more than 20 acres, here both sites are under 1 acre),
- accessibility and public engagement of the operations (Spring Creek was walled off to the public and prohibited use of those 20+ acres of land whereas both sites in our case are open to the public, have community engagement and events and provide valuable education to communities),

- actual nuisance (Spring Creek processed sewage sludge and caused a lot of odors, causing community complaints; here, neither organization here has ever had any complaints about odor or nuisance), and
- commercial use (both organizations here are non-profits that provide community benefit).

Importantly, the two community organizations currently facing eviction also process Parks yard and food waste at no cost, and provide finished compost to the Parks Dept and Green Thumbs across the city as well.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, these "legal" concerns would only be problematic if there were a threat of legal action or lawsuit, as there was in the Spring Creek case. LES Ecology Center has been operating for more than two decades with no threat of legal action, and Big Reuse for half a decade as well. To the contrary, the surrounding communities have embraced these two organizations and do not want to see the service they provide be lost.

Now is the time for Mayor de Blasio to demonstrate his commitment to ensuring that he leaves our City in a better place than he found it, and show that he values sustainability and fighting for environmental justice for all New Yorkers. He can easily do so by taking a first step and intervening to ensure that both of these critical community organizations are allowed to remain where they are until suitable alternative sites proximate to the communities they serve, educate, train, and work with are identified. He can then work with our City Council to devise a longer term plan to move the City towards diverting all of our food waste from landfills and incinerators to meet the goals he loftily set in his 2015 plan.

We know that this City Council and our partners at DSNY share our desire to make strides in the push to zero waste, and hope that together, we can preserve these two gems in our City and allow them to continue to do the good work they do, where they have been doing it, while also looking to the future as to how we can ensure we get to a citywide universal organics recycling program.

Thank you.



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**New York Restoration Project
Testimony, Committee on Sanitation and Solid Waste
Management, Jointly with the Committee on Parks and Recreation
December 18, 2020**

Good Afternoon, Chairman Reynoso, Committee on Sanitation Members, Chairman Koo, and Committee on Parks and Recreation Members. My name is Charlie Reynoso, and I am here today on behalf of New York Restoration Project. Thank you for your leadership in advancing New York City, and thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

NYRP operates 52 community gardens and stewards 80 acres of city parkland throughout the five boroughs. NYRP-stewarded open space and the gardeners who tend it confer outsized impact on their neighbors. The benefits span environmental to educational, impacting community and individual health. In this extraordinary time since COVID-19 took hold, parks and gardens have offered our communities fresh air, physical activity, respite, free and fresh produce, and all the mental health benefits we know nature offers. With all the immediate issues to be addressed, looming emergencies like climate mitigation and bolstering community resilience have only become more critical. Parks and gardens have been offering real, accessible solutions. For years we, like so many of our partners, have been composting in gardens and offering composting sites to neighbors. In 2019, NYRP gardeners diverted 104,485 pounds of refuse from our gardens and neighborhoods away from landfills and waste systems. We know the greatest burden of our waste system is shouldered by our lower-income and black and brown neighbors. Gardeners and composters citywide are helping to alleviate some of the concentrated burden by collecting millions of pounds of organics each year.

It's unfortunate that city composting services were cut when New Yorkers need to be most concerned with the strength and adaptability of our community. We applaud the City Council's efforts to advocate for a future of New York City that includes composting,

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and fighting for funds to aid the Department of Sanitation in rebuilding the community composting program. It's crucial that we restore the level of service which existed pre-pandemic, and work to expand and connect more New Yorkers to the program that has capacity to address some of our dirtiest environmental and social equity issues. While DSNY slowly reintroduces sites, we should be encouraging community-based programs-- small ones like community gardens, and our more prolific partners keeping millions of pounds of trash from our polluting waste systems. We all know investments in community composting mitigate a process that produces unnecessary levels of green-house gas emissions, and further produce a product that helps to sequester carbon and enrich our local soils. And closer to home, it just makes sense to protect and expand local organics processing that improves the quality of life in neighborhoods that host a high concentration of transfer facilities, especially now in the wake of COVID-19. Thank you to Chairman Reynoso, Chairman Koo, and the members of the City Council who have supported our community composting partners in their urgent work and for fighting to maintain and expand citywide services.



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December 2020

The New York City Sierra Group supports the statement submitted by attorney Eric Goldstein on behalf of NRDC. We agree completely and want to add the following:

1. We firmly believe that composting is an appropriate function inside of a NYC Park. The Lower East Side Ecology Center composting has existed in this location for 30 years with the agreement and cooperation of the Parks Department. Nothing has changed that should make this arrangement invalid. The composting has served as an educational resource, a resource to bring people together in a constructive cooperative way, as a source for employment and as a source for job training. The center is loved by the users of the park.
2. The City has a policy to increase sustainability which the composting at the two sites, in question, accomplish.
3. The City has a policy to reduce waste that contributes to landfills. The composting of food scraps, leaves and other natural material can reduce landfill waste by one third. This is an amazing accomplishment in addition to reducing the high cost of transportation and landfill fees.
4. The use of compost provides numerous greenhouse gas benefits, both directly through carbon sequestration and indirectly through improved soil health. Compost is a valuable commodity that can and should be distributed throughout the City's parks for landscaping and to community gardeners who grow healthy food.
5. The reversal of composting at these two sites is not even accompanied with the offer of an alternative location which gives the appearance that the Parks Commission has no respect for the many positive attributes that these two composting sites and composting in general bring to the city.
6. The City Council hearing held on Friday December 18th, 2020 had many people testifying in strong opposition to the Parks Department plan to throw out these two effective composting programs. In addition to the public, several city council members, plus Manhattan Borough President Gale Brewer strongly objected to the point of outrage at a plan that is so contrary to the goals of the city to reduce waste and to reduce greenhouse gases that contribute to climate change.

What follows is the full expert statement from NRDC-Natural Resource Defense Council:

NYC Parks Commissioner Pushing Out Community Composters

December 15, 2020 Eric A. Goldstein

Neighborhood non-profit groups that have run successful and beloved community composting operations on parks properties for years are being ousted by New York City Parks Commissioner Mitchell Silver.

Commissioner Silver's decision runs directly counter to the De Blasio Administration's ambitious global warming reduction goals and its pledge to send "zero" waste to landfills by 2030.

The issue is an important one since food waste that is not composted almost always ends up in landfills (where it breaks down and generates methane, a potent climate-altering gas) or incinerators (where it contributes to additional air pollution emissions, often in overburdened communities of color).



NYC Parks Department is evicting the Lower East Side Ecology Center's community composting operation, which educates kids about nature and reduces global warming emissions.

Among the non-profit groups under attack is the Lower East Side Ecology Center, which has operated its community composting and education program in East River Park for more than two decades.

Over this period, it has attracted local residents into the park with free educational programming, introduced young people to nature, and processed tons of food scraps, leaves and wood chips into finished compost that it has distributed to the public and the Parks Department itself.

Also on the chopping block is the composting operation of another terrific non-profit organization, Big Reuse. In 2011, Big Reuse transformed a small, derelict Parks property under the Queensboro Bridge in Long Island City into a modern community composting and educational site.

In 2019 alone, Big Reuse brought in almost 1,000 volunteers to help beautify the site, learn about composting and distribute compost to community groups, while assisting the Parks Department by accepting leaves and yard waste from Parks properties at no cost.

But earlier this year, the Parks Department sent word to both groups that their licenses to operate at these locations would not be renewed and they would have to pack up and leave.



Big Reuse's community composting has converted derelict space under Queensboro Bridge into an environmental gem. But Parks Department officials want the space for a parking lot.

The Parks Department's decision to evict these two composting groups—and to discourage community composting at other Parks locations—represents a reversal of the Department's own policy.

Indeed, the Department's 2011 Sustainability Plan offered a ringing endorsement for expanding composting on parks properties. The plan committed the Department to "increase the efficiency of its leaf composting program" and "[i]ncrease capacity for small-scale composting." *A Plan for Sustainable Practices Within New York City Parks* (2011) at 1, 22,24.

Now, however, the Parks Department is changing its tune. To justify their flip-flop, Parks officials are insisting that a 2013 lower court case leaves them no choice. The judge in that case, *Raritan Baykeeper v. City of New York*, ordered the closure of a Sanitation Department composting facility that occupied 20 acres of Spring Creek Park in southern Queens. The court based its decision on the alienation doctrine, which is designed to prevent the transfer of parkland to non-park purposes.

But the facts in the Spring Creek case compared to those at the LES Ecology Center and Big Reuse sites are as different as day and night:

- the Spring Creek site was more than 20 times larger than either the LES or Big Reuse composting operations (both of which are an acre or less in size);
- the Spring Creek facility was described by the court as "an unsightly industrial operation," which the well-maintained, people-friendly LES and Big Reuse sites certainly are not;
- the Spring Creek operation "generate[d] noise and odors to the surrounding community," while the two community composting sites at issue here have been good neighbors and enjoy strong local support; and

- the Spring Creek facility composting works—by virtue of its size, scope and operation—constituted a non-park use of parkland, whereas the two community composting sites, which bring people into the parks and teach kids about nature, are consistent with park purposes.

Thus, the Spring Creek ruling should simply not be an impediment to the kind of small-scale composting operations long practiced by these two groups on city parkland.

The Parks Commissioner's decision to push out these two composting programs puts Mayor Bill de Blasio in an awkward position

The de Blasio Administration began with great promise on this issue. On the day she was sworn in, former Sanitation Commissioner Kathryn Garcia pledged to make the Sanitation Department a national leader on composting and sustainability.

But, in a major blow, City Hall eliminated curbside composting collections this past Spring, in the wake of the COVID pandemic.

And the Mayor has not announced plans for the Department to resume separated food waste collections, despite the continuing desire of Acting Sanitation Commissioner Ed Grayson to do the right thing.

The City Council will be holding a hearing on the issue this week. Thanks to Councilmembers Antonio Reynoso, Peter Koo and Speaker Corey Johnson for that.

Mayor de Blasio can advance his forward-looking climate and waste policy goals by directing his Parks Commissioner to allow these two wonderful composting groups to continue serving parks-goers and their communities.



Written Statement of GrowNYC Before the Joint Oversight Hearing on Community Composting by the NYC Council Committees on Parks and Recreation & Sanitation and Solid Waste Management

December 18, 2020

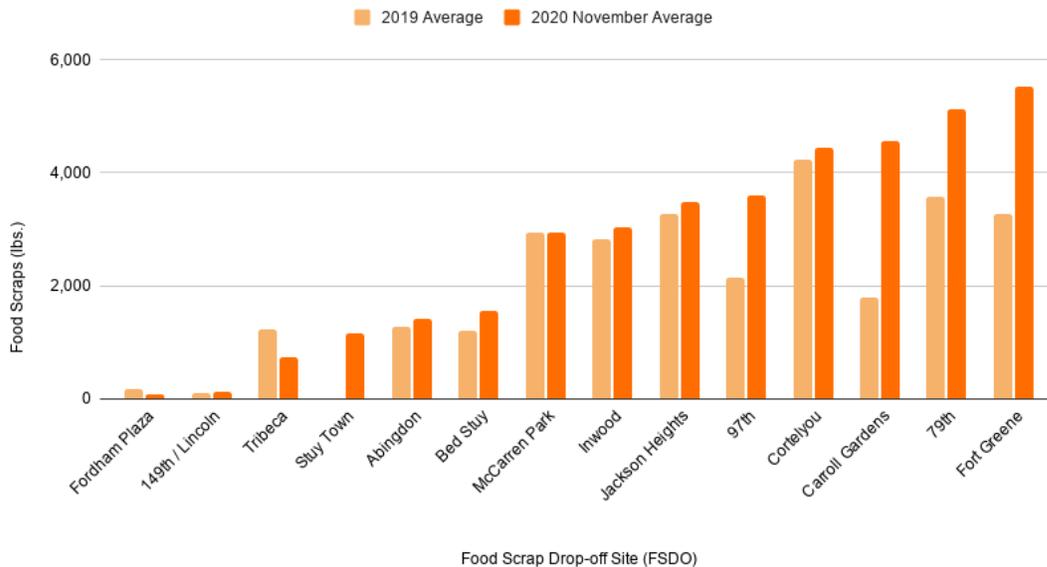
Thank you Chairmen Koo and Reynoso, and members of the Committees for this opportunity to testify in support of Community Composting, and to encourage the City Council to maintain the local compost processing capacity we have today through the Lower East Side Ecology Center in East River Park and Big Reuse at Queensbridge Park.

GrowNYC has played a pivotal role in helping improve the environmental quality of life in New York City for 50 years, and we have been an active player in Community Composting since 2011. We pop-up at Greenmarkets, subway stations, and community gardens to collect household food scraps from New York City residents, and we partner with sites like The Lower East Side Ecology Center and Big Reuse, who make compost by mixing those food scraps with leaf and yard waste from the Parks Department. The finished compost is given back to Parks, Greenthumb gardens, and street trees. In addition to reducing emissions from landfills and hauling, the compost our partners make sequesters carbon in the soil, captures stormwater runoff, and improves our City's parks and green spaces from the ground up. These successful, long-standing public-private and inter-agency partnerships benefit all parties at a time when budgets are tight and collaboration is key.

Community Composting works. The City Council fought hard in June to restore funding for community composting and we cannot thank them enough. They fought for this because their constituents rely on this vital service so that they can do their part to help combat climate change. Now the system that City Council helped restore is in jeopardy with the potential loss of these two sites. The importance of both continuing and expanding these efforts is made clear by the escalating climate crisis, the outpouring of support seen here today, and by the suspension of Curbside Composting and the current growth in participation at our food scrap drop-off sites.

While the majority of funding for composting in New York City was cut from this year's budget, the City Council was able to save some funding for community composting, which allows GrowNYC and our NYC Compost Project partners to both collect food scraps and make compost. At GrowNYC, we've been able to re-open 15 of our 76 former food scrap drop-off sites, and on average, collections at those sites are 25 percent higher today than they were before COVID (Figure 1). In November of 2020, we diverted 149 thousand pounds of food scraps from industrial landfill to community composting, the emissions equivalent of conserving 7,000 gallons of gasoline. With just 18 percent of our sites open, we still collected 43 percent of the tonnage we did in November 2019, which was the second highest month of diversion in the program's 9-year history. Nearly half (43 percent) of the food scraps we're collecting today are being composted at the Big Reuse Queensbridge composting site alone.

**Figure 1. Food Scrap Collections Pre & Post-COVID
2019 vs. November 2020 Average Weekly Collections**



GrowNYC’s goal is to provide all New Yorkers with access to composting, and we want to re-open more Food Scrap Drop-off Sites, but there are two limiting factors we face: funding and local processing capacity. We can’t collect food scraps unless we have a place to bring them, and the closer the drop-off site is to the processing site, the more efficient we are, and the more we can do. What’s at stake right now with the potential loss of the LES Ecology Center and Big Reuse compost sites is over half of our current processing capacity. While the loss of these sites may not result in a screeching halt to our activities, it will be more costly and less efficient to deliver to alternative facilities and may limit our ability to keep all sites operating. Meanwhile, participation at our food scrap drop-off sites continues to grow: by 20% in the south Bronx, 30% in Bed Stuy, 50% in the Upper West Side, 70% in Fort Greene, and 155% in Carroll Gardens (Figure 1). This growth means that we need more processing capacity, not less.

The Lower East Side Ecology Center has been the pioneer in community composting for three decades. It is their work that helped institutionalize composting with the introduction of Curbside Composting. They represent the grassroots history of composting in NYC. Together with Big Reuse, Earth Matter and the other members of the NYC Compost Project, they represent the cornerstones of community compost processing in NYC. But these facilities are not just processing centers for organizations like ours that collect food scraps for composting, they also serve a vital role in educating NYC residents on the importance of composting and its compatibility in the public landscape.

We are so thankful to the City Council, the Mayor, the Parks Department, and the Department of Sanitation. Over the years, your support has helped turn our scrappy compost program from a small pilot to the nation’s largest network of food scrap drop-off sites. We are eager to continue expanding this work, but we cannot do so without our compost processing partners. Our earnest hope is that immediate, long-term homes for the Lower East Side Ecology Center and Big Reuse composting facilities can be secured so they can continue to play their pivotal roles in



community composting. They are models for the rest of the nation and represent a legacy of environmental improvement for NYC. The loss of these two sites would be nothing less than tragic.

We would like to thank Chairmen Reynoso and Koo the Committees for the opportunity to provide this testimony.

With gratitude,

David Hurd
Director, Zero Waste Programs
GrowNYC

Emily Bachman
Manager, Compost Program
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.



December 21, 2020

Committee on Sanitation and Solid Waste
Committee on Parks and Recreation
New York City Council
250 Broadway
New York, NY 10007

RE: Written testimony on Dec. 18th Oversight Hearing

Dear New York City Council Members of the Committee on Sanitation & Solid Waste and the Committee on Parks & Recreation:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony. I urge the City Council and NYC Parks to recommit to community composting on City park property. As you know, long-time community composters Big Reuse! and the Lower East Ecology Center have been facing imminent eviction at their current locations on City parkland.

The Institute for Local Self-Reliance is a national nonprofit organization that supports environmentally sound and equitable community development. We champion humanly scaled institutions and distributed ownership. For more than four decades we have advanced waste reduction, reuse, recycling, and composting as means for local economic development and healthy communities.

Today our work includes facilitating a national Community Composter Coalition, which has members in 33 states, including many in New York City. Indeed, New York City's master composter training programs, farmers' markets food scrap collection sites (GrowNYC program), and support for composting at community gardens and urban farms have been an inspiration for numerous initiatives and programs across the Big Apple and the United States.

I was pleased to hear that one outcome of last week's hearing is that NYC Parks and DSNY have extended the life of parkland composting sites for six more months, at which time they will aid in finding composting a new home elsewhere on a non-Parks site. This step, however, is insufficient. Given the leaves, wood waste, and other plant trimmings generated on parkland, the need for soil amendments, and the importance of building healthy urban soils, composting is a strategy that needs to be integrated into NYC Parks' mission, vision, and operations.

Compost is a soil amendment widely recognized for its ability to enhance soil fertility, structure, water-holding capacity; to prevent soil erosion and stormwater run-off; and to store carbon in soil and avoid potent greenhouse gas emissions.

The Covid-19 pandemic has turned our world upside down in far too many ways. But it is an upside world indeed when city agencies support paved parking lots but eviction of community-scaled solutions that bring myriad benefits.

This is not a time to oust essential community composting programs in NYC. This is not a time to reverse progress on local solutions like composting to climate change. This is not the time for the City to sweep aside its initiatives that regenerate urban soil and support green spaces.

Community-scaled composting sites have the unique ability to:

- Provide low-cost/low-tech organics processing infrastructure and capacity;
- Educate and directly engage with food waste generators on what, why, and how to compost;
- Manage the decomposition process, with careful attention to adhering to best practices and minimizing contaminants;
- Demonstrate first-hand why good compost is important for sustaining our food systems, and how urban green spaces are directly tied to our well-being and our way of life;
- Apply compost to improve soil within the same jurisdiction from where the material was generated, helping to “close the loop” locally and meet local demand for high-quality compost to improve local soils;
- Improve food insecurity in low-income and disadvantaged communities;
- Restore and manage green spaces in urban areas;
- Create local green jobs; and
- Build local resilience to climate change.

The Institute for Local Self-Reliance and the National Community Composter Coalition urge the New York City Council to retain funding for the City’s community-scale composting and education programs. Please prioritize funding for waste reduction efforts that harness the power of local community to solve pressing environmental issues. The future looks brighter when it includes less trash and pollution and more healthy soils, green spaces, locally grown produce, and engaged citizens.

Sincerely,



Brenda Platt
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December 18, 2020

Dear Mayor Bill DeBlasio, Council Speaker Carlina Rivera, Parks Commissioner Mitchell Silver, and Department of Design and Construction Commissioner Lorraine Grillo:

I am a Manhattan Community Board 6 resident; a Baruch College faculty member; a former Director of Research and Operations at the Bureau of Recycling and Sustainability, New York City Department of Sanitation; and a current scholar of sustainable urban organic waste policy. Personally, and professionally, when it comes to composting and organic wastes in this city, I know the issues involved. And I know that the plans to displace the Lower East Side Ecology Center's compost yard, and to refuse a lease renewal for Big Reuse under the Queensboro Bridge, are morally, fiscally, politically, and pragmatically wrong. **I fervently urge you to reconsider these decisions.**

Removal of these organizations to provide Parks expansion space in Queens, and as part of the East River Park Restoration project in Manhattan, runs counter to logic, fairness, good planning, and consistent public policy. The value that both organizations have added to advance sustainability and environmental justice in New York City far, far outweighs the property value of the land they productively use at present. I know this not only as a lifelong New Yorker and an avid composter, but also because I worked at the New York City Department of Sanitation between 1998 and 2020, and while I did not directly work with either organization, I can tell you that sustainable waste management simply would not be where it is today without either of these essential community resources.

As you may know, LESEC and Big Reuse provide essential services for food scrap drop off, on site composting, and environmental education for the communities that surround them, and for New Yorkers as a whole. What you might not know is how essential both organizations have been for decades, and how closely and patiently they have worked with the Department of Sanitation to advance sustainable waste management in all its forms. The Lower East Side Ecology Center, under the leadership of Christine Datz-Romero and Clive Romero, began to take food scraps in the late 1980s, when the lower east side of Manhattan was suffering from rampant disinvestment and municipal neglect. Starting in the 1990's, the LESEC became a founding partner in the New York City Compost Project, leading this program's efforts in Manhattan to promote on site, drop off, worm bin, backyard, and curbside composting collections over the years to come. The LESEC has hosted countless classroom events, has taught thousands of New Yorkers about urban ecology, and has provided stalwart support to DSNY in its outreach and education efforts. These efforts are not trivial or "fun"; they chart a future that our city must follow if we are to move out of the deep unsustainability and injustice of the 20th century, and become a truly green and fair city in the 21st.

Without the unflinching leadership of the LESEC, it is doubtful that we would have been able to embark on curbside organics collection, which is a cornerstone policy for the City's pursuit of carbon neutrality and environmental justice. Big Reuse, under the leadership of Justin Greene, has also shown itself to be crucial to furthering these goals. Big Reuse's mission expanded from building deconstruction and goods resale to

community composting roughly nine years ago. Since that time, the organization has taken a small, unwanted parcel of land and turned it into a hugely successful community compost site, building in education and process refinement.

The current plans to demolish the LESEC compost yard in the East River park and replace it with a temporary lawn space; and not to renew Big Reuse's lease for land under the Queensboro Bridge to make way for a parking lot, are, quite simply unconscionable. These actions are poised to destroy some of the greatest treasures we have in New York City, obliterating decades of hard work and experience on the part of two organizations that have dedicated their entire missions to enriching and improving our City. Where will they go? Even if new space is found, what of all of the community ties, and progress made that is rooted to each spot? Surely the Parks Department's need for relatively small land parcels cannot outweigh the good that these foundational organizations do.

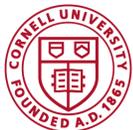
As NYC faces a potentially drastic budgetary crisis in the wake of the pandemic, it is essential to remember that NYC community composting emerged in the 1970's in a similar period of fiscal devastation. As the community composting movement has grown, it has provided vast and varied benefits to the City in terms of environmental education, job training, greenspace development, and the establishment of a base for decentralized sustainability practice that serves us well in this epoch of climate change and its impacts on people in cities. Without a thirty-year history of community composting to build on, it is probable that the city's aspirations to curbside organics collection, not to mention carbon neutrality through sustainable organics management, would still be ideas on the drawing board. Without the continuation of community composting, New York's future resiliency is imperiled. Community compost literally builds the ground that New Yorkers use to grow food and restore industrial land.

Please allow LESEC's Compost Yard to remain where it is until construction on the East River Park Restoration Project begins in 2023, and to plan for the continuation of the compost yard as part of the East Side Coastal Resiliency construction plan. Please renew Big Reuse's lease for the land under the Queensboro Bridge. To do less would be a tragedy, and history will record the outcome of the decisions at stake as the environmental legacy of our City. Do the right thing.

Sincerely,



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To: Committee on Parks and Recreation and Committee on Sanitation and Solid Waste Management

Re: Oversight -- Community Composting in NYC

December 16th, 2020

My name is Dr. Sara Perl Egendorf and I am writing on behalf of a number of research collaborators from Cornell University and the City University of New York. We are extremely concerned with regard to budget cuts for community composting and zero waste outreach programs, as well as the potential removal without secured relocation of the NYC Compost Project Hosted by The Lower East Side Ecology Center and Big Reuse's compost processing facilities. I received a PhD in Earth and Environmental Sciences from The Graduate Center and Brooklyn College of the City University of New York with a focus on urban soil. I am currently employed as a Postdoctoral Researcher with Cornell University, studying microbial communities in NYC soils and compost. I can assure you that **composting is absolutely essential for a just and sustainable future**. We must invest in these green jobs that reduce waste, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and turn this "waste" into a vital resource for building new soils. Supporting NYC's community composting efforts is one of the most important and effective ways to promote local environmental justice, food justice, and climate change mitigation.

The majority of my research over the past six years has focused on limiting exposure to lead (Pb) in soil. People of color and people from low-income communities are most frequently exposed to environmental toxicants, including lead in soil, making this an urgent and widespread environmental justice issue (Cheng et al., 2015). I have worked closely with researchers from Cornell University and the NYS Department of Health's *Healthy Soils, Healthy Communities* team, who have conducted research on NYC soils for over a decade and have created accessible materials for limiting contaminant exposure (McBride et al., 2014; Mitchell et al., 2014). On the widely used "What Gardeners Can Do: 10 Best Practices for Healthy Gardening" info sheet, the **number one recommendation** is to "use clean soil and **compost**" (HSHC, 2014). DSNY and the NYC Compost Project have made this essential resource available to gardeners, landscapers, and street tree stewards so they can do their vital work of greening the city and growing accessible and affordable healthy food safely. **Using compost is one of the most affordable and effective**

ways to reduce exposure to soil contaminants, an urgent and widespread environmental justice issue.

I have also been working closely with the NYC Mayor's Office of Environmental Remediation's (OER's) Clean Soil Bank (CSB), studying the use of excavated inorganic sediments from development sites for use as growing media (Egendorf et al., 2018; Walsh et al., 2019). The first pilot study that began in the spring of 2015 used these clean sediments mixed with three ratios of compost created by the Gowanus Canal Conservancy. We found that mixing sediments with at least 33% compost by volume produced a viable growing media, with soil parameters and yield comparable to soils purchased by the NYC Parks Department's GreenThumb. Because contaminants like lead cannot be effectively removed from soil, we must create affordable clean soils to cover or replace the contaminated soils that abound throughout our city (Cheng et al., 2015). Let me be clear: **creating urban composts are absolutely necessary to supply organic matter to the unique and burgeoning Clean Soil Bank program – the only municipal constructed soil program in the United States.** Within the past few months, the city opened the first Clean Soil Bank stockpile in East New York, Brooklyn, which currently holds thousands of tons of cubic yards of clean sediments. **Locally produced composts are needed for this groundbreaking city-funded program to be successful.**

Since the first CSB pilot study, I have been involved in numerous follow-up studies mixing CSB sediments with compost. I have been conducting participatory research on these soils with two NYCHA communities in Queens – Ravenswood and Pomonok Houses (See Instagram @JustSoilNYC). Creating soils gives gardeners and young people opportunities to understand the natural environment, learn about nutrition, engage in urban agriculture, and participate in creating a sustainable present and future. Focusing on the interests and needs of low-income communities and communities of color as we expand greening efforts is essential for a just and sustainable future. **Composts are needed for expanding these types of environmental justice programs and jobs.**

Compost not only limits exposure to contaminants, and creates opportunities for environmental justice, but also has the potential to mitigate climate change. Most people are aware of the ways in which composting limits waste in landfills, which reduces transportation emissions and methane emissions from anaerobic decomposition in landfills. Fewer people are aware of the ways in which soils can store or sequester more atmospheric greenhouse gases than they release. Research is being conducted on the role of NYC compost in building up soil carbon, mitigating anthropogenic climate change (see carbonsponge.org). **Urban composts have great potential to increase storage of soil carbon, storing greenhouse gases instead of releasing them to the atmosphere.**

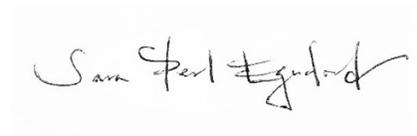
As a postdoctoral researcher with Cornell University, I am part of a large team of researchers and Extension associates studying the vast array of NYC's soils, particularly on urban farms, and their potential to mitigate anthropogenic climate change and support food justice. Again, **we must have a ready supply of urban composts to limit contaminant exposure, mitigate climate change, and support urban food access. We must build on the many years of dedicated labor that so many urban composters have generated to make our city more just and sustainable.**

Funding food scrap drop off sites is an essential step – but the next step is to ensure sufficient space and staffing to process these food scraps into vital compost resources. With adequate funding and space, the organizations that have spent decades developing expertise can continue to provide the invaluable services they do for the health and environmental wellbeing of our entire city.

The NYC Compost Project Hosted by the Lower East Side Ecology Center and Big Reuse must have space to process food scraps into compost. This will benefit all New Yorkers with waste reduction, contaminant mitigation, climate change mitigation, and enhanced green spaces, laying the foundation for all aspects of a healthy urban environment.

I ask that the City secure full funding and physical space for Community Composting and Zero Waste Programs in New York City.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sara Perl Egenderf". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized initial 'S'.

Sara Perl Egenderf, PhD
Postdoctoral Fellow
Cornell Atkinson Center for Sustainability and School of Integrative Plant Science

Samuel Anderson
Urban Agriculture Specialist
Cornell Cooperative Extension and Harvest New York

Jean Bonhotal
Director & Organic Material Specialist
Cornell Waste Management Institute

Brett Branco, PhD
Associate Professor
Earth and Environmental Sciences Program, CUNY Graduate Center

Peter Groffman, PhD
Professor
CUNY Advanced Science Research Center at the Graduate Center and
Brooklyn College Department of Earth and Environmental Sciences

Michael Menser, PhD
Associate Professor
Philosophy and Urban Sustainability Studies, Brooklyn College

Hannah Shayler, MS
Cornell Cooperative Extension Associate
Healthy Soils, Healthy Communities

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Cornell University

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College of Agriculture and Life Sciences
School of Integrative Plant Science
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Bradfield Hall, Ithaca, New York 14853
Web: <http://cwmi.css.cornell.edu/>

December 17, 2020

To: Committee on Parks and Recreation and Committee on Sanitation and Solid Waste Management

Re: Oversight -- Community Composting in NYC

To Whom it May Concern:

Composting organic material including food waste in any city is a daunting challenge. NYC made the commitment to meet that challenge and said to the world: “Watch Us”; we can do this and set the standard. Building the infrastructure to make this happen was complex, bare bones and well thought-out. DOS, DSNY, haulers, micro-haulers, large scale composters, community farms and gardens, gardeners, the vast NYC Botanical “educational” Gardens, community composters, master gardeners and composters, grassroots and nonprofit composters are all part of the solution. However, the most important key to this programs’ success is communication and education; without these building blocks and strategies there is no conveyance of information, or compost bins, or community energy and no program.

Cutting any part of these programs will reverse the progress that we have made by diverting food scraps and about 60% of our organic waste stream from landfills. When in a landfill, food waste and other organic waste are a major source of greenhouse gas emissions. We cannot let the current budget crisis allow us to lose sight of the looming climate crisis and we must continue to divert these materials from landfills to reach our sustainability goals.

Cutting these programs will again turn the clocks backwards and undo the great progress that has been made. Restarting these operations will be expensive and almost impossible. After more than 20 years of composting outreach and education, the NYC Compost Project is working to increase the number of composting opportunities available to New Yorkers and continues to shape the landscape of composting in New York City. From in home vermicomposting to Bokashi (or Vokashi as we know it in NYC), to small and large bins or windrows to the Freshkills’ facility; all are integral components of how NYC Composts! The attached posters feature many of the programs that we are addressing, where NYC is making and using compost while building community.

When COVID-19 hit and devastated NY and isolated us, it was even more clear that we need to plant seeds and grow food as so many people have become less food secure. The NYC Compost Project Hosted by The Lower East Side Ecology Center and Big Reuse are being asked to move their compost processing sites off of Parks land with no alternative sites being allocated or offered. Community composting, recycling our organics back into the soil, allows our communities to be more sustainable and improve our food security. What better use of our parks, a community asset that belong all. There are also vacant areas in NYC that could be allocated if the parks really need to reallocate the land being used, leaving these facilities homeless would reduce the progress. NYC has built momentum for significant diversion of food scraps from landfills to soil enriching compost. New York is now seen as one of the cities leading in composting and healthy soil development through these efforts. Healthy Soils = Healthy Communities!

Cornell Waste Management Institute (CWMI) at Cornell University in Ithaca, NY supports the efforts of the NYC Compost Project which was founded in 1993 by the NYC Department of Sanitation's Bureau of Waste Prevention, Reuse, and Recycling (now the Bureau of Recycling and Sustainability) to provide compost outreach and education to NYC residents, institutions, and businesses. CWMI urges the New York City Council to retain programs and facilities that the NYC Compost Project and Grow NYC nurtured over the years, and that funds for community education be re-instituted to keep composting active in the city until DSNY's program can be funded in 2021.

Respectfully Submitted,



Jean Bonhotal, Director & Organic Material Specialist

Hannah Shayler, Extension Associate, Healthy Soils, Healthy Communities

Mary Schwarz, Organic Material Specialist

Waylon Partridge, Program Assistant

Rachel Kelchlin, Program Assistant

Sara Perl Egendorf, Postdoctoral Fellow Cornell Atkinson Center for Sustainability

Attachments:

[Compost Use for Improved Soil: Make it Use it Urban Applications \[PDF\] \(6.370Mb\)](#)

[Compost Use on Turf for Improved Soil \[PDF\] \(883.1Kb\)](#)



Testimony of the Brooklyn, Manhattan and Queens Solid Waste Advisory Boards

Regarding community composting in NYC

December 18, 2020

This comment is presented on behalf of the Brooklyn Solid Waste Advisory Board (BkSWAB), the Manhattan Solid Waste Advisory Board (MSWAB) and the Queens Solid Waste Advisory Board Organizing Committee (QSWAB). We are grateful for the opportunity to present testimony for this oversight hearing concerning Community Composting in NYC.

The SWABs commend the City for the partial restoration of funding for community composting in FY21 that occurred in the months since the initial budget cuts in the Spring precipitated by the Covid-19 pandemic. This has enabled the re-opening of food waste drop-off sites and the continuation of the NYC Compost Project, providing a vital avenue for New York residents to divert their organic waste from landfill and incineration.

A failure to renew the leases of Big Reuse and the Lower East Side Ecology Center would represent a major setback in this restoration process. Collectively the two organizations divert approximately 2.5 million lbs. of organic waste from landfill and incineration annually, and represent a significant portion of existing processing capacity for organic waste in the city. Given the absence of curbside collections of organic waste, community composting is the only avenue for citizens to recycle their food and yard scraps; as such, in the current time it plays an even more important role than it did prior to Covid-19.

The pandemic has been notable for hitting disadvantaged communities the hardest. Reducing the local processing capacity for organic waste will compound this by exacerbating existing environmental injustices. More organic waste will be sent to landfill and incineration, via truck corridors and to facilities that predominantly impact low income neighborhoods and communities of color.

In addition to the fact that composting has been shown to generate significantly more jobs than disposal to the general waste stream per unit of material, and the two organizations' strong track record of providing volunteering and training opportunities, suspension of their operations would be a significant environmental, social and economic step backwards from the City's perspective and stated goals. Big Reuse and Lower East Side Ecology Center help with the Parks Department's vision of creating and sustaining thriving parks. The two organizations process leaves from City parks, give finished compost back, and educate New Yorkers about ecology and how they can play a role in helping the environment.

The SWABs therefore urge the Parks Department to work with Big Reuse, the Lower East Side Ecology Center, and DSNY to find a solution that will enable them to continue their fine work serving NYC's residents with minimal to no disruption. We are committed to working with elected representatives and citizens towards a waste management system that effectively supports the environment and economy of New York City while enhancing the living spaces inhabited by all its residents.

Thank you for your consideration.

Brooklyn Solid Waste Advisory Board

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Manhattan Solid Waste Advisory Board

Members: Rona Banai (Vice Chair), Margot Becker, Joyce Bialik, Diana Blackwell, Matthew Civello (Chair), Maggie Clarke, Debby Lee Cohen, Peter Cohen, Ellen M. Cooper, DeNeile Cooper, Lorial Crowder, Ann Marie Cunningham, Meredith Danberg-Ficarelli, Kimberly Davis, Lisa Denby, Wendy Frank, Katherine Hanner, Cullen Howe, Sophia Huda, Melissa Iachan, Christine Johnson, Sarah Lehrich, Kate Mikuliak, Kathy Nizzari, Alexis Obernauer, Diane Orr, Ushma Pandya, Kristi Parson, Tinia Pina, John Reali, Martin Robertson, Rich Schulman, Brendan Sexton, Marc Shifflett, Amy Uong, Aditi Varshneya, Chana Widawski

Queens Solid Waste Advisory Board Organizing Committee

Members: Rachel Boeglin, Wylie Goodman (Chair), Janet Kalish, Jon Klar, Mac Lawrence, Robert Lee, Susan Latham, Gil Lopez, John Maier, Amy Marpman (Vice Chair), Jennifer McDonnell, Adam Mitchell, Andrea Scarborough



Compost: Nature's Way to Grow!

December 16th, 2020

Parks Commissioner Mitchell Silver and Mayor Bill de Blasio:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the NYC's Big Reuse's license agreement to operate at its Queensbridge site and the LES Ecology Center East River Park site. The US Composting Council is a national organization dedicated to the development, expansion, and promotion of the compost manufacturing industry, established in 1990 to promote best management practices, establish standards, educate professionals and the public about the benefits of composting and compost use. Community composters, micro-haulers and grassroots and nonprofit composters are all members of our organization. Evicting the use of these sites for community composting operations would decimate these organizations, who we have watched as they built momentum in New York City for significant diversion of food scraps from landfills to soil enriching compost. New York is now seen as one of the cities leading in composting and healthy soil development through these efforts. These moves risk the progress the City has made in diverting food scraps, and yard trimmings, a significant loss since organic material that makes up at least 34% of the residential waste stream will be diverted from disposal. The USCC urges the New York City and the Parks Department to retain composting operations these sites and continue to fund expansion of other sites within the five boroughs.

Sincerely,

Frank Franciosi - Executive Director

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Barnes Nursery

Jennifer Trent
Iowa Waste Reduction Center
University of Northern Iowa

Executive Director
Frank Franciosi

December 18, 2020

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing on behalf of Socrates Sculpture Park to express our utmost support and gratitude for the NYC Compost Project hosted by Big Reuse and the continuance of their operations under the Queensboro Bridge— a site which they transformed into a place of Great Change.

In looking back through our emails, back in 2017 when our partnership was over five years old they had already collected over 38,000 lbs. of food scraps at the Park—which has only increased exponentially as we have instituted year-round food scrap drop-off at Socrates during open hours thanks to their willingness, ingenuity, forward-thinking, and partnership.

This year alone, in which the project was suspended for some months due to funding and COVID-19, we STILL have thus far collected over 8150 lbs. of scraps at Socrates just since September. And in recent times when we asked the public on social media what their favorite thing about Socrates was, a majority of responders actually said the FOOD SCRAP DROP-OFF.

We wish to send the clear message that food scrap collection and compost production is our Future. The work that the incredibly generous, knowledgeable, devoted, and collaborative staff at Big Reuse is doing—is our Future. There is no reason for this grievous disruption of service and upheaval that would result from losing their Queensboro Bridge space.

Their work shows us what is Possible, just like their presence in our Park, every single day, illustrates to our public that we care about our future generations. That we understand what “fighting climate change” actually means—that it means educating our people on-the-ground and making these everyday ways of environmental dedication visible, accessible, and possible.

I implore you to recognize the tragic ways in which cutting corners in this moment contributes to cutting short the life of our city, the life of our planet. We have to think long-term in these days, not short-term. The service that Big Reuse and the NYC Compost Project provides is not just about collecting food scraps and creating beautiful compost to enrich our parks, gardens, and green spaces—it’s about sending a message to EVERYONE in our community that our actions matter, our earth matters, and there are ways to participate, right here, right now.

There are countless other lots in our great city. Other places to park vehicles, other places to use for operations. Please hear the people when they speak, hear the overwhelming support—hear us at Socrates Sculpture Park. We desperately need the NYC Compost Project / Big Reuse to continue operations and show us, especially at these dire times, the way to the Future.

With much respect,

Audrey Dimola

Director of Public Programs, Socrates Sculpture Park / ad@socratessculpturepark.org

Dear members of the NYC City Council's Committee on Sanitation & Solid Waste Management and Committee on Parks & Recreation,

I am pleased to submit written testimony on community composting in NYC:

As the Communications Manager at Socrates Sculpture Park, I am very tapped into what our community's response is to the Park's various programs. As the individual on the Park's staff with that insight, I can confidently say that one of the most loved and valued community initiatives that the Park has undertaken in recent years is offering compostable-waste drop-off in unmanned bins anytime the Park is open, which is every day from 9am to sunset.

Socrates would not be able to offer compostable-waste drop-off – a service that, as I stated above, is highly valued by the community and is also incredibly important from an environmental sustainability perspective – without the NYC Compost Project hosted by BigReuse in partnership with GrowNYC.

Therefore, it is crucial that BigReuse is able to maintain their existing compost sites on NYC Parks Department land so that Socrates can continue to offer the vital service of compostable-waste drop-off to our visitors and your constituents who, as I have made clear, value it so highly.

Please feel free to reach out to me with any questions or for clarification on any of these points.

Thank you for taking my testimony into consideration.

Best,
Sara Morgan

Sara Morgan (she/her/hers)
Communications & Marketing Manager
p. (415) 845-1138

SOCRATES SCULPTURE PARK
32-01 Vernon Blvd. PO Box 6259
Long Island City, NY 11106-0259
[web](#) | [fb](#) | [ig](#) | [twitter](#)

The Park remains open at regular hours, 9am–sunset, with free admission. [View Covid-19 updates](#)

Current Exhibition: [MONUMENTS NOW](#)

Land Acknowledgment: Socrates Sculpture Park is on the ancestral land of the Canarsie, Lenape, and Matinecock People.



Sara Roosevelt Park Community Coalition
<http://sdrpc.mkqarden.org/>

Composting and Sustainable Practices in NYC Parks 12.17.2020

Hello, my name is K Webster I am the President of the Sara Roosevelt Park Community Coalition. Informationally, I am also the Vice Chair of Community Board District 3's Park's Committee (I am *not* writing in that capacity here).

Thank you to the City Council for holding these hearings. Thank you in particular to CM Rivera for her steadfast attention to the Administration's East River Park reconstruction and particularly to the requirement that the safety of vulnerable residents be paramount while continuing to insist that the Park's local, community generated, decades old, pioneering (1998) Lower East Side Ecology Center (LESEC) remain.

East River Park in Manhattan and Big Reuse's site at Queensbridge are both compost sites on parkland that currently face eviction from NYC's Parks Department.

Two community generated organizations that serve the public good with donated volunteer efforts is in the best spirit of New York City. Their removal, especially in this time of extreme budget challenges, is fiscally and environmentally unsupportable. It disrespects community and is utterly dismissive of decades of local labor.

The East River Park is the home of one of New York City's pioneers in the field of community composting with 1,000 people a year volunteering. The Lower East Side Ecology Center's foresight created this beacon of composting, park's stewardship and ecology training that are recognized as necessary to a habitable planet and for future jobs. Thus, it is helping NYC achieve its stated climate goals.

The Center has been our pre-K to adulthood school of hands-on learning and skill training on sustainable waste management that efficiently diverts literally

tons of food waste from greenhouse gas emitting landfills to fertilize 20 local city Parks¹. Air pollution is not theoretical here. On the Lower East Side there are nine schools near pollution-spewing roadways most clustered around CB3's Manhattan and Williamsburg bridges², the East River Park abuts both the emissions producing Con Ed plant on 14th street³, and the car emissions of the FDR Drive. Our CB3 population is at high risk of health impacts from pollution⁴ with high asthma rates.⁵

¹ Lower East Side Ecology Center <https://www.lesecologycenter.org/about/>

² These 15 Schools Are Near Polluting Highways In Lower Manhattan <https://patch.com/new-york/lower-east-side-chinatown/these-15-schools-are-near-polluting-highways-lower-manhattan> "On the Lower East Side alone, there were nine schools near pollution-spewing roadways — mostly clustered around the Brooklyn, Manhattan and Williamsburg bridges. "They might not pay attention to hidden hazards of air quality, even though pollution could have a big impact on their children's ability to learn. After all, kids attend city schools 180 days a year, often running around at recess every day, breathing in the air — and potentially toxic fine particulate matter," Halpern said.

Air pollutants coming from vehicles along major roadways can impact people living or working or going to school nearby, the EPA says. The agency says there is an increased incidence of health issues related to air pollution, like asthma and heart disease, for people nearby the heavy traffic...In Manhattan, there were 38 total — with some 40 percent (or 15 schools) in Lower Manhattan."

³ In 2008, public hearings concerning Con Ed's pollution permit were held in which many believed that regulations have not been stringent enough in capping harmful emissions from the facility, as reports of asthma has been rampant at the nearby Jacob Riis Apartment Complex. ConEd officials said that the reason for increased asthma and air is due to the local residents' proximity to the F.D.R.

<https://theharborandthehudson.wordpress.com/2010/10/25/coned-east-river-generating-station/>

Environmental Impacts of the Electricity System

<https://www.epa.gov/energy/about-us-electricity-system-and-its-impact-environment>

Nearly all parts of the electricity system can affect the environment, and the size of these impacts will depend on how and where the electricity is generated and delivered. In general, the environmental effects can include:

- Emissions of greenhouse gases and other air pollutants, especially when a fuel is burned.
 - Use of water resources to produce steam, provide cooling, and serve other functions.
 - Discharges of pollution into water bodies, including thermal pollution (water that is hotter than the original temperature of the water body).
 - Generation of solid waste, which may include hazardous waste.
 - Land use for fuel production, power generation, and transmission and distribution lines.
 - Effects on plants, animals, and ecosystems that result from the air, water, waste, and land impacts above.
- Some of these environmental effects can also potentially affect human health, particularly if they result in people being exposed to pollutants in air, water, or soil.

⁴ https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2015-11/documents/420f14044_0.pdf

Children, older adults, people with preexisting cardiopulmonary disease, and people of low socioeconomic status are among those at higher risk for health impacts from air pollution near roadways.

⁵ Community Board 3 District Needs Statement:

Health <https://www1.nyc.gov/html/mancb3/downloads/cb3docs/CD3-DistrictNeedsStatement-FY2021.pdf>

The LES has always been a low-income, hard-working, self-help community. We can't afford for our parks to be solely focused on "design concepts" – our parks have to be, are expected to be, have been, "working parks" that must also help clean our air while providing our "summer camps", "vacation homes", 'air conditioning', education enhancing, skill building, and job preparation for our youth.⁶

Every local elected official and Community Board 3 publicly supports the return, with enhancements, of the Lower East Side Ecology Center's building, programming and compost facility as a permanently sited feature in the John V. Lindsay East River Park.

When flood mitigation efforts in this Park are completed, its return is a priority along with the stated commitment by our NYC Parks to adopt sustainable operation practices, such as composting its yard waste, and using finished compost to improve Park soil health^{7 8}

Local elected officials specifically requested that the Department of Parks and Recreation and the Department of Design and Construction "implement measures that ensure the uninterrupted operation of the composting program during construction of ERP and commit now", along with the LESEC, "to include the Compost Yard in the final design for East River Park once ESCR is completed".

We need Parks Department to provide a fully functional temporary LESEC headquarters in Seward Park provided 'move-in ready' and a temporary Compost Yard located close to its Lower East Side community to allow the long-established network of composting to continue.

The hiring of contractors is going forward with no written agreements on the Fireboat House as LESEC headquarters nor is there siting of the LESEC compost yard in the current ESCR construction plans. This, despite that throughout the

⁶ See Community Board 3 District Needs Statement on Youth: "young people have reported a lack of Educational and Work Readiness programs in the community" <https://www1.nyc.gov/html/mancb3/downloads/cb3docs/CD3-DistrictNeedsStatement-FY2021.pdf>

⁷ https://www.nycgovparks.org/sub_about/sustainable_parks/Sustainable_Parks_Plan.pdf
Parks adopt sustainability measures, p 20 - composting in parks

⁸ <https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/escr/downloads/pdf/Notice-of-Completion-Signed-09-12-2019.pdf>
CONSTRUCTION—GREENHOUSE GAS The total fossil fuel use in all forms associated with construction under the Preferred Alternative would result in up to approximately 48,889 metric tons of CO₂e emissions. Potential measures for further reductions of emissions from construction of the Preferred

community engagement process for ESCR, the community and elected officials expressed broad support for the continuation of the composting program on site.

Compost yards are a win-win-win in cost savings, fertilizer production, and reduced emissions of Methane (which is 34 times as powerful as CO₂ as a Greenhouse Gas) and in community organizing for self-help collective efforts to reduce climate change and increases the likelihood of residents taking other resiliency actions.

This Administration's silence has raised legitimate fears that this relocation is ultimately intended to become permanent or end the compost yard as a resource completely. Astonishingly, in Community Board 3 Parks Committee meetings no Parks representative with authority to answer questions on behalf of the Park's Department attended. Instead the public and the committee were referred to a website to obtain updates. The website suggested one go to the local community board meeting!

Volunteer park advocate organizations, who despite no big (or any) salaries or funding, continue to generate care for our parks in the tradition of the Community Garden movement. We testify yearly to ask for funds for the Parks Department infrastructure for parks that have no wealthy conservancy to care for them.

As New York City's infrastructure collapses it will once again be the communities that surround our parks who will continue to care and advocate for these vital green and recreation spaces in partnership with Park's staff. As we did in the 60's and 70's in New York City.

Many of us remember the abandonment of Parks and neighborhoods in our low-income communities without the funds or political clout necessary for upkeep. It's not lost on us that this time is feeling remarkably familiar as we watch some of our parks be overrun with people, who this very wealthy city cannot seem to house. We see them fall prey to drug dealers and murderous attacks while garden beds are only maintained by the will of an intrepid local community.

The stated 'Vision' of the NYC Department of Parks and Recreation is "to create and sustain thriving parks and public spaces for New Yorkers". And its stated Mission is "to plan resilient and sustainable parks, public spaces, and recreational amenities, build a park system for present and future generations, and care for parks and public spaces".

Parks needs to be the *model* of sustainable resiliency practice needed in the coming climate challenges – not the destroyer of the few built by the sweat of the public.

Thank you.

Yours,

K Webster

K Webster

President

Sara Roosevelt Park Coalition

<http://sdrpc.mkgarden.org/>

Committee on Sanitation and Waste Management

Committee on Parks

December 18, 2020

Parks: Don't Turn Back the Clock on Composting

Good afternoon, my name is Meredith Danberg-Ficarelli I am writing on behalf of the NYC Microhaulers and Processors Trade Association (NYC MPTA), as a founding member. I am the Director of Common Ground Compost LLC.

The NYC MPTA is growing a network of businesses that work to reduce the negative impact that NYC's waste has on vulnerable communities and on the environment. When the coronavirus pandemic budget crisis led to the defunding of the City's residential organics program, existing and new microhaulers filled the gap. Months before the City chose to restore a fraction of funding to support shuttered compost drop offs and processing sites, these small businesses and neighborhood organizations, mostly owned and operated by women and people of color, had already restarted or launched organics collection and processing operations in their communities. Some of them developed partnerships with the sites that are slated for eviction.

New York City has invested in local organics collections and composting sites through the NYC Compost Project and the passing of the Commercial Waste Zones law. Together, BIG Reuse and the Lower East Side Ecology Center processed 1,000 tons of organic waste in 2019, roughly one third of what the City collects through its residential composting programs.

Instead of continuing with NYC's charted momentum and investment in localized organics collection and recycling programs, it is allowing a single agency to undermine these significant hard earned advancements. Sites like Big Reuse and the Lower East Side Ecology Center play an integral role in the expansion of localized waste diversion programs. The surge of public interest and concern in composting and climate action have made the value of organics recycling clear. The Parks Department needs to recognize the value of these sites, understand its vital role in our collective climate mitigation as the steward of 14% of NYC's land, and heed the calls to support composting in NYC. Instead of erasing composting from the map, Parks should become hubs for community management of materials - building jobs, fostering community, providing outdoor recreational opportunities, and investing in future generations.

NYC faces a dearth of organics processing facilities at this time, and the eviction of Big Reuse and the Lower East Side Ecology Center will significantly hamper if not completely destroy the developing network of community-scale organics programs that have been inspired by these operations, and in some cases depend on the work of these sites to run their own programs.

A low-waste economy is developing in NYC, which employs people and diverts materials from landfills - the City has played a major role in ushering in this development, and Parks' plan to

evict these sites will decimate employment opportunities and will deal a significant blow to the morale of many people who have found positivity through composting during a very dark time.

The composting community fully understands that thousands of New Yorkers are in dire circumstances and can only focus on supporting their families. Many of us are also going through these circumstances ourselves. While ensuring people are fed, housed, and have health and childcare; we must find the capacity and resources to address both immediate needs and the climate crisis. If we do not invest in the infrastructure now for climate mitigation, the costs to our children will be exponentially greater.

The Parks Department must foster a diverse and inclusive effort to build both short and long term plans to include organics recycling on parkland. These processing sites should be operated by community members and local organizations, allowing Parks to continue with its own directives and not feel obligated to take on additional responsibilities. Composters and microhaulers in NYC are highly skilled, motivated, and in dire need of physical space to do their essential work. Now is the time for Parks to step in and be a leader, allowing for these essential services to operate, rather than hampering their broad-reaching benefits.

Thank you

Meredith Danberg-Ficarelli

Director, Common Ground Compost LLC (CGC)
Co-Founder, NYC Microhaulers and Processors Trade Association (MPTA)
Board Member, US Composting Council (USCC)
TRUE Zero Waste Advisor



Department of Biology

Room J526
City College of New York
Convent Ave. at 138th St.
New York, NY 10031
Tel: 212 650-6800
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Dear Council Members:

Thank you for convening this hearing about the impending eviction of community composting sites in Queens (Big Reuse) and Manhattan (LESEC).

My name is Dr. Amy Berkov. I am a faculty member in the CCNY Dept. of Biology, and a 41-year resident of the East Village. I ask you to use all available methods to investigate the city's position, stated repeatedly in many meetings and in the DDC online question tool: "Regarding the future of LESEC in East River Park, NYC Parks is committed to negotiating in good faith, a return for LESEC to East River Park". The abrupt disappearance of the compost yard from the DDC slide decks (in late 2019, without public review, per following trajectory) does not instill confidence that the City is "committed to negotiating in good faith":

15 Mar 2018 (previous plan): Mature grove shown bordering compost yard

11 Dec 2018 (previous plan): Ecology Center labeled in compost yard

10 Jan 2019 (new plan): Ecology Center labeled in the new design

14 Feb 2019: Compost yard looks intact in the new design

16 Sept 2019: In PDC preliminary review, compost yard is labeled in existing conditions, and appears to remain intact in revisions

10 Oct 2019 (phased construction): No indication that compost yard will be closed prior to construction in 2023

***20 Nov 2019: Drawings for BID show lawn conversion

12 Dec 2019: No indication of design change during 2019; No discussion of evicting compost yard—for a temporary lawn—in mitigation presentation

***16 Dec 2019: PDC approves a temporary lawn that replaces the compost yard

***19 Dec 2019: Early closing for transplants and interim passive recreation—with the compost yard the first to go!

***16 Jan 2020: Early closing (spring 2020) for interim passive recreation; temporary lawn will undergo construction in 2023; no mention of the compost yard returning to the ERP

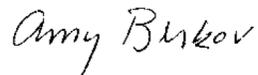
According to colleagues at the LES Ecology Center, the city has not been "negotiating in good faith"; they have been delivering ultimatums that are unrealistic and unnecessary. A temporary lawn is unnecessary. Evicting the Ecology Center in the absence of a confirmed construction timeline is not only unnecessary, but cruel.

NYC Parks offer many vital services to New Yorkers, including recreation, relaxation, aesthetic, a way to connect to nature, greenways for safe transportation, and—more important now than ever—space. Parks has made strides towards a **critically important new mission**: educating the public about human impacts and how our collective behavior threatens the planet on which we all depend. Community composting educates urban residents, trains volunteers, provides employment, and **empowers all of us** to make decisions that address root causes of environmental ills.

When the current pandemic is but a distant memory, we will still be struggling with the impacts of climate change. Unless we execute rigorous and farsighted policies now, these impacts will include food shortages (production, not just distribution), increases in climate refugees, and

increased politic instability. Climate change will not only directly affect humans, but also every living organism—a global experiment with no control and no easy fix. This is why it is so important to continue addressing the root causes of climate change. Because education and training are so crucial, if we lose community composting now, we will lose decades of progress towards NYC's sustainability goals. That represents a very costly loss, in the long term.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Amy Berkov".

Amy Berkov
Dept. Biology, CCNY
aberkov@ccny.cuny.cuny.edu

Dear NYC Council,

I am director of sustainability for an environmental organization in Northern California. My team and I have visited NYC 3 times in the last 3 years (before Covid) to tour your model urban composting projects. The Lower East Side Ecology Center and Big Reuse are pioneering operations that serve as examples of what communities can do to reduce greenhouse gases and build green, climate-resilient neighborhoods. Your great city has been a beacon of light. The rest of the country is only now catching up. With the latest Drawdown studies, these environmental practices are more important than ever for raising consciousness and taking action.

Thank you,

~ David S Baker
Director GRAS/ReSoil Sacramento
1466 27th Ave, Sacramento, CA 95822
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GRASacramento@gmail.com

-- Visit our website: www.GRASacramento.org

~~~~~ More about ReSoil Sacramento ~~~~~

"[Cycle of Life](#)" Inside Publications, Sept 2019.  
"[Bike Powered Food Scraps Collection](#)" Across the USA, BioCycle, Jan 2017.  
"[Waste Not](#)" Comstock's Magazine, October 17, 2016  
"[Food Pioneers](#)" Sacramento Bee, March 31, 2016 in [Sacramento Bee](#)

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~~~~~  
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~~~~~

December 15, 2020



**Green Map  
System**

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Wendy E Brawer  
Director  
web@greenmap.org

GreenMap.org  
Think Global, Map Local!

To members of the NYC City Council Committee on Land Use

I'm Wendy Brawer, a long-time LES resident and sustainability professional. Last December, I was shocked when it was suddenly revealed that the Mayor and Parks Commissioner were planning to destroy the Lower East Side Ecology Center's compost yard and replace it with a temporary lawn. Not having composting when you are fighting climate change is like not wearing a mask in a pandemic! I could not understand who would approve this, despite all the sensible advocacy for this 30 year-old nonprofit, the thousands of families they serve, and the need for every one of us to reduce climate impacts.

I met with our Congresswoman, and Carolyn Maloney urged me to file a FOIL for answers. I filed on Jan 3 2020 with DDC. Despite requests on my behalf from the Congresswoman and Assemblymember Epstein's office, this FOIL is still being withheld.

Who would destroy their top soil making-machine when 45 acres of parkland will need it very soon, according to the current East River Park plan. Unfortunately, ESCR prioritizes FDR drivers and the few who use the ferry (less than 100 a day) over the 500 a day who drop their food scraps.

Composting needs to be visible in a public place, moreover, this is a form of recreation, especially if you pitch in to help make the compost or to utilize it on gardens, in the parks or on street trees. LESEC – as well as BIG Reuse and other community compost groups – have engaged hundreds of local residents in these healthy stewardship activities, leading the way toward ZERO WASTE, circularity and 80 x 50 goals, while diminishing the City's standing on the C40, UN 2030 Goals, Climate Emergency and all other international standards.

Eviction is no way to say thank you. With NYC's ever-growing garbage crisis, we demand the City cancel this costly, illogical climate folly and accommodate the LESEC compost yard, throughout construction and into the new design of East River Park.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Wendy Brawer".

Wendy Brawer  
Director, Green Map System



## Committee on Sanitation and Waste Management

### Committee on Parks

December 18, 2020

### **Waste Inequity is Violence**

Good afternoon, my name is Jesi Taylor Cruz and I am part of the Communications and Research teams at Common Ground Compost LLC. We are a zero waste services company, helping businesses and residents divert food scraps and recyclables from landfills. We also run Reclaimed Organics, a bicycle-powered microhauling operation that services businesses and residents in Manhattan.

When I'm not working on projects with Common Ground Compost I'm a student at the CUNY Graduate Center and my work focuses on how structural violence impacts people's daily lives. One particularly insidious thing about structural violence is that it is so normalized, and so easily shrugged off as problems that people bring about themselves, that many examples of it aren't even accepted as being violent or perpetuated by structures we all navigate. All of us. From schools and hospitals to public housing developments and zoning policies, we're all constantly navigating spaces that directly impact our quality of life. When those spaces serve dominant, violent forces, we're all at risk. We all become vulnerable to harm.

Waste inequity is one example of structural violence that is exposing billions of people to harm, and in some cases death, around the world. And while it may not seem like organic waste management in NYC is part of the problem, I'm here to tell you that it is.

In 2014, over 700,000 tons of NYC's garbage ended up in a landfill just outside of Waverly, VA, a small town with a population that is over 64% Black. Home to one of the country's largest waste management facilities, Atlantic Waste, Waverly has a long history of local residents criticizing the use of the town's waste management facility as a site for handling New York City's trash. As recently as 2016, the landfill's operator was fined when it was determined that it was leaking contaminants into local waterways. Further, residents have complained for decades about the smell of the facility and even opposed the initial plans to use the facility to handle NYC's waste when it was first proposed in 1991.

Unfortunately, though, Waverly isn't the only predominantly Black community negatively impacted by imported waste. The vast majority of waste management facilities and landfills are located in chronically disenfranchised communities in the United States and abroad. This forces marginalized people to deal with problems such as pests, harmful gas emissions, water pollution, and other manifestations of toxicity that are a danger to their health. Recent research even revealed that pollution can lead to negative birth outcomes, mostly for Black pregnant people.

Composting sites in NYC have diverted millions of pounds of organic waste from landfills over the last year alone. Following the slashed budgets that interrupted city-wide composting efforts and the emergence of the #SaveOurCompost coalition, tens of thousands of pounds of organic

waste continued to be diverted by local organizations and even, in some cases, individual people collecting food scraps from their neighbors. Community-scale programs that sprung into action to fill a gap left by the City during an economic crisis depended on Big Reuse as a crucial piece of the environmentally responsible waste diversion supply chain.

Since about 30% of the waste that ends up in landfills is compostable, it's imperative that our city funds and supports people doing this important work. City officials must do all that they can to provide us with the tools and resources we need to help NYC meet and exceed climate goals and make sure that recent climate policy initiatives are more than just words. Towards the goal of benefiting the greatest number of New Yorkers, the Parks Department should change its tune towards hosting community scale composting sites on parkland: rather than seeing environmental justice and waste diversion programs as a burdensome nuisance, the Parks Department must embrace its role in building a climate-ready City for all New Yorkers. We deserve a non-toxic city. So do people who live in cities that import our trash.

Refusing to fund, support, and save our compost is an act of violence. Committee members: it is your responsibility to prioritize waste equity initiatives beyond just words and empty promises. We don't have time to waste.

Thank you

Jesi Taylor Cruz

Waste Impact Administrator, Common Ground Compost LLC



**1278 Myrtle Ave  
Brooklyn, NY 11221  
[www.bkrot.org](http://www.bkrot.org)**

BK ROT Testimony in support of the NYC Composting Ecosystem

Committee on Parks and Recreation, Committee on Sanitation and Waste Management

December 18, 2020

Good afternoon. My name is Brys Peralta-Grant and I am a biker-composter at BK ROT. We are a youth powered composting project that collects food scraps by bike and composts them at our partner gardens. I am testifying on behalf of BK ROT in support of our NYC Compost Ecosystem, with the hope that Parks will consider continuing to support composting projects like BIG Reuse and the Lower East Side Ecology Center.

Composting and Parks go hand in hand. NYC Parks mission is to plan resilient and sustainable parks, public spaces and recreational amenities for present and future generations. What better way to integrate resiliency and sustainability, than by housing composting sites that compost parks' organic waste and create recreational opportunities for New Yorkers. At the beginning of COVID, I very rarely left my house except for going to work at BK ROT, where I could enjoy being outside and active through very meaningful work. From first hand experience, I know composting can be used as a recreational activity - and it creates meaningful jobs as well as healthy, outdoor & land-connected opportunities for volunteers. This complementary relationship is already demonstrated by hundreds of Parks Green Thumb gardens that integrate composting into their operations. Given that one of the greatest barriers to composting in NYC is a lack of space, Parks is uniquely poised to support local composting operations.

Local large scale composting sites on Parks land, like BIG Reuse and the Lower East Side Ecology Center, are critical in our NYC composting ecosystem. They support local community gardens, compost projects and organizations like ours that can get overwhelmed by our neighbors who seek composting options - yet face a shortage of City support. In 2020, our public food scrap Drop Off rates more than doubled from 2019. Even though we expanded our processing capacity, we were overwhelmed by increasing residential demand and found ourselves constantly running out of processing space. In September, BIG Reuse began picking up food scraps from our public drop off. This allowed us to honor our drop off hours and meet our neighbors' composting demands. Our Sunday food scraps have been processed at both BIG

Reuse's Queensbridge site and the salt lot. Places like BIG Reuse connect compost projects throughout NYC.

I was disappointed in learning that Parks was neither renewing BIG Reuse's license agreement nor including the Lower East Side Ecology Center's composting site in the plans for the remodeled East Side Coastal Resiliency Project. While I have heard Parks say they are making this decision out of the public interest, I do not believe they are taking into account the climate crisis we are in, my generation and those to come, or the public demand for local composting options. And believe me when I say the demand is there; every week I come across at least one person who wants to learn more about composting or how they can get involved when going along my route, always mentioning how disappointed they were when the city stopped picking up their food waste.

We urge the NYC and the Parks Department to consider all New Yorkers and the global crises we are in - and hope they will join us in finding ways to continue to support and expand the resilience of our NYC composting ecosystem.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Brys', with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the right.

Brys Peralta-Grant

BK ROT Biker-Composter & Youth Leader

Clay Burch  
BK Scrap Shuttle

Written Testimony for Friday, December 18, 2020  
Committee on Sanitation and Solid Waste Management

My name is Clay Burch, I live in East Williamsburg, and I am the creator and organizer of BK Scrap Shuttle. BK Scrap Shuttle is a grassroots, community composting organization that was formed in mid-July of 2020 after city budget cuts resulted in the cancellation of brown bin organics pick-up service.

BK Scrap Shuttle started as one guy with his bicycle, a mini cargo trailer, and a 27 gallon bin collecting approximately 200 lbs. of food scraps per week from his neighbors in Cooper Park. It has since grown into an organization with a dozen volunteers collecting 700+ lbs. of organic waste every week. Since its inception we have collected and diverted approximately 10,000 lbs of food waste from landfills.

We are currently partnered with the DEP's Green Infrastructure Maintenance and Bluebelt Operations. The Green Infrastructure and Bluebelt Operations team is responsible for maintaining green infrastructure like rain gardens and bluebelt watersheds that help mitigate stormwater from the city's overburdened sewer system. Each week they take our scraps and process them on-site in Greenpoint, Brooklyn. The work that BK Scrap Shuttle is doing in partnership with the DEP is preventing sewer runoff from entering NYC's waterways and is contributing directly to the health of our city's ecosystem.

While we are not currently partnering with The Big Reuse, the DEP is already taking the maximum amount of food waste from us that they can. A partnership with Big Reuse will become necessary as our operation continues to grow. North Brooklyn residents are eager to compost and turn waste into a resource. None of that is possible without the work that is being done by The Big Reuse. It is sickening that after spending \$500,000 of taxpayer money to upgrade this facility that all of that time and money will have gone to waste.

The compost work taking place in North Brooklyn is being done, in large part, by volunteers. The infrastructure that has been created by passionate residents over the last 6-7 months is a testament to the potential of our community when we are unbridled by the limits of bureaucracy. As we move into an uncertain future, we must remain focused on creating systems that benefit all NYC residents and work in harmony with the natural world.

On behalf of BK Scrap Shuttle and the taxpayers of New York City, I urge you to reconsider your eviction of The Big Reuse.

*"Conscious Collaboration Without Competition"*



**Earth Celebrations**

Engaging Communities to Generate Ecological and Social Change through the Arts

I urge the NYC Parks Department to restore and enhance organics composting in New York City as this provides a vital role for of New York City's sustainability and climate change solution goals. While The NYC budget restored \$2.8 million in funding for compost drop-off sites, the Parks department is threatening to evict essential composting sites off of city-owned parcels of land.

Composting is an urban climate solution as it reduces greenhouse gas emissions reducing methane, sequestering carbon and improving soil health. It reduces need for chemical fertilizers, mitigates erosion and runoff, increases water absorption and storage and conserves landfill space.

Composting programs should be supported and enhanced throughout New York City. This action to remove community composting sites is counter to the City's own policies as New York City Mayor signed an executive order 26 reaffirming the city's commitment to upholding the goals of the Paris climate change agreement. Mayor De Blasio's order instructs New York City to adopt the principles of the Paris climate agreement, supporting its key principles of reducing greenhouse gas emissions 80 percent by 2050 and keeping a global temperature increase below 1.5 degrees Celsius. It directs city agencies to work with the mayor's Office of Sustainability to create a plan to further reduce their own greenhouse gas emissions, and notes that New York City will work with other U.S. cities, states and countries to meet commitments set in the agreement.

Composting is one of the vital neighborhood-based urban climate solutions engaging community to participate in taking local action on global climate crisis and enabling New York City to achieve its own policy and goals for a sustainable future.

Sincerely,

Felicia Young

Felicia Young  
Founder/ Executive Director  
Earth Celebrations  
Engaging Communities to Generate  
Ecological and Social Change through the Arts  
[www.earthcelebrations.com](http://www.earthcelebrations.com)



## Testimony of East 4<sup>th</sup> Street Community Garden

December 18, 2020

I am submitting testimony on behalf of the East 4<sup>th</sup> Street Community Garden in Kensington, Brooklyn. We are a GreenThumb garden and a food scrap drop off site. We have benefited immensely from Big Reuse's services. Prior to the pandemic and suspension of the curbside compost program, we processed food scraps from the community right in our garden. A group of 10 volunteers processed about 1 ton of food scraps a year, from gardeners and 100 community members.

However, during this summer, once we reopened after COVID-19 lockdown, we saw double the amount of people coming to compost, and double the amount of food scraps. Our neighborhood had the DSNY curbside compost service, so after it was suspended, the community turned to the garden to compost. We had lines of people waiting to compost and they were bringing months worth of food scraps they had kept in their freezer. After six weeks of doing our best, we were simply running out of space, and were considering closing the compost operations. That's when Big Reuse stepped in and offered us a weekly pick up. And we were able to offer composting for 8 more weeks until we closed for the season, and we attracted even more folks to drop off food scraps in that time. We had people come from far away neighborhoods such as Sunset Park by public transportation. We are the closest site to South Brooklyn, which has no food scrap drop off sites at all.

As a community garden, we were happy to serve as a collection point, without having to process the bulk of it ourselves. We are grateful to Big Reuse for saving our compost program this year. And we take pride in knowing the food scraps will be processed locally and the finished compost will be used to enrich NYC's green spaces. Partnering with Big Reuse elevated our service to the community. And we became part of a larger network of composters in the City.

We as community gardeners do this work on a small scale for free on behalf of the Parks Department. We ask the Department of Sanitation to fund community organizations and their staff to do compost work on a large scale to meet the large demand. And for the Parks Department to provide space for expanding and supporting Big Reuse and Lower East Side Ecology Center's compost yards.

Please consider the value Big Reuse and Lower East Side Ecology Center provide to our City. You will gain more educated, engaged and environmentally and socially aware citizens to improve our City for decades to come.

Thank you,  
Elizabeth Royzman  
Compost Committee Member  
East 4<sup>th</sup> Street Community Garden



## TESTIMONY TO OPPOSE THE PLAN TO EVICT BIG REUSE AND LOWER EAST SIDE ECOLOGY CENTER FROM NYC PARKS, DECEMBER 18, 2021

My name is Jane Selden, and I'm speaking on behalf of 350NYC, an environmental activist organization focusing on local NYC climate issues. We are a grassroots climate group that depends on volunteers to advocate for political and social solutions in order to drastically reduce greenhouse gas emissions and move towards a just transition to a renewable economy.

I'm here today to express 350NYC's opposition to the Parks Department's plan to evict Big Reuse and the Lower East Side Ecology Center from City parkland.

350NYC first joined the #SaveOurCompost coalition because we recognize the vital role recycling of organic waste plays in confronting the climate crisis. 1/3 of the City's waste stream is composed of organic material. If it's composted, it has the environmental benefit of sequestering carbon. If not, most will end up in landfill, where it produces methane a greenhouse gas 30 times more potent than carbon dioxide. Landfills are, in fact, the third largest emitters of methane.

With the suspension of curbside recycling in May of this year, community-based composters like Big Reuse and the Lower East Side Ecology Center have assumed an even greater role in diverting organic waste not only from landfill and incinerators, but also from waste transfer stations concentrated in low income communities of color in Southeast Queens, North Brooklyn, and the South Bronx, where residents are already subjected to unhealthy levels of air and noise pollution. Exposure to particulate matter produced by diesel exhaust from heavy garbage truck traffic has resulted in high asthma rates and higher death rates from Covid 19.

Composting sites in the city are now almost at capacity. Shutting down the sites under the Queensboro Bridge and in the East River Park will strike a devastating blow to the efforts of community-based composting organizations to keep organics recycling going during the current budget crisis. Curtailment of these efforts will mean even more waste will be trucked to the City's waste transfer stations, exacerbating the pollution in already over-burdened communities. Why is the Parks Department planning to evict these composting sites at a time when New Yorkers need them more than ever?

The Parks Commissioner's decision is especially baffling because the Parks Department and Big Reuse and the Lower East Side Ecology Center have enjoyed a long-term mutually beneficial relationship. In exchange for use of these approximately one-acre parcels of land, these composting non-profits combine the leaves and other yard waste from these properties with

food scraps to create soil-enriching compost, which is then provided to the parks for free. And, the Parks Department also uses this compost to nourish the degraded soil of city trees, thereby enhancing flood resiliency.

As a long-time resident of downtown Manhattan, I know what an asset The Lower East Side Ecology Center has been to our community. Not only has it given residents an opportunity to recycle organic waste for the last thirty years, but it provides job training and good green jobs, and through its educational programs for young people, it inspires the next generation to become actively engaged in preserving our natural environment.

At Tuesday's press conference, City Council Member Constantinides rightly called community composters the "unsung heroes of the sustainability and environmental justice agenda the Council has fought for over the last decade." Instead of thwarting them, the Mayor and Parks Commissioner should be thanking them, and instead of trying to shut-down their facilities, they should be replicating their success by expanding small-scale community composting sites to other city parkland. In this way, we can move our city closer to achieving its ambitious sustainability goal of zero waste to landfill by 2030, alleviate the toxic burden of pollution borne by environmental justice communities, and provide an opportunity for good green jobs at a time of soaring unemployment.

Thank you.

Jane Selden  
Climate Activist, 350NYC

Dear City Council,

We request that you immediately renew the Parks license agreement for the Community Composting Site operated by Big Reuse under the Queensboro Bridge. We are asking you to allow Big Reuse to continue operating the community composting site that Big Reuse, DSNY and many volunteers worked many years to create. Their license agreement will end and the site may be evicted on December 31, 2020. An essential community composting site will be destroyed in order to create a parking lot.

Big Reuse plays a fundamental role in composting in Western Queens by partnering with local food scrap drop-off sites to divert organic waste. As a result of the City's decision to eliminate curbside compost pick-up and to slash funding for the operations of NYC Compost Projects and compost pick-up at Greenmarkets, communities across New York City have been impacted. At Sunnyside and Woodside in Queens, volunteers at community gardens and community compost sites have stepped in to fill the gap. In particular, our collective, 45th Street Composters, emerged as a mutual aid effort to meet this need in our community. We process hundreds of pounds of food scraps per week and normally have to turn people away once we meet capacity. Similar to our collective, many other composting sites are experiencing this influx and trying to quickly adapt to this situation. Some have partnered with Big Reuse in an attempt to process the large volumes of organic waste that cannot be processed at small-scale community compost sites. Without large-scale projects like Big Reuse, smaller sites will be completely overwhelmed. Local, small-scale community composting has an important role to play in diverting our city's waste, but these efforts alone cannot replace a broad-based and comprehensive policy of waste reduction by the City.

Our community in Queens cares deeply about composting, which is a service that should be funded by the City. Our neighbors enthusiastically participate in our composting program by dropping off their food scraps, but very few of us have the time or capability to contribute to the vigorous caretaking and development that the creation of compost requires, and while we only serve 50-150 families a week, it takes dozens of hours of unpaid labor every week to keep up. If Big Reuse is evicted from their site, we are certain that even more community members will drop off their food scraps at our site and we simply will not be able to meet this need. The residents of Queens want to figure out which small steps they can take to assist in the alleviation of climate change devastation and "do right" by their waste -- the people in our district are behind compost collection and processing initiatives. Composting sites such as Big Reuse are imperative in our current climate crisis by reducing greenhouse gas emissions from organic waste that would otherwise end up in a landfill. The possible eviction of Big Reuse undermines Mayor Bill de Blasio's pledge to eliminate zero waste to landfills by 2030. Annually, Big Reuse processes more than a million pounds of food scraps and up to 400,000 pounds of yard waste. By facilitating the process of creating and distributing compost, Big Reuse improves the health of soils throughout parks and gardens in New York City, and thus provides free ecosystem services for New York City. This nonprofit site is vital to progress on our City's zero waste, emissions reduction, and environmental justice goals. It supports dozens of local green jobs,

engages thousands of volunteers and food scrap donors each year, and donates composted leaves, wood chips, and food waste back to our parks as rich organic fertilizer.

NYC Parks controls over 30,000 acres and can easily provide space for community composting efforts. The agency controls extensive space under the Queensboro Bridge that could be used for claimed operational needs instead of the composting site. NYC Parks wants to throw the site and these organics away because they claim composting is not their responsibility. Please advocate for community composting and keep the Queensbridge compost site operational.

Sincerely,

45th Street Composters

My name is Browne Sebright—I am an urban planner, ecologist, and designer, who is currently a student at Pratt Institute and an intern with the New York City Environmental Justice Alliance. I am offering my testimony as a private citizen, and as a resident of Brooklyn who seeks to stand in solidarity with the community-based composting and organic waste management organizations of our city.

Waste has always been a challenge for New York City. Despite its identity as a climate leader, NYC currently emits more than 1.8 million metric tons of CO<sub>2</sub> per year, which is associated with the fuels burned in collecting and transporting the waste, as well as the outgassing of carbon dioxide and methane that occurs in landfills.

Community-based organizations were the first people in the city to divert their organic waste from landfills through recycling operations like composting. However, with the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic and the associated projected loss of tax revenue, New York City has massively scaled back its organic waste program. The program that was rolling out across all five boroughs was entirely cut, and only through the lobbying from the Save Our Compost Coalition, made up of many community-based organic waste groups, was some funding returned for select drop-off sites and collection.

There are at least 5 community-based organic waste recyclers in New York City, including Big Reuse, LES Ecology Center, BK ROT, Earth Matter, and GreenFeen OrganiX. While there are several other non-governmental organizations involved in organic waste recycling in the city such as institutional composters, like botanical gardens, and community gardens, these types of organizations typically only produce solid amendment for their internal use.

Community-based organic waste recyclers, such as LES Ecology Center and Big Reuse, are notable for their mission-driven purpose of education, youth empowerment, and environmental justice. These organizations use earth work as a key component in uplifting people, places, and for supporting the development of the next generation of environmental justice leaders.

CBO organic waste recyclers in NYC are located primarily in Environmental Justice communities. These are communities whose residents are typically racialized and marginalized and communities that have a disproportionate share of environmental burdens because of historic and current top-down decision making. CBO organic waste recyclers are characterized by horizontal leadership structures, the fact that they are mission driven, and that they recognize that slow growth is key to building not only a business, but the relationships and the community connections that make their operations successful.

In the scale of NYC waste, these community-based operations are small, diverting at most a few tons of organic material per week. These organizations are highly interdependent—for example, the primary community-based composting organization where I live, BK Rot, has historically sent material that was beyond their processing capacity to partners like Big Reuse. However, since Big Reuse is facing a loss of funding and potential eviction from their Parks-owned land, BK Rot has turned to nearby community gardens where they set up auxiliary compost piles that allows them to greatly expand their capacity.

The decisions that affect LES Ecology Center and Big Reuse have ramifications throughout the boroughs. Despite DSNY's continued rollout of organic waste collection at the curb over the past few years, organic diversion rates were highly uneven, with many neighborhoods diverting relatively small portions of their organic waste to this collection. Community-based organizations are the key to

achieving waste equity in NYC. They have the unique ability to reach out horizontally, and build community knowledge, participation and trust in ways that take City agencies years or decades. Their place in our parks, our publicly owned land is paramount to achieving our Zero Waste by 2030 goals, and the climate goals laid out in both the Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act (CLCPA) and the Climate Mobilization Act (CMA).

While the City has walked back its funding for organic waste recycling this year, community-based organic waste recyclers have continued to operate at a smaller scale. In addition to collecting organic material from residences and institutions, they also collect from business via their micro-hauling service. This material is then processed by hand and solar-powered electric machines, where it becomes compost in large windrows. This material is then distributed to residents and community gardens to grow food for neighborhoods.

There is no one size-fits-all solution to dealing with organic waste, and there was consensus that there need to be a mix of centralized and decentralized systems to deal with organic waste sustainably, and resiliently. Time has shown that community-based organizations are the ones willing and able to meet people where they are at and deploy small and medium-scale composting operations in ways that harmonious with residential neighborhoods and public parks.

In conclusion, I urge City Council not only to grant LES Ecology Center and Big Reuse extensions of their leases, but to go further and establish a legal right for community-based organic waste recyclers to have a place on NYC Parks and DSNY land, and on other City-owned property. Furthermore, the City should understand that these organizations are growing in the absence of DSNY organic waste collection and that they will need more space and resources to expand their operations, including opening satellite locations and including small scale anaerobic digestion to their systems. The City should proactively work towards enabling these organizations to survive and thrive on public land as we seek to create a more environmentally just, equitable, and sustainable society.

Parks Commissioner Mitchell Silver and Mayor Bill de Blasio -

Do you even compost??

Yes! Yes I do!

My freezer is filling up with compost with no where to responsibly deposit it. We've used the services in Prospect park for years at the saturday farmer's market.

Sustainability needs rational representation - especially in our overburdened common spaces. Composting is an environmental justice issue affecting the less privileged. When food waste is not composted, it is often sent to incinerators located primarily in low-income communities and communities of color and burned with trash and fossil fuels. This releases particulates and toxic chemicals into local communities.

Finally, sustainably disposing of organics is critical to achieving New York City's ambitious climate and zero waste goals. Dumping food waste into landfills or incinerators instead of composting them adds to air pollution, accelerates the climate crisis, and will mean that the people who provide these critical composting services will lose their jobs.

Thanks

Aaron MILESTONE

PLG

Hi there,

My name is Adam Schreiber and I live in Astoria, Queens. I am emailing in regards to the upcoming oversight hearing on community composting with the Committee on Parks and Recreation and the Committee on Sanitation. I am a committed composter myself and I strongly believe that the Parks Department should extend the lease of Big Reuse and allow them to continue operations at their Queensbridge site.

I moved to NYC in April of this year and found out about community-led composting efforts in Astoria soon after I arrived. I compost because I know that food waste belongs back in our soil and not in a landfill, period. In addition to composting all of my own food scraps, I have spent many hours volunteering in support of Astoria Pug, which has been a true leader in creating opportunities for composting while the city has chosen to defund its composting program. Big Reuse has proven to be a key supporter of Astoria Pug's efforts, accepting its weekly haul of food scraps when local farms were no longer able to accommodate them and increasing its overall capacity and flexibility in scrap collection.

At this point, you should be well aware of the benefits of composting, which are many. It decreases greenhouse gas emissions by diverting food waste from landfills and allows for the enrichment of the soil in local parks, gardens and other green spaces. It shouldn't take an expert to understand that composting **MUST** be an essential piece of making NYC a greener city. To evict Big Reuse, at a time when the city is already falling far short of its sustainability goals, would be a devastating setback for community composting and a betrayal of all New Yorkers who are doing their part to reduce their carbon footprint.

Do the right thing and renew Big Reuse's lease.

Thank you,  
Adam Schreiber

Sent from [Mail](#) for Windows 10

Dear City Council,

Do not trash and destroy composting in New York City. It is a very successful program with positive feedback from all that participated.

I live in a multifamily building (179 units, 27 floors) on the upper West Side of Manhattan. I assisted the introduction of composting to my neighbors and worried whether the program would succeed. I imagined my neighbors, the building staff and superintendent would be irritated by all the extra work and rules.

Everyone loved the program. All neighbors enthusiastically participating comparing different types of containers to hold their compost and discussing in great detail what could, and could not, be composted.

The building porters and superintendent supported composting pointing to the fact that it greatly reduced the amount of trash that that to be moved to the curb and liking that the garbage was no long a wet mess.

The Super also pointed to need for serious rat control on our block and segregating the compost assisted in efforts to exterminate the vermin.

Not one person complained.

Unfortunately, many are unable to bring their compost to the weekly Greenmarket collection site because they work or are unable to walk the seven blocks. But many do take their compost to the market.

I think the City Council, the Mayor and the Sanitation Dept. need to make better choices in cutting programs and finding funds. It is poor policy to cut the composting and recycling sites in the Parks to accommodate other construction. Figure it out.

**DO NOT CUT A SUCCESSFUL PROGRAM TO MEET A SUMPERIMPOSED DEADLINE.**

Adele Niederman  
[aniederman@aol.com](mailto:aniederman@aol.com)

12/20/2020

City Council Members:

It is well-documented (if not always well-recognized throughout our country) that climate change poses the largest and most terrifying existential threat to our world and way of life, followed, perhaps, by the peril of nuclear warfare. While we as private citizens generally cannot have an impact on the latter issue, we do have the ability from within our communities to effect change regarding the former. The Red Hook compost site is an example of a critical effort to do so. Through education initiatives regarding the benefits of and technical methodologies involved in composting, broad inclusion and acceptance of every person, and innovative programming, the site has demonstrated that it is an essential entity within the Red Hook—and wider Brooklyn and New York City—communities.

This extraordinary group of people have always welcomed volunteers and visitors with a shovel and open arms (or, rather, a signature compost elbow bump initiated by the beloved David Buckel to address the challenges of properly greeting someone with hands covered in materials at various stages of the decomposing process). This is a vital component of the Red Hook compost site: Within the network of city-funded composting programs, there is a need for organizations that embrace the values of diversity and inclusion. These principles are central to the mission in Red Hook and critical to the equitable growth of the surrounding area, both environmentally and culturally.

To conclude, I would like to express my profound belief that community compost sites are essential to the fabric and well-being of this city as we continue to work toward a cleaner, more inclusive society. To lose the Red Hook compost site permanently would be hugely detrimental to the Borough of Brooklyn and its citizens. I implore the Council to take this account into consideration and save the Red Hook compost site.

Regards,

Aden Fischer-Brown

## **Adrian Kitzinger**

**Personally, in the time since the city suspended community compost collection efforts, I have gone to considerable trouble and effort to participate in and support the volunteer collection site at 107th & Columbus, and am appreciative of the devotion, time, and energy the volunteers there have put in.**

**I support the nonprofits Big Reuse and the Lower East Side Ecology Center, and have donated money to LESEC. They provide vital environmental work for the city. Their license agreement for community compost sites must be renewed so they can remain in the Parks. Community composting belongs in Parks.**

**Please, we have to be moving forward in the fight against the climate crisis — not backward.**

The LES Ecology Center site should be built into the East Side Coastal Resiliency Project and moved to temporary space in the interim. LES Ecology Center's license agreement should be renewed and include return to their historical site in the East River Park.

Big Reuse should be allowed to continue composting at their current site and have their license renewed.

These small compost sites are the backbone of the Sanitation Department's newly restored food scrap recycling program - a nimble and already highly popular sustainability program that dozens of City Council members and tens of thousands of committed New Yorkers pushed to fund in this year's budget.

Mayor de Blasio and Commissioner Silver's eviction of the sites not only undermines the City Council funded compost programs, but also the City's greenhouse gas emissions, Zero Waste, and environmental justice goals.

It will result in even more recyclable organic waste being hauled to landfills and incinerators, passing through transfer stations and utilizing waste infrastructure overwhelmingly located in low-income communities and communities of color polluted by particulate matter linked to severe cases of COVID-19. These

community compost sites compost the organic waste and use the compost to green New York City, repair our depleted soils and fight climate change.

Over 4,000 letters have been submitted to Parks in support of the sites in addition to letters of support including over 50 community groups. The sites are supported by their local Council Members and Borough Presidents. We urge Mayor de Blasio, Commissioner Silver and our elected officials to listen to the overwhelming public support for these programs and renew the license agreements for our community composting sites.

**From:** Alan Richtmyer

**Sent:** Tuesday, December 15, 2020 1:48 PM

**To:** NYC Council Hearings

**Subject:** City Council hearing on Friday, December 18 regarding Big Reuse and LES Leases

## Testimony in Support of Renewing the Leases for the Queensbridge and East River Park Composting Sites.

To whom it may concern;

I am writing to urge you to renew the abovementioned leases. The community I live in (Long Island City) has shown enormous support and appreciation for the efforts of Big Reuse to collect and compost food scraps in Western Queens. A sign at the local drop-off site in Socrates Park states that in just the two months since it was re-opened, more than two tons of food scraps have been collected there.

When local composting was discontinued in late March, I searched for a way to continue composting, ultimately finding a community garden on Skillman Avenue (between 47th and 49th Avenues) that would accept my compostables. And though I live two miles away, I would make the trip on a weekly basis, on foot, lugging my food scraps and those of my roommate.

What I found nearly every time I went were other residents of the surrounding neighborhoods who were similarly grateful

to be able to continue composting, and who had often come a considerable distance to do so. And almost always, people there would just start talking to me: where did I live? how far had I come? How did I find this place (the "Smiling Hogshead Ranch")? how long had I been composting?

The conversation I remember most was with a young man who said that, once he came to appreciate how important it was to compost, to have it taken away was painful.

To which I wish to add my thoughts -- that composting is something that nearly everyone can do, and its benefits to the environment (both near and far) are so great -- that it is akin to a civic duty, not unlike voting.

But like voting, it requires the support and organization of the NYC government. So I urge the renewal of these two leases, and urge you to keep composting alive in New York City.

Respectfully submitted,

Alan Richtmyer, Long Island City, Queens

Dear Councilmembers:

I hope you and yours are safe and well. I also urge you to engage the Parks Department to continue hosting compost sites. As compost grows more popular and more people eat at home, the Department can plunge emissions and build healthy soil by sustaining these sites. It can find savings elsewhere, and can work with entrepreneurs who have made composting work when the Mayor's office abandoned it earlier this year.

I'm cc'ing my kids on this message, inviting them to speak as inheritors of our city as climate change gains speed and force. I know you'll think, act and protect with them in mind, and I know that voters across the city will hold you to account on that score. Please feel free to reach me here or by phone to talk through composting solutions. Thanks and take good care.

Best,  
Alec Appelbaum

--

917 353 3717  
[www.allbeforeus.com](http://www.allbeforeus.com)

Hello members of the New York City Council,

My name is Alexa Jakob and I use community compost programs, particularly the one run by Astoria Pug. I've composted for nearly three years now, and even when I lived in my tiny East Village apartment, I always saved my food scraps to drop off at the community garden down the way. I've multiplied my impact by convincing about 5 people to compost along with me. Having lived in both of the neighborhoods where BIG's Queensbridge site and the LES Ecology Center's site have been, let me say that they are both excellent neighbors. We love having them in our community, and to end their lease to create parking lots would be a waste of an investment in both money and in community ties.

I compost because this is a small and easy thing that I can do to reduce my carbon footprint. Getting to occasionally hang out with Rocky the Pug is definitely a plus, but the most important thing is to contribute to reducing NYC's waste.

I am concerned about climate change and our city's response to it. As an organizer with the Sunrise Movement's New York City hub, we are pushing for a Green New Deal that will stop climate change and adapt our society to our new climate change reality by creating green union jobs. Although I am not here today representing Sunrise, I know that our members value the investment of the City Council in sustainability programs.

NYC has a Zero Waste goal for 2030, and we're already not on track, but cutting the composting program makes it even more difficult to reach that goal. As you've probably heard from the Lower East Side Ecology Center and BIG Reuse, composting creates local green jobs, gives back to the community by providing compost to our community gardens, and reduces our collective carbon footprint.

Community-led operations are filling the gap the city left when it defunded the composting program in July, but unpaid advocates across the five boroughs can't do it alone. We need the city to step up in the long term and fund composting city-wide. I see a bright future for composting and sustainability for NYC when we invest in these kinds of programs, and we need sites like BIG Reuse and the LES Ecology Center to remain so that we have the infrastructure we need. In short, if you evict these sites, we are going to have to pay MORE for them down the line – both in money and in climate disasters.

Testimony of Alexander Shaw before the New York City Council Committee on Sanitation and Solid Waste Management (Jointly with the Committee on Parks and Recreation) regarding Big Reuse's operating license on their Queensbridge site. 12.18.2020

Dear Committee Members,

I am writing to show my support for an accessible composting facility in my neighborhood. When the pandemic hit, I was disappointed that composting services were halted. Even though I can use some food scraps in my garden, I always lacked space and had too much food waste. So, for my graduation, I asked my grandmother to buy a compost tumbler to share and use. We used it every day together. The environmental effects of composting are clear, we can reduce methane gas emissions simply by allowing food scraps to decompose aerobically, by composting!

Even after upgrading, I did not have enough capacity to add my neighbor's food scraps, who were also disappointed about the halted public composting program. That is when I found out about Astoria Pug. A group of citizen-volunteers stepped in to solve an environmental problem because they felt personal responsibility. I did too and so I sporadically volunteered to help, even offering a neighbor to pick up their scraps on my way to the drop-off site.

When I did volunteer, I saw genuine excitement for the program. One contributor bought me a coffee to thank me for volunteering. Many came to ask the purpose of three giant green bins off the busy street of Broadway.

When Astoria Pugs started sending compost to Big Reuse for processing, operations became easier and less labor-intensive. What once used to be a job for five became a job for one, a feature of the program that needs to stay true during the winter.

I believe that the Parks Commissioner, Mitchell Silver should extend Big Reuse's license to continue its good work. If you feel a personal responsibility for protecting our community and environment, I urge you to put pressure on Commissioner Silver to consider Big Reuse's operations as an asset.

Sincerely,  
Alexander (22)

Alexander Shaw Testimony for Friday, December 18<sup>th</sup> 11am Committee on Sanitation and Solid Waste Management (Jointly with the Committee on Parks and Recreation).

My testimony concerns the future of the community-based composting of food scraps from the public on Parks managed land. Currently in East River Park and underneath the Queensborough bridge there are two community scale compost sites that have been providing thousands of hours of service for Parks department, community education opportunities, volunteer opportunities outdoors, and divert millions of pounds of organic waste from going on trucks to transfer stations in low-income neighborhoods to local sites where that material is made into a carbon capturing soil amendment. It is in the interest of Parks and the public to maintain these existing community compost sites and expand the community scale composting capacity in every borough. This is work that makes the world and our city a better place – do not tear down these community compost sites operated by LES Ecology Center and Big Reuse to put up parking lots. Support climate change action like composting during this climate crisis! It's a matter of green jobs, carbon emissions, public education, and environmental justice.

Alexis Tannenholtz  
250 East Houston St, 2G  
New York, NY 10002

To Whom It May Concern,

I am writing to you today to save NYC Community Compost. I have lived in the East Village for over 10 years, but I am new to composting. It was always something I wanted to do as I am always seeking to create less waste and move throughout my life with the environment in mind; but it always seemed so difficult in practice. But thank you pandemic, because once the city started shutting down I had nothing but time to research and learn about all the amazing things the city, parks department and different neighborhoods do to bring the community together through composting. I've been lucky enough to be able to build composting into my routine every Sunday and drop off my reusable waste at the Tompkins Square GreenMarket where the volunteers are so beyond helpful and lovely. I could compost instead on Mondays one block from my apartment, but I choose to go on Sundays to feel the amazing sense of community that comes with talking to and seeing everyone drop their compost and ask questions at the market.

My whole family is from the city. My grandparents live down the block from me on 4th Street and Grand Street and we get to be together during this awful time through the amazing parks around the East Village and Lower East Side. But back to composting! It is something that has really helped keep me sane and full of purpose through these trying times and not being able to do this in the same meaningful way due to the cities confusing future park plans is a loss. Not just to me, but to the thousands of people who take great pride in helping reshape our city, country and world and are looking to make a difference by fostering community through these amazing organizations.

Composting in the city does so much! I truly can't believe how much waste this city creates and how much it's people care so deeply about it to do the hard thing to compost. The Lower East Side Ecology Center has taught me so much in such a short time and has made such a profound impact on my life. To not allow others to be changed in this way is a disservice to this great city and it's future. These programs create jobs, stability, community, a greener tomorrow, education, awareness and hope for the future. And I plead to you to keep them alive.

Thank you

Alexis Tannenholtz



12.15.2020

To whom it may concern,

I beg you not to turn our composting site into a parking lot! There are so many of us relying on this as our only composting program. I was overjoyed when the city started composting years ago. I waited patiently for it to come to my neighborhood. When it did, I was astounded at the amount of food scraps I was able to divert from the trash each week. My amount of garbage was greatly reduced! Then when the pandemic hit and the composting program was taken away, I had to see my trash double in size. I was more aware of the waste than ever!

I have found such comfort in being able to drop off my compost now with North Brooklyn Mutual Aid each week. Please do not jeopardize their processing site! Please do not make this parking lot!

Thank you so much for your consideration,

-Alice Johnson

Greenpoint resident

Dear members of the City Council,

**I am a resident of Dumbo Brooklyn and I have been composting on and off since I was a girl. With the roll out of brown collections I really got into it. While my building wasn't collecting browns I got involved by taking my food scraps to the green market. With a family of four, it's amazing what scraps you generate.**

**This is saved from costly waste export, composted locally. Without pickup and with limited options for drop off, keeping the LES drop off and BIG reuse drop off are critical bridges to a time when we are budget stable and able to return to pickup. Composting is a key component to moving our city toward a more sustainable future. The composting sites are needed now more than ever.**

Sincerely,  
Alison s clarke  
Clarkea2@hotmail.com

## COMPOST IS ESSENTIAL

Please stop cutting back compost options. The city's choice to not support community composting is backwards and short-sighted.

As a Bronx resident, I've been grateful to have neighborhood GrowNYC compost drop-off sites. But the city needs to grow its composting efforts. Most people don't have the time or motivation to go to food scrap drop-off sites.

My composting options were already too limited before the pandemic & since the pandemic began, the city's cutbacks are making it harder.

Instead of getting rid of the East River Park and Queensboro Bridge compost sites— the city should be adding locations. By protecting the environment, we're protecting our future.

ALLISON WORRELL

Melrose, Bronx, NY Resident

## **Testimony in support of NYC Composting efforts**

December 18<sup>th</sup>, 2020

By Alma A. Padilla, a Bronx resident, ecologist, educator, and parent.

Dear council members,

Please save our compost. Better yet, don't just save it, EXPAND it! But, at the very least, save it. We cannot and MUST not allow a lack of imagination and will to be the end of this tremendously impactful effort. New York City is unimaginably large, as is our impact on the world. It is up to leaders like you to determine whether that impact is good – or not, such as if you continue to erode current composting efforts.

I know this costs money – what doesn't? But, like the millions of New Yorkers who find a way to feed their families, to house their families, to do what is best for their families, even in the most challenging circumstances, especially those brought on by this pandemic, perhaps YOU should also exert yourselves more to find a way to make this work for our New York family. You owe it to your constituents to act with the future in mind, instead of only looking back to the familiar because it is comfortable, but not better, leaving us all ever-unprepared for the challenges that lay ahead. Hello, climate crisis! This is an investment that WILL yield manifold returns to our city. Be courageous, be patient, and stick it out.

Composting may seem optional, or a luxury – but is it, really? Is it a luxury to reduce the burden our waste places on frontline communities near landfills, incinerators, and in the path of polluting waste transport vehicles? Is it a luxury to bury our garbage and pretend it's gone when all it's doing is generating more pollution? Air, water, and soil pollution may start nearest to disadvantaged communities – but they are not static, and eventually affect everyone. EVERYONE.

As a New York City transplant, when I first moved here almost a decade ago, I was disheartened at the state of waste management in this city. Especially so when native and naturalized New Yorkers alike proudly pointed out that this was MUCH better than it used to be. Yuck. So, I began composting on my own at home and in my middle school classroom. And, I clung to the hope that New York would someday catch up to the modern waste management of so many cities that have far less creative power and resources than we do here.

And it did – at least, it started to. In the time since I moved here, I have seen a true transformation in the city, largely thanks to the launch of citywide organics collection and composting. These helped magnify and normalize the many independent efforts that had already been happening for years. The impact of composting doesn't end with simply diverting a waste stream to more useful, less noxious purposes. Rather, it is the literal change in the thinking it requires of individuals and entities alike. Once a person has to take the time to separate the waste they generate, inevitably it creates an awareness that leads to waste

reduction. That in itself is a very powerful waste management strategy, one that will also be squandered if you take composting away from our communities.

Personally, I have been composting in my home since before the city launched its curbside collection. I am in the unusual and fortunate situation of having access to a yard where I can bury food scraps that cannot be processed by my worm composter, which is what I have had to do since organics collection was suspended in May. But what am I going to do now that the ground is hardening and decomposition slows down with the cold? And my case is far from typical – how much more of a burden are you creating for the much more numerous people who have no such access and depend on community composting, such as that offered by Big Reuse and the Lower Eastside Ecology Center? And all for what? To save a few pennies, park a few vehicles? Write a summary of your plan and read it as a story – will your decisions make you the hero of that tale, and will anyone like the ending?

It's worth repeating: please save our compost. Better yet, don't just save it, EXPAND it! But, at the very least, save it.

Thank you for your time – I hope you will consider what I and so many others have said, and act in favor of composting in New York City.

Sincerely,

Alma

From: Alyson Shotz  
Sent: 12/10/2020  
Subject: composting NYC

Dear Council Committee on Parks & Recreation and the Committee on Sanitation & Solid Waste Management, chaired by Council Members Peter Koo and Antonio Reynoso:

I have been very distressed since the pandemic that something as simple as composting is being defunded and eliminated by NYC Parks Dept. and the city. Choosing to build parking lots instead of expanding/keeping existing composting sites is a huge detriment to this city and to the environment of this city.

As we all know, composting is a simple and very cheap way to cut the NYC waste stream drastically. It not only eliminates waste by half, but reduces green house gas emissions by huge amounts: **“a ton of food scraps sent to compost rather than landfill prevents the emission of the equivalent of one ton of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere”**

<https://www.motherearthnews.com/nature-and-environment/compost-reduces-ghg-emissions-zbcz2003>

NYC is trying to reduce its emissions. This is an easy no brainer- we must expand composting, not end it!

As an added bonus, we get great compost that can be used throughout the city to fertilize the trees and plants for free and make it greener, more healthy and beautiful. It's a win win all around.

We must keep the Big Reuse sites in Gowanus and under the Queensboro Bridge and find more and expand composting for NYC.

Thank you. Sincerely,

Alyson Shotz  
11217

**AMY LYNN VANDERWALL MUSICK , EdD**

100 West 94th Street, Apt. 21F, New York, NY 10025  
917.364.8697 ~~ alvmusick@gmail.com ~~ amusick@schools.nyc.gov

December 12, 2020

Dear New York City Council Members:

I grew up in Upstate New York and my mother was always in the garden – and always had a compost bin. When I moved to NYC 20 years ago, it didn't occur to me that I could compost in the city. But then I joined a CSA (Community Supported Agriculture) farm. Through the Roxbury CSA on the UWS in the early 2000's, I learned about composting and how composting can not only cut down on trash, but build healthier and more sustainable communities and gardens – and that I could do it in my tiny apartment! From that time, I have been committed to composting no matter what it takes!

During those first years that I was on the UWS, I purchased a compost spinner, which lived on the roof of my rental building. I used the compost for small planters and street tree-bed gardens outside my building. After getting married and moving to Brooklyn in 2008, I spent years freezing our family compost then carrying it in a backpack as I pushed my daughter in a stroller down Flatbush Avenue to the Grand Army Plaza Green Market every Saturday. When my public school Green Team advocated and finally received our brown bins, I happily stood with my students helping other middle schoolers sort their recycling and compost/organics. It is also with these Green Team students that I spread compost in our street tree-bed gardens. Every year I would arrange for countless bags of free compost for the school – and for my residential block association as well. I would drive to the Big Reuse Compost pickup site and load my car up with bags of compost – it was so heavy that the car dragged all the way back to Brooklyn! My school and my block had healthy, thriving street tree-bed gardens and my students and neighbors learned about composting through our hands-on gardening events.

When my family moved back to Manhattan in 2018, I was happy to live in a building with brown bins and work at a school that also had brown bin recycling! I also enjoyed walking my dog and compost up to the Columbia University Green Market – or to the 97<sup>th</sup> Street Green Market – on occasion. The Big Reuse bagged compost was essential for our larger Green Team gardening events and available at our request! NYC compost was humming along – gardens and the communities caring for them were thriving – and it felt great to be part of such a forward-thinking city committed to sustainability!

Then COVID hit. Schools went remote. Brown-bin organics recycling halted. Green Market compost collection halted. Budgets were slashed. It was – and is – a sad time for our city. But small communities persist! I found Reclaimed Organics and since September, I have been freezing our family compost once again, then walking it up to the Community Garden at W107th & Columbus Avenue every Wednesday. I have found organizations advocating to BRING COMPOSTING BACK and SAVE THE BIG REUSE & LOWER EAST SIDE ECOLOGY CENTER'S COMMUNITY COMPOST SITES – thus this letter. There is a powerful movement to encourage the city to re-route itself back to composting, sustainability and forward-thinking policies. Please, do not close the compost sites at Big Reuse & Lower East Side Ecology. These sites are essential to helping our city come back from these dark times, and move forward as a thought-leader as we reconnect with our climate and Zero Waste goals and initiatives. These sites are also essential as they will support communities and schools as we start to once again, garden together, learn together, care for each other and care for our environment. It starts here. PLEASE, keep these sites open.

Sincerely,



UWS Resident, NYC Public School Teacher

To whom it may concern:

I drop off my compost scraps at one of Lower East Side Ecology Center's compost collection sites around lower Manhattan every weekend, sometimes twice a week. I believe composting should be urgently and widely adopted because it implements the naturally symbiotic relationship that should exist between a place and the people who live there. It improves soil health, which is why so many community gardens around the city use compost, and healthier soil sequesters more carbon from the atmosphere. Composting also decreases the amount of trash thrown out by each household, reducing waste pollution. We live in an incredibly wasteful city—from the store lights that are perpetually lit, to the tons of food thrown out by households every year, to the haphazard recycling infrastructure where citizens are responsible for sorting their own recycling and often do so incorrectly, creating thousands of missed opportunities in everyday life to improve the environmental sustainability of this city. LES Ecology Center and Big Reuse, on the other hand, allow us to make direct, positive action; when we drop off our food scraps every week, we know and **trust** the impact of our actions because we know these organizations, and these people, who transform our actions into actual change. Although the mayor claims to care about making the city more environmentally friendly and reducing our carbon footprint, I cannot name a single, substantive thing he's accomplished in this vein, and removing LES Ecology Center and Big Reuse from the spaces they currently inhabit actively goes against these purported stances.

I also want to highlight here that these organizations' value lies not just in the fact that they compost, but also in how embedded they are within the communities they serve. People don't just stop by LES Ecology Center's compost sites at the farmer's market to drop off compost, they also buy home gardening supplies, learn about the city's waste management practices, learn about opportunities to decrease their own waste output, and, most importantly, build relationships with the people who work at these stands. At a time when trust in government is at an all-time low, organizations such as LES Ecology Center and Big Reuse promote participation in public life and are a necessary beacon of hope for citizens who want to make a difference—they are, after all, the reason why I am writing this testimony today.

Please halt the plan to evict LES Ecology Center and Big Reuse from their current composting spaces. They play a vital role in transforming this city into livable communities, and losing their existing compost yards will be a huge blow to our city's health.

Best,  
Amy

To the Committee on Sanitation and Solid Waste Management and Committee on Parks and Recreation,

I am urging you not to evict Big Reuse and Lower East Side Ecology Center.

Earlier this year, when curbside compost collection was cut seemingly overnight, it was compost sites that stepped up to fulfill this need. I would go regularly to my local community garden twice a week and there would almost always be a socially distanced line of neighbors - old, young, families, individuals - waiting to deposit their food scraps as well. It was clear a solution for compost collection was desperately needed.

When this garden paused operations because it couldn't keep up with the demand, I watched my compost scraps pile up in my bin and in my freezer. More than that, I felt an essential part of the city's commitment to go green had fallen short.

Compost keeps naturally occurring waste from unnecessarily ending up in landfills or polluting especially poor communities of color. It improves the environment with nutrient rich soil. It creates jobs and sustains communities. Most importantly, it is a strong sign of a thriving climate minded society.

Cutting compost collection and evicting two major compost sites would be indicative that the city is NOT willing to: uphold its climate goals, create green jobs, or preserve infrastructure that benefits poor communities of color. I urge you to allow Big Reuse and Lower East Side Ecology Center to continue operations.

Thank you for your time.

Amy Zhen

To Whom It May Concern:

I had the pleasure of volunteering at the Red Hook Composting site since 2019. Initially, I sought out volunteer work because I wanted to learn more about how the city was tackling food waste and composting seemed like an excellent solution. My first time volunteering at Red Hook Compost was an experience that changed me forever. Aside from learning all of the benefits of composting for the environment, the experience encouraged education, community building, teamwork, and was engaging for the mind and body. The city benefits so much from community composting and many of them in ways that cannot be seen in dollar amounts, but through the development of community and leadership. I love coming out to see the work being done at the site and I know so many other people do as well. I hope that city does its part to not only protect composting but also for the community. In challenging times like these, community matters for the daily lives of New Yorkers.

Best,  
An Nguyen

**From:** Ana Acosta

**Sent:** Sunday, December 13, 2020 2:49 PM

**To:** NYC Council Hearings ; District2

**Subject:** Petition Regarding Composting

To The New York City Council,

I am writing to urge you to maintain and support two composting sites: Reuse's Queensbridge Community Composting Site and LES Ecology Center's Composting in East River Park.

To repurpose these sites is shortsighted. Creating more garbage to send to landfills is not just financially unsound but ecologically unsustainable. One of the city's key priorities should be zero waste.

The city should not just maintain and support these two sites but add many more. There is no justifiable reason to make composting harder. It should be encouraged and made as easy as possible.

Moreover, most New Yorkers support composting and expect elected officials to respond to what their constituents want and consider essential.

Respectfully,

Ana Acosta

December 18, 2020

To the New York City Council,

My name is Andrea Grody, and I am a private citizen of New York who has lived in Astoria, Queens for eight years. I am writing today in support of the Lower East Side Ecology Center and Big Reuse, two fantastic community composting organizations in New York City.

Climate change is my number one concern as a New Yorker and as an American. I am a young woman afraid to have children because I so deeply fear the climate catastrophes they may face and that I know I'm going to face. When I see political inaction and obstinacy in the face of this extremely inconvenient truth, it makes me feel I can't have a family because I can't count on keeping them safe and giving them a good life.

I have been composting ever since I moved to Astoria. This spring, though, the GrowNYC compost bins near where I live were removed due to budget cuts due to COVID-19, and with no compost options near me, I have been forced to stop. I still put my food scraps in the freezer when I cook, and I try to bring them into Manhattan when I can, but that's hard enough to do when there's not a pandemic and I actually feel safe traveling about the city, so most weeks now I have no choice but to throw my food scraps away. I feel ashamed and guilty sending those scraps to a landfill, where I know they'll become dangerous greenhouse gases, when I could have been turning them into next year's fertilizer.

New Yorkers want to be sustainable. They want to help the environment and do the right thing. But they can't do it if the opportunity isn't available to them. Most people don't have the privilege of being able to go to extraordinary lengths to find a compost station, but they would absolutely compost if they could. Organizations like the Lower East Side Ecology Center and Big Reuse make it possible for so many people to compost, and without them, more people like me would be forced to resort to throwing away their food scraps. We have to make it as easy as possible for people to compost because it is one of the most important and impactful ways everyday citizens can help fight climate change.

New York has established itself as a national and global leader in fighting the climate crisis that leaves me so afraid. There will always be other priorities we feel are important. That's why change is hard: the new never feels as important as the old until we're faced with disaster. Well, the disaster is here, and we need to learn how to prioritize in favor of sustainable community living. We don't have another choice. It's not whether we want to: we have to.

Thank you very much.

Andrea Grody  
32-60 38<sup>th</sup> St, 3<sup>rd</sup> Fl, Astoria, NY 11103

# **Why We Need Big Reuse**

**Vinegar Hill Community Garden x Groundcycle**

# Who we are

**Vinegar Hill Community Garden** was built as part of the 2013 Gardens for Healthy Communities program within the Mayor's Obesity Task Force Initiative. The 2,500 square foot garden includes 10+ raised beds for growing vegetables, a rainwater harvesting system, shed, and seating.

**Groundcycle** is an organics micro-hauler who started collecting compost in Brooklyn after the city suspended the brown bin program. With a heavy emphasis on community building, we wanted to offer a public food scrap drop-off for residents who don't have the ability to sign up for a private pickup service.

Together, we've partnered to create a **weekly compost hub** servicing over 100 local residents. In September, we established a critical partnership with **Big Reuse** to scale up our operations and increased our capacity 5X, to ~1,000 lbs per week.

# Our old model

- Small-scale, depended on friends with cars to pick up compost
- Delivered to Gowanus and driven upstate (This is wasteful! Keep the biomass here!)
- 4 bin (small) capacity
- ~200 lbs/week



# The new model (with Big Reuse)

- Part of a large network of food scrap collection sites
- Regular pickups, standardized XL totes
- Local processing, compost comes back to fertilize our garden
- **~1,000 lbs/week, room to expand with more bins**
- We would not be able to expand in this way if it weren't for partnership with Big Reuse



# If Big Reuse is evicted

- Our community of 100+ local residents depends on us for weekly composting service
  - These are committed community members who we've come to know by name and see week over week, rain or shine
- Rolling back our capacity to the Old Model would mean compostables inevitably end up in landfill!
- The opportunity cost of losing one of NYC's only compost processing facilities is immense
- Substantial investment has been made in BR's processing infrastructure. What do we do if this eviction happens?

## CONCLUSION

**NYC Parks leadership needs to step up  
and do the right thing.**

## CONCLUSION

**Community members should not be counted on to donate their time or work out logistical operations. NYC Parks is taxpayer-funded and should serve our needs.**







NYC

Compost Project

Hosted by

BIG  
REUSE

Funded by NYCsanitation



Dear Mayor de Blasio and Parks Commissioner Mitchell Silver,

My name is Andrea Lieske, I have been working at Earth Matter NY on Governors Island for the past 7 years doing compost & zero waste outreach & education as well being part of our operations team that processes over 750 tons annually of NYC organic materials into compost.

I can tell you from firsthand experience how important and necessary the work and services of Big Reuse and the LES Ecology Center are. With no other composting options left in NYC, it took only a few weeks after Public Food Scrap Drop Offs (FSDO) came back in late August that all the community compost facilities, including ours, were close to processing capacity. If anything, New York needs more dedicated community compost spaces not less.

But it is not just the organics recycling capacity that Big Reuse and the LES Ecology Center are providing; it is the connection to the community and the education that these organizations, like ours, are providing. The Climate Emergency is real and education and outreach are essential in addressing it.

Big Reuse and the LES Ecology Center are giants in the environmental & sustainable landscape of New York City, their services is essential and their work needs to happen in public spaces to involve all New Yorkers. What better place than city parks to show the full cycle?

I ask you to please ensure that they can continue to operate in their current location and to officially dedicate 1-2 areas in each borough, including their space, to community composting and education.

Sincerely,

AndreaLieske

Dear City Councilmembers:

I submit here my testimony in support of community composting in city parks.

#### Composting Reduces the Waste Stream

Food scraps and garden waste combined make up more than 28 percent of what we throw away. Not only is food waste a significant burden on the environment, but processing it is costly. As you may know, NYC's budget to export waste is over \$400 million yearly. Composting at home makes sense from not only an economic perspective, but environmental one. NYC has the infrastructure and expertise to maintain a composting program.

#### Cut Methane Emissions From Landfills

Although most modern landfills have methane capture systems, these do not capture all of the gas; landfills are the third-largest source of human-generated methane emissions in the United States.

NYC is well-positioned to spearhead zero-waste strategies to increase composting and recycling to keep waste from being generated in the first place. In 1996, San Francisco established a large-scale composting program, and by 2000 it was able to divert 50 percent of its waste from landfills. By increasing its goals over the years, San Francisco has been diverting more than 80 percent of waste from landfills since 2012. Imagine what results NYC could gain.

#### Improves Soil Health and Lessens Erosion

Compost is an essential tool for improving large-scale agricultural systems. Instead of relying on synthetic fertilizers that contain harmful chemicals, composting offers an organic alternative. Research has shown the capability of compost to increase soil's water retention capacity, productivity, and resiliency.

#### Conserves Water

Water is becoming increasingly difficult to obtain across the country. Research has shown the water-retaining capacities of soil increase with the addition of organic matter. This results in less run off into the city's drains and sewage system.

While NYC is the largest city in the country, it is sadly not on the forefront of progressive policies that save tax dollars and improve people's lives. Adopting a citywide composting program is a no-brainer and only the first step to being a world class city.

Respectfully submitted,  
Andrea Lu



Testimony to Save Big Reuse & Lower East Side Ecology Center's Community Compost Sites  
Committees on Parks and Recreation and Sanitation, Joint Oversight Hearing  
Friday, December 18, 2020 at 11am

From Angela Himself

**I support the nonprofits Big Reuse and the Lower East Side Ecology Center. They provide vital environmental work for the city. Their license agreement for community compost sites must be renewed so they can remain in the Parks. Community composting belongs in Parks.**

The LES Ecology Center site should be built into the East Side Coastal Resiliency Project and moved to temporary space in the interim. LES Ecology Center's license agreement should be renewed and include return to their historical site in the East River Park.

Big Reuse should be allowed to continue composting at their current site and have their license renewed.

These small compost sites are the backbone of the Sanitation Department's newly restored food scrap recycling program - a nimble and already highly popular sustainability program that dozens of City Council members and tens of thousands of committed New Yorkers pushed to fund in this year's budget.

Mayor de Blasio and Commissioner Silver's eviction of the sites not only undermines the City Council funded compost programs, but also the City's greenhouse gas emissions, Zero Waste, and environmental justice goals.

It will result in even more recyclable organic waste being hauled to landfills and incinerators, passing through transfer stations and utilizing waste infrastructure overwhelmingly located in low-income communities and communities of color polluted by particulate matter linked to severe cases of COVID-19. These community compost sites compost the organic waste and use the compost to green New York City, repair our depleted soils and fight climate change.

Over 4,000 letters have been submitted to Parks in support of the sites in addition to letters of support including over 50 community groups. The sites are supported by their local Council Members and Borough Presidents. We urge Mayor de Blasio, Commissioner Silver and our elected officials to listen to the overwhelming public support for these programs and renew the license agreements for our community composting sites. **We should be moving forward in the fight against the climate crisis--not backward.**

**Testimony for Oversight Hearing - Dec. 18, 2020 at 11am**  
**Committee on Sanitation and Solid Waste Management (Jointly with the Committee on Parks and Recreation)**

Subject: Save Composting Sites - LES, Big Reuse and Red Hook

I am dedicated to composting and I believe our City, Sanitation, Parks and Schools should be too. I have vermicomposted at home in my apartment, I have contributed to the NYC Curbside Organics Collection which previously provided an outlet for composting of meats and dairy, unlike many other sites, I have contributed and volunteered at the Red Hook compost site, and I have been found great educational resources from the Lower East Side Ecology Center and Red Hook. I am committed to a lifestyle of saving our community resources, reducing the impact of climate change, and supporting the creating of meaningful work and jobs in our community. I also believe it is the ethical course of action to take.

I implore you to dedicate more time and resources to the growth of composting efforts, which contribute in all these ways noted above. More specifically, I call on the City, Sanitation, and Parks to preserve the community compost sites at the Lower East Side Ecology Center, the Big Reuse and the Red Hook Farms. These three sites have all been doing excellent work to divert waste from landfills, educate the community to multiply these efforts in other day-to-day aspects of life, and creates worthwhile jobs in our city. The pandemic is a poor excuse for taking away at the worst time possible to further penalize at risk communities and take steps backwards in the health and well being of our city and its residents. The pandemic was the catalyst for me to begin vermicomposting at home - but we know that these at-home solutions are not enough. Licenses expiring with no intent of aiding in the relocation and reestablishment of the sites that are doing incredible work for the betterment of our city is a poor excuse. Composting needs to be a community-wide effort. Good habits and good infrastructure have lasting productive benefits for our community and we need to preserve the good that these programs are doing and build upon them, instead of effectively taking them out at the knees. During the pandemic, I have biked to Farmers Markets outside of my immediate neighborhood to drop off compost and recyclables, when services were slashed. These services are important and need to be preserved and grown. The Parks and NYC schools specifically produce so much organic waste and should be at the forefront of these growing efforts, not pulling back when the City most needs this leadership. I ask that you help in the efforts to save the Big Reuse and LES Ecology Compost sites with urgency.

I love this City and want it to thrive. I hope you will take this request into consideration.

Best regards,  
Angeline Leong  
Brooklyn Resident - Boerum Hill

Testimony to Save Big Reuse & Lower East Side Ecology Center's Community Compost Sites  
Committees on Parks and Recreation and Sanitation, Joint Oversight Hearing  
Friday, December 18, 2020 at 11am

**Anika Weiss**

**Member of Prospect Farm in Windsor Terrace, Brooklyn**

**I support the nonprofits Big Reuse and the Lower East Side Ecology Center. They provide vital environmental work for the city. Their license agreement for community compost sites must be renewed so they can remain in the Parks. Community composting belongs in Parks.**

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## SAVE OUR COMPOST - Anita Chan's Testimony

We NEED composting in New York City! We need to allow Big Reuse and LES Ecology Center to not only continue their environmental work, but to help them expand. That cannot be done if we do not secure space for them to process NYC's organic waste and educate New Yorkers about composting being a powerful tool to combat climate change. NYC established many sustainability goals but what we need to do is ACT ON IT.

Composting locally is a direct way to

- reduce greenhouse gas generation through transportation of waste to landfill
- reduce methane gases generated in landfill due to improper conditions for degradation
- create local green jobs in the city
- recycling nutrients to keep NYC soil healthy which helps in mitigating soil contamination, preventing soil erosion, stormwater management, and growing healthy produce in community gardens, and creating lush green spaces to purify air and let New Yorkers have an escape in their backyards.

Several months ago, composting was at risk of coming to a complete halt because it was cut out of the city's budget but composters and allies fought hard which resulted in some of it being restored. Now two of New York City's major composters are going to get evicted on December 31, 2020.

The Parks Department justifies evicting Big Reuse by saying that they signed a three year lease and now the space is required for Parks vehicles and equipment. There is plenty of more space under the Queensboro Bridge that Parks can use yet they are going after the parcel of land Big Reuse is on. Leases can be renewed and this one SHOULD BE.

The Parks Department cannot plan for climate resiliency along the East River in a vacuum. The compost processing and environmental education that LES Ecology Center does in that space IS PART OF CLIMATE RESILIENCY. They cannot be relocated temporarily without concrete plans for their future where they can resume their amazing environmental work and expand on it.

What is even more admirable than someone who can stand their ground is someone who can admit they are wrong and change their decision accordingly to benefit the people and the environment. I plead with Mayor DeBlasio and Parks Commissioner Mitchell Silver to do what is right and support Big Reuse and LES Ecology Center immediately.

Save composting sites!

I am a devoted composter, and I ask that you please ensure that the Big Reuse Compost Site, under the Queensboro Bridge, and the LEC Ecology Center's East River Park compost site -- both facing eviction in 2021 -- remain active! It is essential that their important work can continue: reducing air pollution and waste in the city and fighting climate change.

For these reasons I urge you to see that their licenses for 2021 are renewed!

Looking forward to your response,

Yours,

Ann Bradley  
1235 Park Avenue, Apt. 2C  
New York, NY 10128

Hello,

My name is Anna Poaster. I'm a resident of Astoria and manager of the compost program at Hellgate Farm. Hellgate Farm is an urban production farm based in Western Queens and our public food scrap drop off site collects and processes the food waste (tens of thousands of pounds of waste annually) for hundreds of families in Queens weekly.

Our work would be much more difficult, if not impossible, without the support of BigReUSE's composting site at the Queensboro bridge. The site often provides us with "browns" materials (carbon rich organic materials, such as leaves and wood chips) that are essential to the composting process, helps us sift our finished compost, and acts as a release valve for excess food scraps in the case that our community processing site for food scrap waste is at capacity. They are like a hub to our spoke of community processed organic waste. They are local to our part of Queens and the only other alternative for the kind of support they provide us is the Queens Botanical Garden, 40 minutes away in Flushing. So these are the practical reasons why closing this site will suffocate the efforts to locally process food scrap waste in Queens.

But moreover, closing this site is a giant step backward in efforts to deal with our waste, and in a larger sense our duty to mitigate the climate crisis. Diverting organic waste from landfills so that it can be turned back into soil and used locally is a major way that municipalities can impact their carbon and methane emissions. It is the right thing to do.

Pre-pandemic, compost infrastructure was flourishing in Queens. We should not let a public health crisis contribute to our ongoing environmental one. It doesn't need to be this way. Taking away a lifeline to process organic waste in our local community is completely irresponsible and I urge the Council to take action to stop this from happening.

Sincerely,

Anna Poaster  
Compost & Nursery Manager  
Hellgate Farm

As my dad's daughter I have had a lot of experience with the compost site. When I first started at the compost site I realised how important it meant to people. It was a welcoming place for a lot of people. The way they accepted you whatever age you were and you could enter without applying. One would help the world while getting exercise and sometimes be so relaxed you would forget how much effort you have put in. I would be shoveling away and all my stress would disappear. I would make friends gathering up happiness during sad times. They welcomed me so nicely that I wanted to stay there all day. I felt so proud and grateful to be lucky enough to do a little part in healing the world. It inspired not only me but so many other people to try and stop chemicals. All chemicals do is make it worse. Having a compost site is a way to have fun. One feels that they have helped by bringing clean air to the world and fresh dirt to gardens and farms with every donation. Taking the compost site away would be like taking away people's connections, hard work, cooperation, and hope for the world to be a better place. During COVID 19 it is even harder to be together. So it would be worse because you would be creating some of the last moments together in person. This compost site is important and the world needs it so keep it please to heal the world.

Sincerely,

Annabel Lee Devlin (age 9)

Good afternoon,

I'm writing to express my concern over your plans to pave over the Big Reuse composting site under the Queensboro Bridge.

Composting is an amazing tool that NYers can weild in the fight against global warming and the continued degradation of our environment. Food scraps that we put into landfills get compressed into anaerobic environments; when the food breaks down without oxygen, it creates methane -- a terrible greenhouse gas! Compost is an inexpensive way that NYers can stop contributing to this huge problem.

*When we weigh the health of the environment with the plight of drivers with limited parking in NYC, I think it's pretty clear that the environment wins.* Please dismiss this plan to pave over the composting site. Show NYers that your priorities are with their health and the future of our planet.

Thanks for your consideration,  
Anne Calder  
11217

Anne-Laure Michallet

555 Main St

Roosevelt Island

NY 10044

21 December 2020

To whom it may concern,

Please renew the lease for the Big Reuse and LES Ecology Center for composting in Queens. It is a far more environmentally useful project than more car parking spaces. Diverting food waste from landfill, contributing to the city's parks and green spaces through composting, and making young and old more aware of what they can do for the environmental health of the planet are all big advantages of the compost initiative.

Please reconsider and maintain the lease for the composting site.

Regards,

Anne-Laure Michallet

I am a native New Yorker. My mother is a first generation New Yorker. My grandfather drove a milk and butter truck through Brooklyn. I do not think they composted, but they lived during a time of a lot less waste being produced.

I have heaps of privilege, one relevant to this moment is that i dropped off compost to a nyc grow spot in my neighborhood not really understanding the politics.

When funding was cut I struggled to figure out what to do with my scraps. I could not and would not throw them into the garbage. Community gardens were closed and my options were limited. I volunteered to collect food scraps in June when I realized I couldn't be and wasn't the only one who was exhausted finding alternate ways to "dispose" of my food scraps without disposing of them.

These days we collect about 2k lbs in 2 hours once a week. We used to rent trucks to drive them to Fred who drove a flatbed truck to a farm upstate to ensure our waste wasn't being added to landfills. When bigreuse was able to open back up and start collecting our scraps we were thrilled. Centralized processing of food scraps MAKES SENSE. We need more of these sites because composting should be mandated (like our friends in Europe). A huge part of that is education. I'm not going to get into that now. The point is: this site is a highly functioning location processing 1.5-1.7 million lbs annually. In one year. FOR nyc PARKS.

If we are really thinking ahead, if we care about greenhouse gases and climate change, more than just to drop the buzzword, we need to invest in these sites, not only keep them where they are but to expand and find more locations so we can process more scraps and build the infrastructure to support the education and revolution of mandated composting in our city. In understanding and consciousness. Knowledge is power. Now more than ever. Thank you.

December 19, 2020

Dear Commissioners:

As I'm sure you know, food waste is a huge contributor to our global pollution problem. The City of New York, contributes largely to this issue due to our number of residents and restaurants. When food scraps are sent to landfill, they combine with other waste and plastic bags to form toxic gases that further pollute our air quality and contribute to global warming.

It doesn't have to be this way. Food is fuel. For our bodies, for our livestock and for the Earth itself. When we compost our food scraps, they break down as nature intended; to nourish and feed the next generation of crops. This makes our planet and our food healthier, and our food system more sustainable. Further, diverting food scraps from the trash in my own home leads to a 60% reduction in waste. That is 60% less mass going to landfill and 60% fewer plastic trash bags purchased.

Further, composting in a city as large as ours could lead to additional streams of revenue. States with large farms and low populations could benefit from the purchase of our compost to nourish their crops. It would be advantageous for our officials to explore this option for additional income for the city's coffers.

During this time of economic need, health crisis and climate urgency, we should be prioritizing and expanding this vital program. Composting is a simple, affordable and natural way toward a more sustainable future.

Thank you for your consideration and your service to the greatest city in the world. Let's live up to our title and lead the way on this issue.

Your fellow New Yorker,

Annemarie Rosano

Astoria, NY

To Whom It May Concern:

Previous to Covid-19, I brought my food scraps to compost sites at farmer's markets in Carroll Gardens and Brooklyn Heights every week. The removal of this service has impacted our community greatly.

Food scraps and garden waste combined make up more than [28 percent of what we throw away](#). Not only is food waste a [significant burden on the environment](#), but processing it is costly. The average cost to landfill municipal solid waste in the United States was around [\\$55 per ton](#) in 2019. With the United States generating more than [267 million tons of municipal waste](#) in 2017 and sending two-thirds of that to landfills and incinerators, we spent billions of dollars on waste management. Composting at home allows us to divert some of that waste from landfills and turn it into something practical for our yards.

Composting is an environmental justice issue too. When food waste is not composted, it is often sent to incinerators located primarily in low-income communities and communities of color and burned with trash and fossil fuels. This releases particulates and toxic chemicals into local communities.

Finally, sustainably disposing of organics is critical to achieving New York City's ambitious climate and zero waste goals. Dumping food waste into landfills or incinerators instead of composting them adds to air pollution, accelerates the climate crisis, and will mean that the people who provide these critical composting services will lose their jobs.

Please consider bringing back these critical sites.

Kind Regards,

Antonia Fattizzi

Hi, my name is Antonio Lopez, and I'm in support of the Big Reuse and LES Ecology Center compost programs staying on parkland.

Working at the LES Ecology Center as their development manager, I have seen firsthand what compost does to park soil, the health of street trees, and the overall quality of life for New Yorkers. Moving us out of the East River Park and not welcoming us back would be a big setback to all of the work our founder and executive director, [Christine Datz-Romero](#), has done to lead the way for the city to ultimately provide brown bins.

I also happen to live in the neighborhood, and every time I mention where I work, all of my neighbors talk with such enthusiasm about our compost yard and say how amazing it is to have such a large yet also hyperlocal composting site in such a densely populated area. The same food that my neighbors consume and dispose of properly then goes back to many community gardens in the neighborhood and even parks, like Seward Park and East River Park.

What the city needs are more composting programs that the neighborhood can visit to participate and learn more.

Good day to whoever this reaches,

Today I plea to you to spare consideration for the future generation. Many people claim that 'youth is the change we need', that we have the potential to change the world for the better. No longer should that selfish burden be placed on my fellow peers. It is disrespectful to expect so much from those who have been given so little to work with. It is offensive not to hold those in positions of power accountable for their actions and influence in the youth's and future generations' futures. We no longer ask, we demand that the City Council continue funding composting programs. We urge you to extend composting into ALL schools and homes citywide, with generous focus on public housing and BIPOC communities. Not only have we been left out of the conversation, we have been deserted in this campaign to save our compost, to save our Mother Earth.

The two community nonprofit composting programs (Lower East Side Ecology Center in East River Park and Big Reuse under the Queensboro Bridge in Long Island City) planned to be evicted have assisted the City's greenhouse gas reduction, zero waste and environmental justice goals. They have single handedly helped decrease the greenhouse gases production from the city that the City Council had promised its people to do, but have regardless initiated and supported proposals that have done the exact opposite. Threatening the existence of these mere, essential programs is a disservice to the community promised to be protected, to be taken in consideration every step of the way.

Being a member of the BIPOC community, a youth in public schooling, a teenager personally committed to zero waste and veganism, I testify to you. However, I hope you do not consider this as a personal out-speaking, but an outreach to you on behalf of everyone who you will be affecting by committing to this proposal before you. Attending a NYC DOE school in Brooklyn, living in Queens, utilizing NYC city parks on a daily to remind myself of some hope despite seeing no composting drop-off site in my neighborhood, I unfortunately know very well the effects of 'not caring' for our environment, whether at the hands of the City or citizens.

Nevertheless, it would be dishonest of me not to continue believing in the potential you, the City Council, everyone on this Earth can have in saving a lovely planet as ours. I, along with The Brooklyn Latin School Eco Club and Cafeteria Culture Youth Advocate organization, truly hope that after the oversight hearing, after reading this testimony and various others from fellow peers/citizens/humans, that you may be a voice that advocates for the future generation. Below you will find additional testimonies, gathered by my fellow advocate Fariha Haider, from the aforementioned organizations that may help you in your ultimate decision; I hope you find the time to take a look and read the words of my peers.

Thank you for your time, I hope to hear of your decision soon.

With a warm heart,

Ariana Alonso

## **Statements from students who have volunteered with Big Reuse:**

Matthew Chu, Senior at The Brooklyn Latin High School:

"I don't think the parks department should evict Big Reuse. Being one of the largest community processing sites in NYC, Big Reuse has introduced recycling and reuse to construction and demolition waste in a city where its construction and demolition industry throws away nearly 7,000,000 tons of building materials annually. Without any way of recycling or reuse, these materials end up accumulating in landfills which have been a significant source of pollution due to the large abundance of trash that the city generates, causing millions of tons of greenhouse gas emissions each year. Through Big Reuse, such materials are diverted away from landfills and are instead salvaged to then be reintroduced into the market which reduces the city's artificial need for more materials to be manufactured. Moreover, Big Reuse promotes composting in NYC which can significantly reduce how much trash ends up in landfills. As of the moment, not many New Yorkers have the incentive to compost, but after the day that I was able to volunteer with Big Reuse, I saw how impactful the actions of a single individual can be when I was volunteering with Big Reuse. Though the volunteering experience lasted for only a couple hours, I saw how I was able to fill more than 10 Lawn & Reuse bags full of dried leaves and how people who were simply walking in the park were interested in raking leaves as well. By the end of the day I learned that any individual can contribute to the reduction of the city's waste production by simply recycling at home or coming out on a Sunday morning to rake leaves to be given away for composting. From then on I felt inspired to find ways that I can be responsible as a member of my community to recycle in any way that I can so that my family would be 1 less household filling up the landfills and I think that with Big Reuse, many New Yorkers can be inspired to recycle and would be more environmentally conscious about the amount of trash they generate."

Rebeca Sabnam, Senior at The Brooklyn Latin School, Lower East Side Resident:

My name is Rebeca Sabnam. I am a Lower East Side Resident, NYC DOE highschooler, and Youth Advocate for Cafeteria Culture, and I strongly urge the city Council to continue funding composting in NYC. I'm testifying because evicting composting is only a step back in the wrong direction. Because evicting composting means denying frontline communities the environmental justice they deserve. As a Bangladeshi youth, I already know the horrible realities that Bangladeshi people face back home as a result of the climate Crisis. And now essential composting sites run by my neighborhood, practically in my own backyard, are now on the verge of being shut down, and I refuse to see that happen. Evicting composting means increased greenhouse gas and pollution from all compostable waste (Food scraps and organics make up one third of our trash) that are just being dumped into landfills. And who is going to be affected the most? Low income, black , and brown communities. In the middle of a pandemic, where people are already vulnerable to health issues, evicting composting is a dangerous thing to do. It's not only just a waste of the public funds invested to make these sites (and a waste of the City residential and school organics collection, and other DSNY services designed to reduce sending waste to landfills), but it tells these frontline communities that the city does not care about them. If the city cares about Black, brown, and low income communities, if the city cares about its youth, City Council MUST continue funding composting and resume it in ALL schools city wide (especially public housing and BIPOC communities that were excluded). Now is your chance to show us you are on our side.

Arianna Gutierrez  
20 River Rd #21A  
New York NY 10044

December 14, 2020

To whom it may concern,

Please keep the Big Reuse Compost processing at the Queensbridge location.  
This is such a huge help for me and my family in reducing my household waste and attempting to live more sustainably in such a large city.

Roosevelt Island in particular is already cut off from many other areas of the NYC, that if we cannot keep the Big Reuse Compost, it would significantly compromise our community's efforts to live more sustainably.

Please extend the Big Reuse Compost's stay on Roosevelt Island.  
They play an important role in the community.

Warm regards,

Arianna Gutierrez

12/18/20

To whom it may concern,

I've lived in East Williamsburg for 5 years now. In the beginning my building had its own compost bins which I assumed the city would take and it was great to be able to dispose of waste efficiently and ecologically.

I later started using the composting site at Domino Park, McCarren park and Cooper Park. I rely on these community initiatives to properly dispose of organic waste which makes a positive impact on the environment and on the city.

The city should not only be supporting all the compost initiatives but actually invest more for the city to become greener and more livable.

Thanks a lot!

Ariel Cheszes

To Whom It May Concern:

I am a resident of Hell's Kitchen in New York City and have lived here for 10 years. About 5 years ago or so I became very interested in composting and the extreme benefits it has on the planet; I've been an active user of the city's composting collection sites ever since.

At the beginning of the pandemic all city composting services were suspended; an action that I found horrifying. Currently, I use the drop off site at the park between 47<sup>th</sup> st & 9<sup>th</sup>/10<sup>th</sup> Ave but the collection days are only between 9am – 12pm Saturday, Sunday & Monday. These hours are so limited; how are people supposed to actively participate in this system when the city isn't investing in this service in a serious way?

Furthermore, I am equally horrified that the city wants to eliminate the compost sites in the East River Park and under the Queensboro Bridge in Long Island City. These sites are essential services.

I am sick of this city saying that it takes climate change seriously yet its actions suggest otherwise. Composting is a major and direct way to combat climate change; it's something that can't wait.

I implore you to take climate change seriously and reinstate the composting programs; any actions in contrast to that would be further proof that our elected officials are not willing to take large, long term actions to help the future of both this city and our planet.

Thank you,  
Ashley Perkins

## Testimony of **ASHOOK RAMSARAN**

December 16, 2020

To the attention of:

Members of NYC Council Committee on Parks and Recreation  
NYC Committee on Parks and Recreation Hearing on Dec 17, 2020

Ref: **Pandit Ramlall Way** T2020-6964

Co-Naming 1 block of 133rd Street between Liberty Ave & 105th Ave in Queens

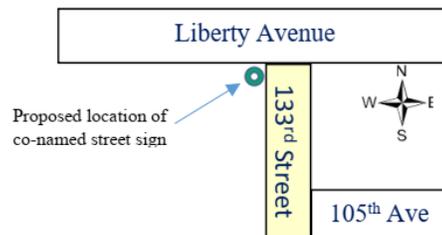
We are seeking your approval for co-naming 1 block of 133rd Street between Liberty Ave & 105th Ave in Queens as **Pandit Ramlall Way**, in honor of the late Dharmacharya Pandit Ramlall, a selfless and avid community advocate, who passed away on January 26, 2019 in Queens, New York at the age of 91 years.

There is overwhelming community board, community residents, religious, business and organizational support for this application (over 5,000 signatures, dozens of letters of support and petitions submitted), in particular the Arya Spiritual Center of New York (ASC-NY) founded by the late Dharmacharya Pandit, the same being extensively used for various community events, including the annual Gandhi Peace March, Diwali Parade, Ramayana in the Park, etc. ASC-NY is located at 104-36 133<sup>rd</sup> Street in Ozone Park where we are seeking to co-name the 1 block of 133<sup>rd</sup> Street between Liberty Ave and 105<sup>th</sup> Avenue.

As can be seen from his extensive biography, the late Dharmacharya Pandit Ramlall was a well-respected iconic spiritual leader and scholar, a pioneering community advocate who has been recognized locally and internationally for his life-long community service. He founded the annual Phagwah (Holi) Parade in New York and Queens Borough President declared March 23, 2003 at “**Pandit Ramlall Day**”. He was indeed a tremendous asset to the community with a lifetime of service to spirituality, justice and freedom.



133<sup>rd</sup> Street between Liberty Ave & 105<sup>th</sup> Ave  
Ozone Park, Queens, New York



All protocols and procedures for the application filing, meeting with CM Adrienne Adams, community board members, and other supporters have been diligently followed.

Queens is the most diverse community and the late Dharmacharya Pandit Ramlall represented the best and brightest among us. Our community eagerly looks forward to this New York City Council's approval.

With appreciation,

**Ashook Ramsaran**

Committee for Co-naming 1 block of 133rd Street between Liberty Ave & 105th Ave, Queens  
In honor of the late Dharmacharya Pandit Ramlall

Email: [AshookRamsaran@Gmail.com](mailto:AshookRamsaran@Gmail.com) Cell: 1-917-519-5783



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Post Office Box 650523 New York 11365 USA

cc: NYC Council Member Adrienne Adams

## **Testimony in favor of renewing leases for BIG REUSE and LES ECOLOGY CENTER composting facilities**

My name is Aurore Stanek-Griffiths. I am a very concerned citizen. We are in a very severe climate crisis, and so many New-Yorkers are struggling right now. Why would the City and the park department evict two major community composting sites? They help us reduce greenhouse gas emissions, provide green jobs and education; they are a place of community, which is pretty much the last resource that many of us can turn to during these extremely difficult times. Why would you stop this? I always try to understand different perspectives, but what are the parks' and city's on this one?

We need to compost, this is an essential environmental solution, and we are running out of time to avoid the worst of the climate crisis. We need NYC to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions. When organics go to the landfill, the methane they emit there is much worse than CO<sub>2</sub>. It worsens the urban island heat effect and global warming (sea-level rise will be a significant issue in the decades to come for NYC, a problem among many others linked to the climate crisis). We can not afford to pollute more. We need to act; we need a green and resilient city where it is possible to live healthily.

We are in deep need of the community. A lot of us are socially, financially, and emotionally struggling. Community helps. It is the way we are here for each other.

Community composting is a win-win.

Big Reuse and LES Ecology Center are two major actors of community composting. Evicting them would leave New-Yorkers with nearly no possibility to recycle organics.

Please, do what is right. There are no legal issues for these sites to keep serving the community on Parks' land. We need to process our organics in NYC. This is why I am in the resounding support of Big Reuse, and LES Ecology Center community composting sites keep operating on Parks' land, where they belong.

I would add that composting is scalable; each park should compost. I compost in my little patio thanks to worms. No park is too small; no effort is too small. We are in this together. It is the responsibility of everyone, especially Parks' and City's.

Let Big Reuse and LES Ecology Center community composting operate on parks' land.

Dear friends,

I have always been fascinated with compost - watching organic materials decay into rich usable soil and reducing the amount of garbage I produce.

I helped campers (almost all native New Yorkers) create a composting system at Beam Camp in New Hampshire - saw how proud they were to be reducing waste and tending to their compost as they would to a garden.

My 13 year old son and I volunteered year round at Earth Matter on Governor's Island and loved having goats and chickens and rabbits as fellow composters there. It was amazing to handle the bins arriving from the city - the fancy bread from Tom Cat bakery, the Halloween pumpkins, the random grapes that were our chicken friends' favorites.

I think composting (and recycling) is an important hands on experience for young New Yorkers. The Lower East Side Ecology Center and the Big Reuse make that happen, and it would be a tragedy to lose them.

I am writing as a resident of East Harlem. We have just one community garden that is accepting compost. It was a terrible loss to us when the curbside program was suspended. I live in a 200 unit building and it was interesting to see how building-wide composting took hold, winning over skeptics. Neighbors and staff who are from other countries commented that this was how things were done "back home".

I hope the Big Reuse and the Lower East Side Ecology Center will be allowed to continue doing the good work they have been doing all along. They are deserving of our support.

I also hope that the curbside program will be brought back. It was such a step forward for the city.

Respectfully yours,

Ayun Halliday  
1270 5th Ave 7D  
NY NY 10029

Dare to Be Heinie. **Read [the East Village Inky](#)**

Δ

[Theater of the Apes](#) **HUMAN SEE, HUMAN DO**

I am writing this in unconditional support of the composting programs in New York City. Ever since I moved my permanent residence here over the summer, I have been more than thrilled to find compost dropoff locations all over the city, making it incredibly easy for me to do my part in saving the environment. I compost because it's an easy way to make an impact. The buildup of organic materials like banana peels, egg shells, and coffee grounds in landfills is something easily avoidable since these are materials that are easy to separate out in the home, and can be recycled back into the earth. The process of composting brings me back down to earth and connects me to my community. It's something invaluable to me. I proudly reserve a quarter of my minimal freezer space for my food scraps, and then once a week, I make the trek to visit the local compost dropoff zone. It's such a pleasure to interact with my community in this way, especially in the midst of a pandemic that has left us all feeling more isolated than ever.

I implore you to keep putting funding into these programs. Things such as compost drop-off zones and community gardens are the things that keep NYC strong. As representatives of the people, I would hope that you would want what is best for the people and the community.

Thank you!

City Council Meeting Testimony December 18, 2020

Composting is an important component to combat climate change. With the city losing foresight of the benefits of composting and cancelling the organic waste collection, it's horrible that of all city departments the NYC Parks Department wants to close 2 composting sites.

The Queenboro Bridge lease expires on December 31, 2020. As Joni Mitchell sang "Take paradise and put up a parking lot" it would be greatly appreciated if the department could wait a year until the city restores organic collection. I have seen the recycling that people like me grateful to have a place to drop compostable food on Sundays at McGorlick Park in Brooklyn. There are a lot of people who will be disappointed that it is gone next spring.

The Lower East Side Recycling Center is being displaced by a project that the community did not want. The Parks Department told them they had to move for the project but there no place for their recycling project.

I am very disappointed in the Parks Department not realizing what harm they will do if both these services are gone. Please stand by your roots of fairness and looking to help the environment by extending the lease of the Bridge site and relocating the Lower East Side Recycling Center composting site.

My name is Barbara McClung and I live on the Lower East Side. I have been composting at the **Lower East Side Ecology Center** site since it opened.

Since my co-op, East River Housing Corporation, doesn't have a composting program, I had made it my happy business to cross over the FDR Drive to make sure my scraps were put to good use. In our family, separating our food scraps for composting has become second nature and has been a source of pride and self respect.

As Governor Cuomo, earlier this year, talked about "reimagining" our state, I find it incomprehensible that community composting should be terminated and unfunded. We've already done it—let's "imagine" even bigger and better. As we are all concerned about the vitality of our dear New York City, this program, too, is on behalf of the health and future of the city and every New Yorker.

As a science educator in the NYC public schools for over 30 years, I always quoted to my students the words of Edmund Burke (1729-1797) "Nobody made a greater mistake than he who did nothing because he could do only a little." And I've tried to live by that.

Let's do it!

Sincerely,

**Barbara S. McClung**  
**457 FDR Drive, A1206**  
**NYC 10002**

To the Honorable NYC Council Members:

I am writing to you today as a volunteer of the Save Our Compost Coalition and as one of the millions of New Yorkers who have benefited from the city's municipal composting programs. When I lived in Elmhurst, my household was one of the lucky participants of the brown bin organics collection program—and I say lucky because as of 2018 I had hoped that all New Yorkers would have had access to this program as promised by Mayor Bill de Blasio. Unfortunately, municipal composting has faced a huge setback due to COVID-related budget cuts and reallocation of funds away from the Department of Sanitation.

My household and I used to put our trash cans out two times a week when residential curbside pick-up occurred, but thanks to the organics collection program, that significantly reduced. We understood that as civil society members, we too could make a difference and take climate action. We too could help the city reach its zero waste goals!

I started volunteering with the Save Our Compost coalition and was so ecstatic to help mobilize the community and successfully advocate for a modest amount of funding to preserve community composting. All of my efforts and my fellow NYC community members' efforts should not go in vain. We appreciate the work of the NYC Compost Project partner organizations and are in full support of Big Reuse and LES Ecology Center.

I visited Big Reuse last weekend and saw what a monumental contribution they are making in fighting climate change, just in my borough alone! They are not only processing residents' organics, but also processing NYC Parks' yard waste as well. Additionally, a significant portion of the finished compost goes *back* to NYC Parks. I am incredibly disappointed and disheartened that NYC Parks Commissioner Mitchell Silver claims to be a proponent of composting but is willing to use an irrelevant ruling to impede our city's climate change mitigation efforts.

Similarly, the LES Ecology Center has run a community composting program in East River Park for over two decades, but Parks is unwilling to commit parkland for community based composting and is refusing to extend their license or make commitments for the return of their programs after the East Side Coastal Resiliency Project is completed. I want to know how this makes sense, considering this is supposed to be a climate resiliency project. It makes perfect sense to me that composting sites should always be present where there is park land.

I hope you will take my words as a lifelong New Yorker and environmental justice activist to heart, as well as the hundreds (and hopefully thousands) of testimony that will be submitted in support of Big Reuse and LES Ecology Center. Please do not let NYC Parks and Commissioner Silver derail all of the progress we've made to keep community composting alive. Please renew their leases effective immediately so the community and NYC can continue to benefit from their services and free programming!

Best,  
Belinda Chiu  
Queens, NY (District 19)

Dear City Council,

Compostable organics amount to one third of New York City's household trash and disposing of it sustainably is critical to achieving the City's ambitious climate and zero waste goals.

Yet, since funding for curbside compost collection and community composting drop off services was drastically cut in New York City's budget, two community composting organizations -- the Lower East Side Ecology Center and Big Reuse -- face possible eviction by the New York City Parks Department.

I ask that you reach out to the Parks Department and direct the Commissioner to find a way to accommodate the Lower East Side Ecology Center and Big Reuse's operations in City parklands.

When food waste is not composted, it is often sent to incinerators located primarily in low-income communities and communities of color and burned with trash and fossil fuels. This releases particulates and toxic chemicals into local communities and in some cases, they even drift back into New York City.

Composting is just too important for our environment, our health, and our economy -- please take action to protect the future of the Lower East Side Ecology Center and Big Reuse's composting services in New York City parks.

Sincerely,

Ben Anagnos

P.S. I have been separating organic waste for decades and happily helped my building join the DSNY program three years ago. It only makes sense to divert this valuable resource from landfills and turn a cost to the city into a benefit to us all. Thanks!

Benjamin Anagnos  
(917) 721-7218  
[benjaminanagnos.com](http://benjaminanagnos.com)  
[altaipsum.com](http://altaipsum.com)  
he/him/his

Hello Parks Commissioner Silver and Mayor de Blasio,

My name is Ben Croze. I am writing today to express my deep concern about plans to evict Big Reuse from their Queensbridge site and the uncertain future of operating space being given to LES Ecology Center. According to New York Lawyers for the Public Interest there is no legal reason that these two organizations must lose their leases and cease operations.

New York City must prioritize organics collection in order to meet our zero waste and climate goals. Before this year, our city was making major advances in our waste management, empowering New Yorkers to take personal action to better our environment. As someone who worked at food scrap drop-off sites and composting facilities across the city I can personally tell you that enthusiasm around these programs has never been greater.

Composting is one of the best ways each of us can mitigate negative impacts on our environment. Diverting organic waste away from landfills reduces greenhouse gas emissions, properly cycles nutrients back to the soil, and promotes sustainable farming practices that further sequester carbon.

Evicting Big Reuse and LES Ecology Center will have negative effects on our city's public health and environment - specifically in low-income areas and in communities of color.

What is the point of setting environmental and zero waste goals if we plan to defund and evict community based organizations dedicated to these very things?

We cannot afford to reverse progress on the issue of climate change - especially in a case where simple steps can be taken to allow established organizations to continue working towards positive climate goals.

I am asking you to renew Big Reuse's license agreement to continue operating at the Queensbridge site. I also ask that LES Ecology Center be given a temporary home during the ESCR project and a permanent home in the East River Park thereafter.

Sincerely,

Ben Croze

Composting is really important to me and to my family. We feel good when we save our vegetable scraps, knowing that they could be converted to compost and in that way promote sustainability. It is deeply troubling to imagine that they would go to a landfill to emit greenhouse gasses and contribute to global pollution, PLEASE support composting in NYC!

Benjamin Orlove

*Testimony submitted by Mary Ann Bennett before the New York City Council  
Hearing held by Committee on Sanitation and Solid Waste Management  
Jointly with the Committee on Parks and Recreation  
December 18, 2020*

My name is Mary Ann and I am a resident of District 40 in Flatbush, Brooklyn. I volunteer with Nurture BK Compost which organizes a weekly food scrap dropoff in my neighborhood.

Composting is important to me because climate change is real and affects all of our communities. I made a commitment to live a more sustainable life and reducing waste is an important part of that. A lot can be done to reduce waste, but composting has been the easiest sustainable lifestyle change I've made in New York.

Taking action against climate change means not only reducing waste, but also reversing our effect. Composting offers an opportunity to give back to the environment. Big Reuse, which is where my food scraps go to, gives their compost to community gardens and parks across the city.

Every week at Nurture BK we've seen our community grow as more people make the decision to start composting, or restart after they realize they have a place where their scraps can go again. This gives me hope that we are expanding a community and building future generations committed to reducing and reversing climate change. Taking away community composting sites, like Big Reuse, is a step backwards. It prevents other organizations like ours from being able to start up or intake more scraps.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak before you today about an organization and process that is important to my community.

## **Testimony by Billy Freeland before the Committee on Parks and Recreation and the Committee on Sanitation and Solid Waste Management.**

**Delivered on December 18, 2020 and submitted in writing on December 21, 2020**

### **Save Composting on Roosevelt Island and in New York City**

Thank you Chair Koo, Chair Reynoso, and members of the Committees. My name is Billy Freeland. I first want to thank Saira Pannu and Justin Greenberg, two high schoolers in my community on the Upper East Side, who are passionate about this topic and helped me prepare for today. I want to tell you how the eviction of the Queensbridge composting site will hurt my neighbors, and the broader ramifications for our climate and food security.

I have been a volunteer with the Haki Compost Collective on Roosevelt Island. Haki provides a place for Roosevelt Island residents to drop off their food scraps, which are then picked up by our composting partner, Big Reuse, and processed at their Queensbridge composting site. If Big Reuse is evicted, finding a new partner would pose significant challenges in light of July's budget cuts to compost transportation and curbside pickups. It would be devastating to the entire composting community, and it is possible that the Haki Compost Collective would have to put their collection of food scraps on halt.

We must also consider that any new site would be relatively far away from Roosevelt Island, which is already isolated from much of Manhattan and Queens. It is possible that the emissions generated from hauling the scraps a greater distance would cancel out, and outweigh, the emissions saved from composting. Crucially, the island has a large elderly and disabled population, for whom traveling over a bridge or under the East River to find a far-off composting site is simply not feasible. That burden becomes even greater on days like the most recent weekend, December 19 and 20, 2020, when there was no direct F train service from Roosevelt Island to Manhattan.

More broadly, we must talk about what this means for climate and food insecurity.

Climate change is a global emergency and a key driver of economic hardship and environmental damage worldwide. Less well-known is the role composting can play in addressing this crisis. Municipal solid waste landfills are the third-largest source of human-related methane emissions in the United States, accounting for approximately 15.1 percent of these emissions in 2018,<sup>1</sup> the second-biggest factor of global warming. Organic wastes, such as food waste, make up 25% to 50% of what people throw away.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>[https://www.epa.gov/lmop/basic-information-about-landfill-gas#:~:text=Methane%20Emissions%20from%20Landfills,-Note%3A%20All%20emission&text=Municipal%20solid%20waste%20\(MSW\)%20landfills,of%20these%20emissions%20in%202018.](https://www.epa.gov/lmop/basic-information-about-landfill-gas#:~:text=Methane%20Emissions%20from%20Landfills,-Note%3A%20All%20emission&text=Municipal%20solid%20waste%20(MSW)%20landfills,of%20these%20emissions%20in%202018.)

<sup>2</sup><http://lessismore.org/materials/72-benefits-of-composting/#:~:text=Composting%20Reduces%20Waste,down%20on%20your%20overall%20trash.>

Composting<sup>3</sup> can significantly cut down this organic waste production, which would otherwise be burned in these landfills, significantly reducing New York's carbon footprint. Furthermore, studies have shown that plants grow more rapidly in soil supplemented with compost, meaning they reduce carbon dioxide in the atmosphere and increase the air quality.

NYC residents produce more than 14 million tons of trash every year,<sup>4</sup> and send approximately 26,000 tons per day to landfills.<sup>5</sup> Our residential recycling rate is 18%. By contrast, Seattle has a 57% recycling rate and sends just 0.81 pounds of waste to landfills per person every day.<sup>6</sup> We must do better.

Composting can also impact New York's growing problem of food insecurity. Nearly 1.1 million New York City residents, or 12.9 percent, are food insecure.<sup>7</sup> New York City residents make up half of all food insecure people living in New York State. Research shows a strong positive correlation between composting and food security. Composting promotes higher yields of agricultural crops which will allow more healthy foods to be available in the markets. Additionally, gardeners in low-income communities can access high quality soil from compost for urban vegetable gardening.

In September 2015, for the first time, both the USDA and the EPA recognized that composting could help increase economic development and job growth by turning food waste into financial opportunity.<sup>8</sup> Recycling and composting creates an expansion in green jobs. If the U.S. reaches a recycling rate of 75% by 2030, researchers predict that 1.1 million new jobs will be created,

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<sup>3</sup> Composting is the natural process of decomposition and recycling of organic material that results in a rich and luxurious soil. Certain food wastes such as vegetable peelings, fruit waste, teabags, plant prunings and grass cuttings are composted into a nutritious and sustaining soil which can be used for gardening, landscaping, urban agriculture and organic farming.

<sup>4</sup><https://www1.nyc.gov/site/sustainability/codes/waste.page#:~:text=Top%20line%3A%20Sending%20zero%20waste%20to%20landfills%20by%202030&text=New%20York%20City%20produces%20more,pollutes%20our%20streets%20and%20waterways.>

<sup>5</sup><https://www.city-journal.org/html/garbage-gridlock-12673.html#:~:text=Each%20year%20New%20York's%20residents,more%20than%202%2C500%20garbage%20trucks.>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.epa.gov/transforming-waste-tool/zero-waste-case-study-seattle.>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.foodbanknyc.org/research/reports/#:~:text=Nearly%201.1%20million%20New%20York,the%20New%20York%20State%20rate.>

<sup>8</sup><https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/nutritionsource/sustainability/food-waste/#:~:text=On%20September%2016%2C%202015%2C%20both,security%20and%20conserve%20natural%20resources.>

this rate is 9 times higher than future jobs created by landfills and incinerators.<sup>9</sup> Composting actually allows for a reduction in solid waste disposal fee, helps close the food waste loop by returning it back to agriculture, and furthers business profits as they can market their establishment as environmentally conscious and one that assists local farmers and the community.

Composting has been nationally recognized as a critical driver for healthier, more sustainable communities. Throughout the country, hundreds of communities have instituted residential food scrap collection programs, a stunning increase over the past 10-15 years.<sup>10</sup> Countless supermarkets, schools, restaurants, and other businesses and institutions are also a prominent source, separating their food scraps for composting. New York, a leader in so many areas, must now demonstrate its leadership on this important environmental and economic issue.

In closing, composting is an integral part of the fight against the climate crisis and food insecurity, and is crucial to building a vibrant, green, 21st Century economy. If we are determined to better our city, combat climate change, and improve our individual and collective health and well-being, closing down composting sites is not the answer. Rather, we must expand composting sites, food scrap drop-off sites, and the budget for composting—including curbside pickup and community composting—in New York City. If we makes these priorities and embrace innovative solutions, we will be better for it in ways that numbers alone cannot convey.

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<sup>9</sup>[https://harmony1.com/recycling-industry-creates-jobs/#:~:text=Ecocycle.org%20cites%20that%20a,\(via%20Ecocycle.org\).](https://harmony1.com/recycling-industry-creates-jobs/#:~:text=Ecocycle.org%20cites%20that%20a,(via%20Ecocycle.org).)

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.biocycle.net/subscriber-exclusive-residential-food-waste-collection-access-u-s-complete-report/>; <https://www.biocycle.net/state-of-composting-in-the-u-s/>.

TESTIMONY — December 21, 2020

New York City needs to aggressively support composting. For the City to be closing composting sites down is wrong-headed— the total opposite of what we should be doing. NYC should be a leader, not a massive failure. San Francisco puts NYC to shame on this issue. NYC needs to scale up, educate, regulate, and lead.

"About 41% of the space in landfills can be attributed to organic waste, which includes [food scraps](#) and yard trimmings. When organic waste is disposed into landfills, methane gas is produced. Methane is a powerful [greenhouse gas](#), 34 more times effective at trapping heat than Carbon Dioxide (CO2)."

I'm no scientist, but between the plastics we're dumping into our environment and the harmful gases we're releasing, we're on a path to destroy the world we depend on.

New York City government must act responsibly and work with its citizens on this issue to do what's right — and do that right now! Tomorrow's coming and we need to make sure it's not a nightmare for our children and the generations to come.

Brad Manier  
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Hello members of the New York City Council. My name is Brendan MacWade, and I am a resident of Inwood, Manhattan. I've been here for 15 years. For 10 years before that I was a resident of Sunset Park, Brooklyn.

I just want to report that the city composting program appears to be a huge success. People who never thought of composting -myself included- now go out of their way to compost organic waste. When the program launched in city parks and farmers markets, my wife and I gave it a try and loved the benefits of reducing landfill waste from our apartment. During the pandemic, we missed the program, and the plans for residential pickup that are now on-hold. We don't really need a compost container for our building. We're happy to walk to composting sites. In Inwood, we have two: the Inwood greenmarket every Saturday morning, and a composting bin at Public School 5 Ellen Lurie. Both of these sites are within walking distance to our home. For us composting is a way to reduce landfill waste and get a few more miles of walking exercise per week.

So please, I implore you, despite the budget shortfall, despite the bleak economic outlook, keep this program going. The city will one day recover. I think it would be more expensive to suspend and then restart the program years later. The demand seems to be there. Thousands of New Yorkers are using it every week. Let's keep it going. Thank you.

--

Brendan MacWade

brendan.macwade@gmail.com

Sent from my Lenovo ThinkPad c13 Yoga Chromebook

12/19/2020

Hello,

I am writing to request that you renew the Big Reuse's License and build the Lower East Side Ecology Center into the East Side Coastal Resiliency Project. This would require moving their composting site to a temporary location over the course of construction. Promoting an environmentally friendly and sustainable lifestyle in our great city should be a priority of the highest importance. As we see the early stages of climate change taking effect across our country and the world abroad, it is critical that we emphasize support for programs that take steps towards reducing our footprint.

I have lived in New York for many years and have seen how availability of programs like these grows, the more energy and awareness they create. Living an environmentally friendly lifestyle takes encouragement. Composting is a simple and effective way to turn food waste into a useful resource while simultaneously reducing the waste stored in our landfills. Limiting or reducing our communities access to these programs will inherently increase our carbon footprint. Beyond the toll these landfills take on our environment, excess waste has increasingly affected lower income communities. This exacerbates deeply ingrained social injustices and reflects poorly on our city.

New York should be seen as a city that leads our country by taking action. Climate change is an undeniable threat that we need to meet with action. Social injustice needs to be met with action. The city has set goals to meet net zero emissions and waste, while also emphasizing support for local communities. Yet, impairing our composting programs is in direct contradiction of these stated ambitions. Please take action by allowing Big Reuse and the LES Ecology Center to continue influencing our communities in a positive and productive way.

Sincerely,

Brian Haydon  
150 E 7th St, Apt B7  
NY, NY 10009

## Compost City Council Testimony 12/18/20

My name is Brian Thompson. I am a Brooklyn resident of 20+ years, Compost Team member of Prospect Heights Community Farm (the Farm) and a long time composter who sees the far ranging value of composting not only for myself personally but for my immediate community, my city and the ecosystem at large. As you are likely aware, composting diverts organic waste from the waste stream saving the city from having to process that waste, cuts methane emissions from landfills, improves soil health and reduces erosion, conserves water and reduces the amount of food waste we all create.

Soon after the city shut down in response to Covid-19 in early March 2020, the city cut 90% of the compost budget, eliminating curbside brown pale pickups as well as an extensive, citywide network of pilot programs via GrowNYC which provided alternative food scrap drop sites at green markets and subway stations. Suddenly, conscientious New Yorkers committed to composting quickly found themselves with little to no options to keep their own house in order let alone continue their efforts to contribute towards the City's ambitious goal of sending zero waste to landfills by 2030.

Following the guidance of the city and state government, the Farm closed our gates to visitors as well as to composting both for members and the community at large. Compost volunteers soon reinstated member composting and shortly thereafter, initiated a pilot program to collect food scraps from the community at the front gate, masked and socially distanced. Instantly popular and soon beyond our 4 bin system's capacity to process, we quickly found partners, in NatureBased and then in BigReuse, as overflow sites for the food scraps collected from the community. Through this effort, the Farm has collected more food scraps in 6 months time than we would normally in a calendar year, not only diverting organic material from the waste stream but as importantly, providing an immeasurable service to the community.

Now BigReuse faces eviction from one or more compost processing sites by the city via the Parks Dept which claims it is not within their mission to support composting yet whose parks benefit from composting citywide. This will have a domino effect, potentially forcing the Farm to turn away the 150+ people and nearly 1000 lbs of food scraps collected each week as a participating member of the NYC Compost Project, a model public private partnership between the city and non profit pioneer, BigReuse. Rather than compartmentalize our roles, I call on Parks to support BigReuse and consider themselves part of a family, a city family of agencies, communities and people who all must work together to raise the quality of life for all of us.

Sincerely, Brian L. Thompson

Why is composting important to me? As someone whose job is to make waste as a packaging engineer it is also my job to find the best possible way to reduce what waste will end up in the landfills. Throughout my career, I have learned that the best possible solution to eliminating waste is making it as easy as possible for the consumer to be able to make the more sustainable decisions.

Truthfully, the current process of composting is not as seamless and easy but even so it is still important to the community. I used to go do a weekly drop off at the library but some days it would become cumbersome to go out of my way west to the library on 14<sup>th</sup>. As winter came, I started going less and less due to the cold and the weather. Once Covid hit and everything shut down it was even more difficult to compost. I was happy when the Astoria pug took it upon himself to start setting up composting for the community here. When the process first started, it was a lot more difficult for the Pug and those volunteers but it seems as Big Reuse has become involved to process has become much easier and seamless. It has also been encouraging each week to see more and more people heading to and from the bins dropping off their compost. The amount of collection has been able to increase thanks to the help from Big Reuse.

The best part about composting to me is that it really helps move many scraps out of my garbage, which also is great during the summer when my apartment is warmer – no stinky rotting banana peel smells. Also by transitioning a lot of food scrap out of the garbage bags often piled on the street keeps pests and rodents from coming in for some snacks.

I think it is really important for NYC to keep a forward focus and become a leader in sustainability. This could be accomplished by not only allowing Big Reuse to continue their operations at their current location, but to really take a page from Astoria Pug and learn how to encourage communities to look towards composting as it is one of the most sustainable ways to get rid of waste with an added benefit of producing a byproduct that can be used in the City's parks and gardens. When it comes to sustainability I always like to use the motto 'it is better for everyone doing a little bit instead of a few people doing it perfect'. Composting has allowed many people to take small steps to really help the environment and this planet.

To Whom It May Concern,

I am writing as a very concerned Astoria resident, making a strong plea to stop the eviction of the Big Reuse compost lot in favor of a parking lot. This concept is utterly abhorrent to me, that the Parks department, which is theoretically concerned with the preservation, growth, and beautification of our city's green spaces would evict an organization providing the community with a rare and valuable opportunity to participate in composting efforts, and reduce waste heading to landfills. Big Reuse even supplies compost to the very parks and green spaces you supposedly care about. This move is clearly in opposition to the city's supposed environmental efforts, and instead turns us in the opposite direction to more waste. If the parks department were to use their existing parking lots and land more efficiently for their equipment and vehicles, it would be a non-issue to allow Big Reuse to remain in it's current location.

As an Astoria resident, I desperately want more opportunities to participate in composting efforts, not less. Please do not take something that is working so well and destroy it, setting us back in these efforts tremendously. Rather, please work with us to allow the Big Reuse lot to stay, and continue to help us increase our access to even more composting opportunities.

Thank you for your time,  
Brienne Riviello  
[bmriello@gmail.com](mailto:bmriello@gmail.com)  
Astoria, NY, 11105

Dear City Council,

I am a resident of Fort Greene, Brooklyn. I love my neighborhood, community and all the greenspace I have access to. Yet I also chose my apartment in part because of the availability of compost bins and the DSNY Food Scraps and Yard Waste pick up program.

I am a young, working professional who is obsessed with composting as it feels like a triple win:

- it diverts waste from landfills
- it cuts down on greenhouse gas emissions (from anaerobic combustion and transportation cost of garbage) and
- it fertilizes our parks in the city.

And critically important, composting is an **environmental justice** issue too. When our food waste is not composted, it is often sent to incinerators located primarily in low-income communities and communities of color and burned with trash and fossil fuels. This releases particulates and toxic chemicals into local communities.

You have the opportunity to save two essential locations to this program from eviction. Sustainably disposing of organics is critical to achieving New York City's ambitious climate and zero waste goals. Dumping food waste into landfills or incinerators instead of composting them adds to air pollution, accelerates the climate crisis, and will mean that the people who provide these critical composting services will lose their jobs.

Please do our part in continuing to push our city and world closer to a planet that works for all life.

Much appreciated,

Briene Lermite

My name is Brittany and I'm a resident of Astoria, Queens. I began the weekly chore of bringing my food scraps to a local drop off point 4 years ago and haven't looked back. Ironically, that "chore" quickly became a high point of my week and an important staple in my ever-evolving habits to lead a more sustainable life for myself, our community, and the planet as a whole.

I spent 3 1/2 of those years passively dumping my food scraps at various drop-off points around the city, not truly appreciating the efforts and immense importance of facilities like Big Reuse and the Lower East Side Ecology center. Facilities that have worked hard to pick up the slack as the city continues to roll back their composting efforts, effectively ignoring the promises leaders like you have made to send zero waste to landfill by 2030.

When the pandemic hit and the our regular food scrap drop off point closed, my husband and I squirreled away as many food scraps as we could in our small apartment. In August we found out about Astoria Pug and all that they were doing to support sustainability efforts in our neighborhood. I was so impressed with just how many people were involved and how efficiently they worked to help their neighbors divert food waste from landfill.

In the 5 months since I began volunteering with them, they've grown from operating out of a Uhaul (before that a small red sedan) to collecting over 3,000 food scraps every week all of which are processed at Big Reuse, an incredibly efficient facility that I was lucky enough to visit. At that time, the narrative Parks was pushing was that they needed the space as a parking lot. But walking home I passed multiple parks designated lots that were half full and severely under utilized.

Composting is too important to give up over poor planning and inefficient vehicle organization.

If composting wasn't important to New Yorkers, you wouldn't see micro haulers in small neighborhoods collecting 3-4 thousand pounds a week. If composting wasn't important you wouldn't see families coming out with their young children rain or shine during a pandemic just to divert their food scraps. If composting wasn't important you wouldn't see big cities like San Francisco, Portland, OR, Boulder CO and Seattle prioritizing composting in their waste infrastructure. if composting wasn't important Parks themselves wouldn't need to utilize it to dump a massive amount of yard waste, If composting wasn't important we wouldn't have upwards of \_\_\_\_\_ people here in support of it.

I moved to NYC 10 years ago expecting it to be a leader but if we allow these compost facilities to fall by the wayside we will quickly fall behind and not only be a disappointment to the country but more importantly the residents of this beautiful city.

Please New York City Council, Save Our Compost.

Dear City Council,

I am writing on behalf of La Casita Verde, a GreenThumb Community Garden that is on NYC Parks Department land. We, a group of community volunteers, founded La Casita Verde in South Williamsburg in 2013, turning a derelict lot that had been abandoned for four decades into a thriving garden. The space was an eyesore and a junkyard for many years and now it is a beautiful and thriving community space. In 2013 a lot of people told us it was not possible but we started slowly and we started by **composting**. We knew that the foundation of a healthy garden is good soil and we knew that taking care of our waste was responsible and ultimately beneficial. Composting was an investment in our community. It was not easy or quick but it was the right decision.

Seven years later we are still composting. We now have solar power and a community shed and large artist murals. The space is thriving and a place of pride and joy.

A few years later, when the city started to collect organics for citywide recycling, we were overjoyed. Commissioner Garcia chose our garden for a press event to celebrate the expansion of the organics program into our neighborhood. People said that would be the end of our composting program but we knew better. The city needed our community composting program to involve people and educate the neighborhood about the benefits and process of composting. We needed the city program because there is just too much organic waste for small composting programs to handle. There is no excuse ever to send our food scraps to landfill.

At this juncture — with so much precocity — to turn back on all of the progress we have made together in this city to ensure all people can readily compost is not only short sighted but a crime. The city at this time needs to double down on its commitment to composting in all forms and bring even more people into the fold.

**DO NOT SHUT DOWN BIG REUSE AND LES ECOLOGY CENTER. SAVE OUR COMPOST AND INVEST IN A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE FOR NYC!**

Respectfully,

Brooke Singer for La Casita Verde  
[www.lacasitaverde.nyc](http://www.lacasitaverde.nyc)



*Creatively working with youth to achieve equitable zero-waste, climate smart school communities and a plastic free biosphere, —teaching citizen science, civic action, arts & media*

## **Cafeteria Culture Testimony - New York City Council Oversight Hearing on Community Composting December 18, 2020**

**On behalf of Cafeteria Culture (CafCu), I am asking Mayor de Blasio, Parks Department Commissioner Silver, and the City Council to take immediate action to ensure:**

- **Renewal of leases of two vital composting sites operated by the nonprofit organizations Lower East Side Ecology Center (LESEC) in East River Park and Big Reuse under the Queensboro Bridge in Long Island City, both NYC Council funded organization; and**
- **Development of long term solutions that further support community composting sites by working collaboratively with related agencies and organizations.**

**Reasons to take immediate action to save community composting sites include:**

- **LESEC and Big ReUse collectively divert about 2.5 million pounds of organic resources from landfills and incinerators per year, which is a significant percentage of the total organics collected in NYC at this time;**
- About one third of NYC's garbage consists of organic materials, which due to the suspension of the curbside Organics Collection program, leaves city residents few options for keeping valuable food scraps out of a costly and dangerous waste stream that contributes to Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions;
- These and all community composting sites play a critical role in mitigating the climate crisis by decreasing particulate pollution caused by GHG emissions that are linked to public health issues, including Covid-19, particularly in lower income communities of color.
- Our city's garbage disproportionately hurts lower-income BIPOC in New York City and Newark, NJ (a "sacrifice zone"), adding to high rates of asthma, cancer and other illnesses;
- Community compost provides a valuable product that helps to repair damaged and contaminated soil across the city;
- Community composting sites provide hands-on education to intergenerational and diverse audiences and have a built in community engagement component simply by having a physical presence in neighborhoods; and
- Community composting sites bring urgently needed awareness of the benefits of zero waste behavior.

**Now is the time to take action for a climate-smart future by reducing our solid waste and protecting lower income and Black and Brown communities who bear the burden of our landfill and incinerator bound garbage.**

Thank you,

Debby Lee Cohen

Cafeteria Culture, Executive Director/ Founder,

Co-Director/Producer, [MicroplasticMadness.org](http://MicroplasticMadness.org) - a movie and impact campaign for a plastic free future

[Youtube: CafCu Media](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCafCuMedia) [twitter @cafeteriacu](https://twitter.com/cafeteriacu) [Instagram: @CafCu](https://www.instagram.com/CafCu)

**Cafeteria Culture (CafCu)**, founded as Styrofoam Out of Schools, is an environmental education organization that works creatively with youth to achieve equitable zero waste, climate smart school communities and a plastic free biosphere.

Debby Lee Cohen, Executive Director/Founder, [CafeteriaCulture.org](http://CafeteriaCulture.org) [DL@cafeteriaculture.org](mailto:DL@cafeteriaculture.org) 917-282-0253  
% The Lower Eastside Girls Club NY, 402 East 8th Street, NY, NY 10009

Caitlin Enz  
25-10 30th Road  
11102 Astoria

Date of hearing: December 18 2020

To the Committee on Land Use  
Re: Eviction of Big Reuse

As a Resident of Astoria, New York, I was extremely disappointed when the city made it clear that they would not continue to support composting initiatives with city funds. Luckily individuals within the community immediately began organizing and setting up micro hauling initiatives. Every weekend I am happy to volunteer with Astoria Pug because I know that I am helping to keep precious resources, food scraps, out of the landfill. Keeping food scraps out of the landfill cuts down on dangerous methane emissions, reduces the need for polluting fertilizers and generates the valuable resource of enriched and fertile soil.

When I heard that the city was not going to renew Big Reuse's lease it was like being told that all of these volunteer hours, the tons of valuable compost generated, the sense of community created and the support we had been showing for the city's green initiatives were worthless. Big Reuse's efforts support all of NYC and not only do they take in food scraps from the community, but they accept yard waste from the city parks and give the parks compost in return, free of charge. Our much used and very appreciated parks are kept beautiful in part by the amazing process of turning food and yard scraps into compost. Not only that, but as a tax paying citizen my taxes have gone to support the Big Reuse facilities, money which will have been wasted if Big Reuse is forced to relocate, as they cannot take processing bays with them. In a time when we are told the city does not have any money to spend on services that pick up scraps for compost, I cannot imagine that we can be so flippant with money that we can waste what was put into creating the amazing community resource that is Big Reuse.

It is time for NYC to put its resources where its mouth is, it is not enough to say that we are a green city, we need to show this with our actions. Now is the time to support initiatives like composting. We need to stop creating barriers and discouraging people from making choices that support our communities and that have a positive impact environmentally.

I sincerely hope that NYC will continue to be a leader in green initiatives and that the city will renew Big Reuse's lease as well support residents in composting initiatives.

Please save composting. Is there anyway that we can reduce cost, but keep the program in place by asking citizens to step in and volunteer? Please save this valuable program.

Camille Brown  
1270 Fifth Ave 5C  
NY NY 10029

I have been composting my whole life. So when the city drop-off sites closed because of Covid in March, I couldn't bring myself to throw my food scraps in the garbage. I know that it wasn't the right thing to do, to dispose of my food scraps in a way that instead of them becoming composting for the city's soil, they would just go to the landfills contributing even more to polluting our soil and our atmosphere. My partner and I held onto our frozen bags of food scraps until we found a community garden that was accepting them. We decided then that we should offer our neighbors a hand and take their food scraps to community gardens as well since we had a car. This is how our micro-hauling operation began. After 36 weeks of weekly food scraps collection, my partner, me and all the volunteers that are Astoria Pug diverted more than 70 thousand pounds of food scraps from landfills. Because that's the right thing to do. Food scraps have a destination, they have a part to play in nature's cycle, and it's not to end up in the landfills. It is a shame that New York City is lagging behind other cities in the country when it comes to diverting waste (especially food scraps) from landfills. It is a shame that that's the policy choice at the mayor's office and the Parks Department.

Caren Tedesco Cardoso

At the beginning of 2020 I finally made the decision to start composting at home. I had learned about composting previously and knew it was a great thing, but thought like many people, that it would be too difficult to find any compost drop-off sites in my neighborhood of Canarsie, Brooklyn. I had previously applied to get a compost bin for our building from the compost collection program, but found that we were outside the range of pickups and at the time the City had unfortunately decided to halt its growth. When I finally went to look up drop-off sites, I was shocked to find some locations within 30 minutes of me. The closest location was at the Wyckoff House Museum which is only a 15 minute drive from my home. We began freezing all of our compost until we would drop it off about once a week there. When the pandemic hit, the farm operations at the museum were forced to close their composting operation for a couple months. Worried where we would take our compost, my husband and I talked to our landlord and they were gracious enough to allow us to buy our own compost bin to do composting in front of our building.

I reached out to LES Ecology center for resources and they very graciously provided us with wood chips and wood shavings for the bottom of our compost bin that we needed to place over concrete. LES Ecology gave these materials to us for free and they were so helpful with sharing additional composting tips. As you know, LES Ecology Center and Big Reuse are currently facing eviction by the NYC Park Department. We need these organizations desperately in NYC because they are some of the last in NYC's composting program whose budget was cut by 90% this year. Additionally, I recognize that most New Yorkers are not as lucky as we are to have landlords who are willing to allow us to compost on their property and without public compost drop-offs near their home, most New Yorkers will not be able to compost at all.

I am furious to say the least that New York City has allowed their composting collection program to fall apart when at its peak it was the largest compost program in the country. New York City enjoys to promote their Zero Waste to Landfills by 2030 program, and yet if we do not continue to save what is left of our composting program, that will absolutely never happen. Our planet does not have time for us to waste. What we do in the next 10 years will have a huge impact on saving our environment. Recycling is certainly not our only solution to zero waste, and composting is just as important if not more so, in addition to the first of the 3 R's: Refusing waste in the first place. I want New York State to complete their goals for their ambitious climate policies. And I know in my heart that composting is our key to success. They don't call compost black gold for nothing! We need to make public composting easy and accessible for all New Yorkers! There is no good reason that 28% of our food waste which is organic waste to be buried in landfills and never decompose. I am asking the City Council today to save the LES Ecology Center and Big Reuse's sites from being evicted by the NY Parks Department. These programs should be our proudest and we should make fully funding composting in New York City as one of our highest priorities.

2:57

Methane from food waste in landfills is one of the largest contributors to the climate crisis. A giant city like NY must do its part to help save our planet. We must continue and expand composting, not cut back on it!

Carolyn Steinhoff

**from: Carolyn Steinhoff**

**I support the nonprofits Big Reuse and the Lower East Side Ecology Center. They provide vital environmental work for the city. Their license agreement for community compost sites must be renewed so they can remain in the Parks. Community composting belongs in Parks.**

The LES Ecology Center site should be built into the East Side Coastal Resiliency Project and moved to temporary space in the interim. LES Ecology Center's license agreement should be renewed and include return to their historical site in the East River Park.

Big Reuse should be allowed to continue composting at their current site and have their license renewed.

These small compost sites are the backbone of the Sanitation Department's newly restored food scrap recycling program - a nimble and already highly popular sustainability program that dozens of City Council members and tens of thousands of committed New Yorkers pushed to fund in this year's budget.

Mayor de Blasio and Commissioner Silver's eviction of the sites not only undermines the City Council funded compost programs, but also the City's greenhouse gas emissions, Zero Waste, and environmental justice goals.

It will result in even more recyclable organic waste being hauled to landfills and incinerators, passing through transfer stations and utilizing waste infrastructure overwhelmingly located in low-income communities and communities of color polluted by particulate matter linked to severe cases of COVID-19. These community compost sites compost the organic waste and use the compost to green New York City, repair our depleted soils and fight climate change.

Over 4,000 letters have been submitted to Parks in support of the sites in addition to letters of support including over 50 community groups. The sites are supported by their local Council Members and Borough Presidents. We urge Mayor de Blasio, Commissioner Silver and our elected officials to listen to the overwhelming public support for these programs and renew the license agreements for our community composting sites. **We should be moving forward in the fight against the climate crisis--not backward.**

**from: Carolyn Steinhoff**

**I support the nonprofits Big Reuse and the Lower East Side Ecology Center. They provide vital environmental work for the city. Community composting belongs in Parks.**

Renew LES Ecology Center's license agreement and return them to East River Park. Allow Big Reuse to continue composting at their current site, and renew their license. Dozens of City Council members and tens of thousands of New Yorkers pushed to fund composting.

Eviction undermines the City Council funded compost programs and the City's Zero Waste environmental justice goals. Even more recyclable organic waste will go to landfills and incinerators, passing through low-income communities and communities of color polluted by particulate matter linked to severe cases of COVID-19. These community compost sites repair our depleted soils and fight climate change.

Local Council Members and Borough Presidents support the sites, and over 50 community groups have submitted over 4,000 letters. I urge Mayor de Blasio, Commissioner Silver and our elected officials to listen to the overwhelming public support for these programs and renew the license agreements for our community composting sites. **We should be moving forward in the fight against the climate crisis--not backward.**

**Name: Cate McCrea**

**I support the nonprofits Big Reuse and the Lower East Side Ecology Center. They provide vital environmental work for the city. Their license agreement for community compost sites must be renewed so they can remain in the Parks.**

**Community composting belongs in Parks.**

In my own life, access to community composting efforts has transformed my understanding of food waste and taught me so much about sustainability practices on the personal level. I want my city and its parks to be places that encourage and quite literally make space for these practices on a community and civic level as well.

As the layered crises of climate change and the pandemic have upended our sense of business as usual, now is the time to press further toward zero waste and sustainability, to re-imagine parks as places that can enact a comprehensive definition of environmental stewardship. It is unimaginable that during this time the legacy of our parks would be that they moved toward harboring *less* community composting, as opposed to more.

The LES Ecology Center site should be built into the East Side Coastal Resiliency Project and moved to temporary space in the interim. LES Ecology Center's license agreement should be renewed and include return to their historical site in the East River Park.

Big Reuse should be allowed to continue composting at their current site and have their license renewed.

Mayor de Blasio and Commissioner Silver's eviction of the sites not only undermines the City Council funded compost programs, but also the City's greenhouse gas emissions, Zero Waste, and environmental justice goals.

**We should be moving forward in the fight against the climate crisis--not backward.**

12/19/2020

As a very concerned New Yorker from Queens, I urge you to please not evict both LESEC and Big Reuse from their community compost sites. Please consider the great impact and reach these compost sites have spanning across all boroughs and thousands of people. We want to compost and we can't if these sites are evicted. These sites are responsible for diverting thousands of pounds organic waste from landfills. This saves resources for dsny while encouraging community involvement. The curbside program has already been terminated, which has been devastating for numerous households. This is the only option left and you are taking that away from us. This will leave us with no option and more garbage.

Not only is this a huge benefit for the environment as a whole and the city, but also these critical compost sites provide the NYC Parks Department and local communities valuable quality compost for all their parks, street trees, backyards, and houseplants alike. You are depriving dedicated New Yorkers who want to beautify and clean their city from being able to do so, and instead supporting a parking lot that can be placed next to the Big Reuse site.

If you've ever visited the site, you will see that it is not a large space. Big Reuse staff use the space very efficiently and keep it clean. Prioritizing a parking lot goes against Parks' own vision and mission "to create and sustain thriving parks and public spaces for New Yorkers and to plan resilient sustainable parks, public spaces, and recreational amenities, build a park system for present and future generations, and care for parks and public spaces." These two compost sites embody ALL of these goals. A parking lot that only serves its employees does not.

Please do not evict either site. The many workers at these sites and community members depend on them. It will also hurt employees economically and marginalized communities disproportionately during a pandemic. This is NOT the time to evict these compost sites. The city is supposed to increase equity and improve the health of the city. Do not turn your back on these values and the people who need the most help. You have a choice. Please think about the many benefits of these two amazing compost sites and the cons of shutting them down.

Thank you,

Catherine Louie

I am extremely concerned about NYC Parks and Mitchell Silver's decision to turn the Big Reuse compost site under the Queensboro Bridge into a parking lot. I am also concerned that LES Ecology's composting site will not be available at the redesigned East River Park. A composting site is not currently included in the plan.

Compost sites allow New Yorkers to drastically reduce their food waste by dropping off their food scraps at farmers markets so they are turned into nutrient dense soil instead of going into landfills which produce methane that warms the Earth.

NYC has a goal of being zero waste in 2030 but the removal of important composting sites contradicts this.

I drop my food scraps off in Abingdon Square every weekend and it is one of my favorite parts of the week. The bins are nearly almost all full at the end of the greenmarket each Saturday so this program of collecting food scraps is clearly widely used in Manhattan.

Anything you can do to save composting in NYC and allow New Yorkers to reduce their food waste would be greatly appreciated.

Thank you,  
Catherine

CATHERINE G. TALESE

• CatherineTalese.com •

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December 20, 2020

New York City Council

Testimony by Catherine Talese

Committee on Sanitation of Solid Waste Management.

Composting NYC

To the Attention of New York's City Council,

I've been composting our household food scraps for over 20 years; not only does my small effort reduce our household garbage to a minimum, I also receive a tremendous reward knowing that my behavior is increasing the well being of my city. Composting food scraps reduces landfill, reduces toxic leachate produced with organics commingle with non-organic waste in landfill, and increases the value of what little earth my city has not already paved for cars. I attended the Committee on Sanitation of Solid Waste Management last Friday, December 18th and agree to so much that my fellow citizens have said and the incredible initiative Big ReUse and the Lower East Side Ecology Center have made in leading the city towards a sustainable city. Our citizens are doing great work, however you, our elected officials, are lagging far behind. For what? For parking? For real estate development? I urge you, my city's leaders to listen to your political constituents; you are here to serve the people. I pledge my support to continue composting and to tell my representatives to listen, to act, and to be on the right side of history.

I'm not a supporter of threats, but you can be certain that thousands of people will not stop composting and push back against our elected representatives short sighted vision.

So many decisions in life are complicated, but composting is easy, creates jobs, and is so rewarding, the choice is...simply uncomplicated!

Catherine Talese

917.971.5288

Catherine@ctalese.com

**To:** New York City Council  
**From:** Catherine Wiacek  
**Date:** December 18, 2020  
**Re:** Committee on Sanitation and Solid Waste Management

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Hello,

I am submitting this testimony to the council to convey my interest in the New York City Parks Department extending the existing licensing agreements to Big Reuse and the Lower East Side Ecology Center. Composting has become an important part in my role as a New York City resident. I have lived in Astoria, Queens for nearly seven years and I take pride in my attempts to make NYC a cleaner place to live. The amount of trash I see on streets daily is too high. People around the world mock NYC for its garbage that ends up on the streets.

Composting is one small action I can take to help reduce the amount of trash that pollutes our great city. I choose to compost so that my food waste ultimately creates a benefit to society rather than a detriment. Composting makes me feel like I have a positive impact on our neighborhood.

I believe NYC should extend the licensing agreements to Big Reuse and the Lower East Side Ecology Center in order to continue the positive impact they have on the city. These organizations make it easier for residents such as myself to compost and ensure less waste is sent to landfills.

Thank you in advance for considering this testimony.

Regards,

Catherine Wiacek

To the NYC Dept of Sanitation and the Dep of Parks and Recreation  
jointly with the Committee on Sanitation and Solid Waste Management  
12/18/2020 11:00 AM

To continue to engage and collaborate with local communities  
to encourage and allow community composting  
to be carried out on parkland that is safe for residents.

I am a resident of NYC, Neuroscience PhD, and Research and Practice Chair for the American Dance Therapy Association. I am an active composter, community garden member, and serve NYC elders with neurodegenerative diseases like Parkinson's and Alzheimer's.

I am disturbed by three recent changes advanced by NYC administration: 1) the indefinite suspension of **curbside composting** services, and the threat to NOT renew 2) **Big Reuse's** lease in **Queensbridge** and 3) **The Lower East Side Ecology Center's** lease.

New York generates more than **14 million tons** of trash each year, and New York's Department of Sanitation (DSNY) is the **largest waste management agency** in the world. Most of New York's **mixed solid waste** (about 80% of it by tonnage) will end up in a **landfill**, sent to other states like Pennsylvania, Ohio, South Carolina, and Virginia. The total haul cost the city **\$409 million in 2019**. It is indeed a costly operation.

A massive city-wide compost campaign could **reduce the waste mass by nearly 30-40%**, determining a huge **city-budget cut (\$122-\$163 million/year)**. In front of this budget reduction, the cost of necessary personnel and materials would be pennies. Why this is not happening? The benefit of implementing a permanent budget-cut, also in line with **de Blasio's pledge** to virtually **zero out the city's garbage exports by 2030** to combat the effects of **climate change**, may be in **conflict with other interests**.

A couple of possible explanations may lead to a **call for NYC administration accountability**. Conflicting interests are those of **organizations who profit from the waste-processing business** and those **real-estate developers who want to occupy the land** currently dedicated to composting and recycling practices. Given the magnitude of the above-mentioned permanent budget-cut, **no private organization or real-estate developer could nearly match or top that amount**. However, these groups could pay off representatives to direct their policies (i.e., corrupting them).

It does not make sense from a budget (and environmental crisis) standpoint to take apart compost projects in NYC, **it is only financially sounded to expand them!** The systematic dismantling of our compost structure that is taking place reveals potentially underlying **conflicting interests** and agendas that **deviate from our collective good** and reroute capital into somebody's pocket.

In faith that you will correct this unacceptable course of action.  
Dr. Cecilia Fontanesi  
201-355-7443  
foxanesi@gmail.com

**From:** Cecilia Galarraga  
**Sent:** Monday, December 14, 2020 1:25 PM  
**To:** NYC Council Hearings  
**Subject:** LES Ecology Center & Big Reuse Composting

Good afternoon, I am writing to submit written testimony regarding the proposed conversion of the LES Ecology Center's & Big Reuse's community composting sites into vehicle and equipment storage for Parks. The Parks Department should be hosting and supporting community composting initiatives. Both of these organizations have provided a much-needed resource, particularly given that the city-wide organics collection has been suspended. Elimination of these sites will lead to increased landfill usage and will move NYC backwards in its push for environmental leadership.

I write this testimony also in my role as an educator who teaches sustainability to young people. I am proud that NYC has done many things that are making a positive and lasting impact on our environment, including street tree planting, green stormwater infrastructure, and innovative waste management strategies. These examples show young people that a more just, more sustainable world is possible. I am disappointed to see that the city is considering going backwards on its legacy, and I am disheartened to think what message this sends to our young people. Is our city committed to their futures and to the future of our planet, or not?

Best regards  
Cecilia Galarraga

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**Cecilia Galarraga** | Garden Teacher (she/her/hers)  
[www.edibleschoolyardnyc.org](http://www.edibleschoolyardnyc.org) | [cg@esynyc.org](mailto:cg@esynyc.org) | [347-565-0100](tel:347-565-0100) x110  
**PLEASE NOTE OUR NEW ADDRESS:**  
20 Jay Street, Suite M9, Brooklyn, NY 11201



[Watch Our Intro Video Here!](#)

December 15, 2020

Hello, this is Cecilia Lim, a Queens, NYC resident since 2001, public servant for 10 years with the NYC Department of Consumer Affairs. I respectfully submitting this testimony to the Committee on Sanitation and Solid Waste Management and the Committee on Parks and Recreation, to humbly request that, in line with this administration's zero water to landfill goals, Big Reuse and Lower East Side Ecology Center community composting sites be kept open—renew their licenses!—, and receive additional funding to build out the Lower East Side Ecology Center into the East Side Coastal Resiliency Project, and move their community composting site to temporary space in the interim.

When we compost, we support the kind of balanced and harmonious living our ancestors practiced. Through composting, organic matter not fit for human consumption is transformed into nourishment. The business of composting is pro-people. These are the types of green jobs and services we want and need. The composting business is critical work in our communities. Supporting the compost business is part of economic and climate justice.

I understand the Parks Department has raised legal concerns about composting on Parks' land. Natural Resources Defense Council and New York Lawyers for the Public Interest have reviewed these concerns and determined they are a non-issue.

I would love to see my City officials decide to support the public good and the next seven generations of inhabitants of this Earth with their decision. Thank you for your time and attention to this matter.

I have been participating in this program since it began - it is a very effective way to both reduce waste and provide organic materials for our parks and community gardens.

Why would you wish to end it?

Please reconsider - thank you.

Sincerely,  
Celia Bressack

To Whom It May Concern:

My name is Celia Frey and I am a Brooklyn resident writing to implore you to save the Red Hook composting site. Now is not the time to be shutting down composting sites we desperately need in NYC. Besides the obvious need for a composting site to help save our environment, and provide a future for our children, I know first hand the kind of care and work that has gone into that site. David Buckel put so much of himself into that site. He knew the importance of it and he went above and beyond to make that composting site what it is today. To shut it down is to completely write off all of what he stood for and worked so hard for. It is heartbreaking to imagine saying goodbye to that site that has done nothing but improve lives and bring together the community. Please reconsider the decision to shut it down.

Celia Frey



Contact: Clare Miflin  
[clare@centerforzerowastedesign.org](mailto:clare@centerforzerowastedesign.org)  
718.306.9525  
Dec 19, 2020

I submitted written testimony previously, but changed it in response to concerns brought up during the hearing – this is the text I spoke at the hearing.

I'm Clare Miflin, from the Center for Zero Waste Design. I led the development of the [Zero Waste Design Guidelines](#) which show how design of the city is crucial to achieving zero waste. This was a collaborative process and many city agencies were involved, but unfortunately not Parks. Yet, Parks is THE most important agency for making sure composting is designed into the city's urban realm.

Other parks, not city owned, like Governors Island, Battery Park City, Hudson River Park, and Domino Park **know** that composting **food waste** and yard waste makes sense and have designed facilities into their parks.

I was previously the project architect for Bushwick Inlet Park facility which houses Parks North Brooklyn maintenance operations, so I understand space constraints and how these projects work. There parks vehicles are in a garage with the park sloping up over the top. Good design solves problems.

Before Parks dept can say they need the Big Reuse site, they would need to do some sort of conceptual plan laying out their space requirements. Where is that plan?

I also know that the architects of East River Park were given a design brief, which either included a compost yard or it didn't. Saying that the City is committed to negotiating in good faith a return to the Park doesn't answer the question – is a compost yard in the new design or not? If it isn't, their return will waste a lot of money in retrofitting a brand new park.

**Collecting and composting of NYC's organic waste has to be designed into the urban realm. That will make it affordable and ensure the benefits contribute to a green and just recovery for the city.**

To whom it may concern,

In the summer of 2017, I was feeling depressed and decided to begin volunteering through New York Cares. I volunteered for more than a dozen organizations, but composting in Red Hook outshined them all. At the time, I had almost no experience (and even less interest) in compost. But I found myself returning week after week, year after year, working until my arms were sore, my body covered in sweat, rain or snow, and going home with not only a sense of satisfaction, but with the knowledge that I had helped to build a better future. Gradually, my depression disappeared and I found that I was in good shape, knew all about carbon and nitrogen cycles, and had made many new friends.

Like all volunteer projects, composting is a band-aid; a small, temporary but necessary solution to a larger problem. Stocking shelves at food pantries helps, but does not solve hunger. Playing bingo with Alzheimer's patients eases, but does not cure suffering. Composting reduces waste and greenhouse gasses, but does not reverse climate change. But unlike other volunteer projects, composting in Red Hook also improves the community and the volunteers themselves. It is an athletic, social, educational and therapeutic experience. It is like a free gym, a community center, a chat room, a classroom, a playground. The approach to volunteering and waste management is wholly revolutionary. We volunteers see and experience what we as a society discard, we see what we could be throwing into landfills. We learn about the greenhouse gasses that would be produced if we did, and we make sure that doesn't happen. We take what is discarded and turn it into something useful. We work hard, and we work together. Yet we know that what we do could be done quickly by machines. But is a future with machines what we want? Is it even a present we want? Composting in Red Hook is about much more than the job itself. It is about improving people.

I ask you, could the Parks Department really achieve more on the land without composting? I don't know what would happen to the land if composting were evicted, but I do know that our community would not be the same without it.

Sincerely, Charles Lavoie

Concilmembers,

Keeping the compost processing yard occupied by the Big Reuse is crucial to our community, especially now. NYC composting had been decimated in the last year. These sites are some of the only publicly funded composting options left for NYC. Composting is ESSENTIAL to our city. The DSNY spent \$500K in taxpayer money to create a compost processing yard only for the Dept. of Parks to convert it into a parking lot? What a load of shit.

Building a parking lot would be a slap in the face to all New Yorkers working towards a green future. The Big Reuse is diverting tons of organic waste from landfills. Not only are they diverting tons of this organic waste, they process the leaves and yard waste from Parks for free and the soil in our parks and community gardens are replenished and rejuvenated by this compost. Compost and parks, especially public parks, go hand in hand. It boggles my mind that the Dept. of Parks is not advocating for compost as it directly benefits them.

The Big Reuse is making this lot useful to our community by two folds. Turning it into a parking lot will not make it useful for the public and would be shortsighted.

Your trucks can be parked somewhere else.

To quote Concilmember Jimmy Van Bramer, "The eviction of Big Reuse is not only wrong, but it cements the city's shameful policy of walking away from composting and a more sustainable future that literally could leave no waste unturned...But to do this so that this site would become a parking lot is an absolute disgrace."

Do better, NYC.

Sincerely,  
Chatdalin Sinthorn  
Sunnyside, NY

Reducing my negative environmental impact is part of why I choose to live in a city (even now). Since moving to NYC 6.5 years ago, I have been composting my food scraps. In my Manhattan apartment, I saved up the scraps in my mini-fridge for weekly drop-off at a nearby Greenmarket. (Yes, I was in a tiny studio with an especially tiny fridge, and I made space to compost.) If I had to miss market one week, I strategized to make it the next week or to make a trip to a farther drop-off point. When I moved to Astoria, it again took some strategy to make sure I made time on nice weekend days to make it to Socrates Park during its drop-off hours. (If I waited until Sunday evening, the bins were sometimes too full.)

Yes—I have a compost strategy for drop-off, system for collecting my scraps and make space in fridge/apartment to minimize what goes in trash.

Before 2020, I was proud of NYC for similarly having a compost strategy in its environmental priorities, a system with community drop-off sites and piloting residential collection, and making space to process compost without hauling it all out of the city.

I have been very disappointed in the city's anti-compost actions this year. After city collection sites were paused, I regularly checked online to see if they resumed collection. In the fall, I finally learned that the city resumed some programs and Socrates Park could open collection! I also learned of community-organized drop-offs, which are closer to home, but are regularly over-flowing if I don't visit early enough.

After all that, both collections are again threatened as they're both connected to Big Re-use.

It's very important to me (and everyone contributing to those overflowing bins) that you make a permanent commitment to allow Big Re-use and LES Ecology Center to continue their urban compost programs. I try to divert waste from landfills as much as possible, and compost is a big part. It isn't logical to send organic matter to a landfill to (decompose anaerobically and) produce greenhouse gases when the Big Re-Use can turn it into organic matter for urban farms to grow produce in my neighborhood or to use in city park landscapes. Without waste reduction and permanent composting options, the NYC's environmental plan and commitments are incomplete. Prioritizing urban composting will complement the city's other initiatives to help NYC become an environmental leader.

Thank you for your attention and time to understand our concerns, as well as to find a permanent solution for community composting in NYC.

My name is Chris Noland and I have lived in New York City since 2008. I currently reside in Astoria. I have been composting for a few years now, and was incredibly disappointed that the city discontinued composting programs during COVID-19. We only resumed composting thanks to the work of Astoria Pug, and other dedicated individuals. I'm grateful that their work allowed for us to continue saving and dropping off food scraps, and was saddened to hear that Big Reuse and LES Ecology Center might be forced to give up their sites.

My husband and I compost for many reasons. We are mindful of how much food we waste, and are happy to know that composting reduces some of that. We know that composting is one of the many necessary steps to reduce the devastating effects of climate change. This is something that both of us worry about – we are only in our early 30s, and want to help make this planet better than it currently is now. Additionally, composting is not a huge effort for us. We keep our food scraps and drop them off weekly – rain or shine – because it is an incredibly easy way for us to collectively make a difference. I run past the 59<sup>th</sup> street bridge and am happy to know that my food scraps, and those of many others, are there.

This focus goes beyond us, however. I have worked with elementary and middle school students since 2011. One of the most pressing issues they have discussed – and there have been many – is climate change. The students may struggle to remember their times tables, but most third graders knew that penguins might die out within their own lifetime. One fourth grader told me that if we didn't take significant steps to reduce our carbon footprint in ten years, the world may become inhabitable. It did not make him feel good. All the children understood that the actions of adults like myself, and politicians such as yourselves, will radically dictate the world they face as they get older. Hearing them speak about these issues devastated me, because I knew that there wasn't much that they could do to change this. I have never submitted a written testimony before, and am hesitant to do so now. But I don't want to see these kids again without knowing that I did what I could, however small the action might be, to prevent some of their biggest fears from occurring. Please save the Big Reuse Queensbridge site and the LES Ecology Center Site. This is the least you could do to help all New Yorkers now and in the future.

It seems to me the city is going backwards in terms of its green initiatives. One thing that we can do to maintain some semblance is to keep the lower Eastside composting center open.

Regards,  
Christine Campbell

Sent from my iPhone

To the City of New York:

As a volunteer with Earth Matter, I, Christine Malonzo, stand behind our sister composting organizations Big Reuse and the Lower East Side Ecology Center. They provide essential services to both the Parks Department and to the countless New Yorkers that rely upon them. With the elimination of the curbside composting program and the closing of multiple Greenmarket food scrap collection sites, entire neighborhoods have lost access to environmentally sound organics disposal. From my home on 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue, I used to be able to walk a few minutes to a drop off location; now, my closest collection site is all the way across town, about 2 miles away. I am fortunate to have public transit options; for far too many New Yorkers, this is not the case.

At Earth Matter, I have met many passionate and dedicated advocates for the environment who share my concerns about climate change and quality of life for citizens throughout the city. Mr. Mayor, Commissioner Silver, NYC Councilmembers: evicting Big and LESEC without guaranteeing their return is irresponsible and indefensible. Even now, the city has not offered any specific, concrete justification for the destruction of these composting programs, nor has it demonstrated any attempt to find alternatives. The eviction of Big and LESEC flies in the face of decades of hard work, community engagement, dedication and love from thousands of our neighbors. Losing these beloved organizations would be a devastating blow to the life of our city and would set back decades of progress when we already shamefully trail behind other American cities such as Seattle and San Francisco. New York should not be lagging; we should be leading the charge toward sustainability.

The city **needs** Big Reuse and LESEC in our parks to enrich the soil, the planet and our diverse communities. They are crucial. Don't just throw them away.

Compost is for everyone. It **belongs** in public parks!

Sincerely,

Christine Malonzo

It is disgraceful that NYC has eliminated the food scrap collection program during the COVID crisis. It's more disgraceful that we did not already have city-wide, mandatory composting. Other cities do this, it is a basic waste collection practice that just makes good sense. It cuts down the load on landfills and creates a useful product that can enrich our gardens. It's an absolute travesty to be discussing evicting organizations that do the vital work of assisting those of us who still fight to compost despite the city's shameful lack of support. I oppose evicting these organizations and call on NYC to finally do the right thing and create a city-wide pickup for all compostables.

**Christine Rose**

Dear City Council and Parks Commissioner,

I am writing to implore you not to allow the Queensboro Bridge Composite site to be converted to a parking lot. As you are well aware, the composting of food scraps is an important step that everyone in NYC can take to help improve our overall impact on the environment. Converting a robust and highly used composting site that services thousands of NYC residents into a parking lot that serves only a few is a backwards step. During these times of create social change, we are all responsible for making decisions that move us forward as a city and society. Building yet another parking lot at the expense of a site that positively benefits the city is a shortsighted and irresponsible decision. Please do the right thing.

Best regards,

Christopher Mayne  
Brooklyn, NY

December 20, 2020

**In relation to the Hearing by the Committee on Sanitation and Solid Waste Management (Jointly with the Committee on Parks and Recreation), held Friday December 18<sup>th</sup>, 2020 at 11:00am ET.**

Dear City Council,

I am writing to testify about the social, economic, and environmental importance of NYC's community composting sites.

It is VITAL to the health and wellbeing of everyone in New York City that the Parks Department and Sanitation Department reinstate full funding and permitting for all compost programs that were operational prior to recent shutdowns. Compost collection sites and processing centers across the city provide a crucial landfill alternative for our food waste, and will help the city prevent millions of tons of greenhouse gasses from accelerating climate change and the acute threat it poses to New York.

New Yorkers who are seeking to reduce their environmental impact are able to do so, thanks to compost collection sites and community processors. The process of dropping off one's compost also strengthens community connections, bringing neighbors together and giving the public free access to education about sustainability in their city. Personally, I really enjoyed meeting new people and knowing that my food scraps were making a difference every time I dropped off my compost at the Bowling Green compost collection in Manhattan or at the Franklin/Eastern Parkway and Grand Army Plaza farmer's market drop offs in Brooklyn.

The processing of food waste into compost provides sustainable jobs for community members, and also offers young New Yorkers an opportunity to learn about the environment and sustainability while visiting and volunteering at these sites. This processing capacity is also KEY to NYC's ability to achieve the sustainability goals set forth for 2030. The amazing work done by folks at the Red Hook farm are a perfect example of this.

The by-product of the localized composting process also benefits New Yorkers, as rich, nutrient dense soil is consistently made available to help trees and other plants in the city thrive. If you've ever been to Governor's Island, you've seen the power of compost from Earth Matter at work in the gorgeous flora of the island.

Investing in compost is an investment in the long term health of the city and its people. I urge you to fully fund all NYC community compost elements as soon as possible.

Sincerely,

Chris Dass Patacsil

718-541-3560

cdpatacsil@gmail.com

My name is Ciara Sidell -- I am an urban farmer, educator, certified master composter, lifelong Queens resident, and currently an employee of the Randall's Island Park Alliance.

Composting is essential to the sustainability of our environment, to the growth of NYC's sustainability goals, and to our community of New Yorkers.

It is unbelievable to be in this position today, arguing to keep intact what has been such an incredible contribution to our city.

While employed at Harlem Grown between 2015 and 2018, a partnership with the NYC Compost Project hosted by Lower East Side Ecology Center, allowed us to:

- a) Acquire enough free compost to manage 12 urban educational farms
- b) Collect thousands upon thousands of food scraps each year from our neighbors
- c) Expand efforts around the city through hands-on training and exposure to the expansive facility on the Lowest East Side

My partnership with NYC Compost Project hosted by LESEC has continued in my new role managing the educational urban farm on Randall's Island. When in need of compost to amend our growing space at the start of the 2020 season, LESEC was there to provide it free of charge. Without their compost, we would not have been able to successfully grow and donate over 3,000 lbs of fresh fruits and vegetables to communities facing food insecurity in Harlem and the South Bronx. The compost provided by the NYC Compost Project, and the food scraps they collect in order to make that compost, is critical for the environment, sustainability, education, and the operation of countless community-led growing spaces.

In response to the city's drastic reduction in composting efforts in the face of COVID-19 budget cuts, we rebuilt our three-bin compost system at the Randall's Island Urban Farm and began to collect 300 lbs of food scraps weekly through a partnership with Astoria Pug. We were glad to do our part, but it was Big Reuse who was able to process the majority of food scraps collected in Queens throughout this pandemic.

It is because of Big Reuse's expertise and state of the art facility, that we have for years been able to keep our compost local.

I am baffled by NYC Park's lack of interest and investment in community composting. I am concerned about the steps backward we are about to be forced to take as a city. And I am nervous to lose a free, local compost supply just as growing food here in NYC becomes ever the more essential.

I seek clarity in the decision making process. I seek commitment from NYC Parks to return LESEC to their compost yard, and to keep Big Reuse's yard intact. If that cannot happen, there needs to be a commitment to finding and funding alternative locations for both groups.

Commissioner Silver and Mayor de Blasio:

I am a member of Smiling Hogshead Ranch, a volunteer run community farm collective in LIC, Queens that accepts our neighbors' food scraps. I am troubled that licenses for community compost sites operated by Big Reuse (in Queens) and the Lower East Side Ecology Center (in Manhattan) have not been renewed by the Parks department. Removal of these sites (and the Brown Bin program) has and will again dramatically increase the amount of food scraps our community brings to our site. This overburdens our volunteers (me) with work that the city should be doing.

The Big Reuse and the LES Ecology Center sites are vital to progress on our City's zero waste, emissions reduction, and environmental justice goals. They support dozens of local green jobs, engage thousands of volunteers and food scrap donors each year, and donate composted leaves, wood chips, and food waste back to our parks as rich organic fertilizer.

There is no good reason to evict longstanding community organizations from small parcels of City land. If our City agencies cannot see the inherent value in composting without rules or laws in place, then we believe parks should be mandated to compost.

Now more than ever, our green spaces must be places where we can learn about and practice sustainability.

I urge you to immediately renew the longstanding license for these sites AND to mandate composting citywide.

Cindy Qiao

12/18/2020

**In relation to the Hearing by the Committee on Sanitation and Solid Waste Management (Jointly with the Committee on Parks and Recreation), held Friday December 18<sup>th</sup>, 2020 at 11:00am ET.**

Dear City Council,

I am writing to testify about the social, economic and environmental importance of NYC's community composting sites.

It is VITAL to the health and wellbeing of everyone in the city that the Parks Department reinstate full funding and permitting for all compost programs that were operational prior to the recent shutdowns. Compost collection sites and processing centers in the city provide an important landfill alternative for food waste, and will help the city prevent millions of tons of greenhouse gasses from being emitted.

New Yorkers who are seeking to reduce their environmental impact are able to do so because of compost collection sites. The process of dropping off one's compost also strengthens community connections, as neighbors interact and learn more about sustainability in their city. I was always enlightened by dropping off my compost at the Bowling Green compost drop off when I worked in Manhattan, and the Franklin/Eastern Parkway compost drop off when I worked in Brooklyn.

The processing of food waste into compost provides sustainable jobs for community members, and also offers young New Yorkers an opportunity to learn about the environment and sustainability. This is KEY to NYC's ability to achieve the sustainability goals set forth for 2030. The amazing work done by folks at the Red Hook farm are a perfect example of this.

The by-product of this process also benefits New Yorkers, as rich, nutrient dense soil is then made available to help trees and other plants in the city thrive. If you've ever been to Governor's Island, you've seen the wonders that the compost from Earth Matter have created in the beautiful flora on the island.

Investing in compost is an investment in the long term health of the city and its people. I urge you to fully fund all NYC community compost elements as soon as possible.

Sincerely,

Clara Son

508.395.9361

[Clarason5@gmail.com](mailto:Clarason5@gmail.com)

Dear City Council,

I urge that you immediately renew the Parks license agreements for the community composting sites operated by Big Reuse under the Queensboro Bridge and the Lower East Side Ecology Center. Their license agreements will end and the sites may be evicted on December 31, 2020.

Big Reuse plays a fundamental role in composting in Western Queens by partnering with local food scrap drop-off sites to divert organic waste from entering landfills. As a result of the City's decision to eliminate curbside compost pick-up and to slash funding for the operations of NYC Compost Projects, communities across New York City have been impacted. At Long Island City, Sunnyside, and Woodside in Queens, volunteers such as myself have stepped in to fill the gap at community gardens and community compost sites. In particular, Smiling Hogshead Ranch and the 45th Street Composters have met this need in our community. The sites process hundreds of pounds of food scraps per week, which is very labor intensive and requires detailed coordination. Similar to these volunteer groups I am a part of, many other composting sites are experiencing this influx and trying to quickly adapt to this situation. Some have partnered with Big Reuse in an attempt to process the large volumes of organic waste that cannot be processed at small-scale community compost sites.

Our community in Queens cares deeply about composting, which is a service that should be funded by the City. If Big Reuse is evicted from their site, we are certain that even more community members will drop off their food scraps at our sites and we simply will not be able to meet this need. Composting sites such as Big Reuse are imperative in our current climate crisis by reducing greenhouse gas emissions from organic waste that would otherwise end up in a landfill. The possible eviction of Big Reuse undermines Mayor Bill de Blasio's pledge to eliminate zero waste to landfills by 2030. Annually, Big Reuse processes more than a million pounds of food scraps and up to 400,000 pounds of yard waste. By facilitating the process of creating and distributing compost, Big Reuse improves the health of soils throughout parks and gardens in New York City, and thus provides free ecosystem services for New York City.

Both the Big Reuse and Lower East Side Ecology Center nonprofit sites are vital to progress on our City's zero waste, emissions reduction, and environmental justice goals. They support dozens of local green jobs, engage thousands of volunteers and food scrap donors each year, and donate composted leaves, wood chips, and food waste back to our parks as rich organic fertilizer. Now more than ever, our green spaces must be places where we can learn about and practice sustainability.

NYC Parks controls over 30,000 acres and can easily provide space for community composting efforts. Please advocate for community composting and keep the Big Reuse and Lower East Side Ecology Center sites operational. I urge you to immediately renew the longstanding license for these sites.

Sincerely,

Claudia R. Urdanivia

Thank you to Mr. Reynoso for supporting this resolution,

I have volunteered at the Red Hook and Lower East Side Community compost sites located on Parks land over the past two years. I also study food systems at NYU, which is how I was introduced to the community composting program. The sites that I have volunteered with offer important environmental, educational, social, and overall quality of life benefits for the city.

The sites function as important educational locations, for me they have advanced my university studies, while also giving me the theoretical and technical knowledge to advise and help operate a composting pilot program in Bridgeport, CT this past summer. In my eyes the Red Hook site in particular functions as a vibrant piece of social infrastructure. Pre-pandemic, a tremendous amount of interfacing with the public went on during volunteer days. The site functions as a drop-off site for organic waste, hosts a wide social web of volunteers, allows people to meander through the lot and observe and it is an important site for intergenerational interaction and education. I have gotten to know many people who I never would have gotten the pleasure of meeting through volunteering with the compost program.

Maintaining the continuity of these sites should be a priority of the city. These sites are managed effectively, and people have already built their services

into their routines. Evicting these sites will damage overall composting efforts, and overall city greening initiatives. These sites embody what makes New York City, and urban life, special. They bring together ideas, materials, and diverse groups of people, in a collective manner that cities like New York are uniquely able to provide. Closing these sites undermines would undermine the environmental progress, civic connectedness, and educational leadership of the City as a whole.

Colin Burns

Colin Vettier  
25-10 30th Road  
11102 Astoria

Date of hearing: December 18, 2020

To the Committee on Land Use  
Re: Eviction of Big Reuse

As a Resident of New York City, it broke my heart to learn that compost initiatives would not be defended. After much advocacy, a fraction of the funds was re-allocated. However, they are clearly insufficient. Luckily individuals took it upon themselves to create micro-hauling initiatives to help cover the loss with free labor (I, myself, give my time every week to help Astoria Pug collect food scraps).

New York City has been boasting about its green initiatives and how it values the need to cut our carbon emissions. However, actions have not followed words - far from it.

Composting is a low hanging fruit in the fight for a livable future:

- It saves money by diverting food scraps from landfill.
- It creates value by generating compost from food scraps.
- It reduces the need for polluting fertilizers.
- It enriches soil.

And yet, NYC has decided to not renew Big Reuse's lease in order to turn a composting site (which benefits the community on so many levels) to turn it into a parking lot (no benefit for the community).

The biggest challenge of our time is and will be to reduce our impact on the environment, so that future generations can live a safe and healthy life. If the city cannot see what lies ahead and decides to evict Big Reuse, what kind of message does this send? I believe that this would be loud and clear: "we don't care about you, your communities and the people who will come after us".

The time to actually make NYC a leader in the fight against climate chaos is now. And we should all be part of it.

I sincerely hope that NYC will be up to the challenge and that the city will renew Big Reuse's lease as well as develop new composting initiatives to show that there is interest in keeping residents safe and healthy.

Sincerely,  
Colin Vettier

Big Reuse has been wonderful especially in these times of Covid in allowing my husband and I to drop of 2.5 to 5 gallons of food scraps a week. Before Covid, I would drop off food scraps at the DSNY food scrap drop off near my work in the Fordham section of the Bronx. However, it was such a short window of time to drop off these scraps and I now work from home (I am a DOE teacher). So, we now usually take our food scraps to Socrates Park where there are always 6 cans ready for us anytime on the weekend or weekdays. We usually walk around the parks (a great and safe way to get out of the house for exercise), buy produce from Hell's Gate Farm in the park, drop in at Costco food court or pick up psalteries from Château le Woof across the street. It's a great way to help the community (keeping that food from rotting in a landfill) and to support local businesses. Big reuse also has drop off sites around Astoria when we can't get to Socrates on Saturday. It would wonderful if there were permanent spots similar to Socrates. Big Reuse helps keep food waste from landfills, which is an important tenant to this administration by helping us reducing waste. It encourage healthy and safe walks and encourages support of local businesses big and small.

Courtney Fowlkes

Hello, my name is Courtney Hargrove and I am a resident of Bushwick, Brooklyn.

First, I want to thank the New York City Council and the Parks Department for allowing this dialogue.

I am deeply saddened and disappointed that the Parks Department has decided not to renew or renegotiate the BigReuse's license to operate its composting facility under the Queensboro Bridge.

I am a fervent supporter of the BigReuse's composting facility because it provides the surrounding neighborhoods and communities with the opportunity learn and participate in a composting program that inevitably helps to keep their parks and neighborhoods green, creates jobs and volunteer opportunities for New York residents, as well as decreases methane gases that are created when trash is oxygenated in landfills.

Also, it is not lost on me that the trash that would normally end up composted will now sit in transfer stations that are primarily located in low-income, black, and brown neighborhoods, increasing particulate pollution (PM2.5) linked to COVID-19--communities that have already been disproportionately affected by COVID-19. ["Blacks and other low-income communities living in highly polluted areas will likely still be exposed to relatively higher levels of PM2.5 when compared with less-polluted areas even as PM2.5 decreases across the globe following stay-at-home orders" ([https://www.jacionline.org/article/S0091-6749\(20\)30632-1/pdf](https://www.jacionline.org/article/S0091-6749(20)30632-1/pdf))] .

Further, I am deeply upset that you would instead use this space to create a *parking lot*--something that cannot even be used by members of the community it lies within.

Thus, I am respectfully asking the Council and the Parks Department to renew the BigReuse's license. Be better. Do better.

Best,

Courtney

12/10/20

RE: T2020-6956

Dear Leaders of the Oversight Community Composting in NYC Hearing  
Jointly with the Committee on Sanitation, Solid Waste Management and Parks and Recreation:

After a career producing primetime specials & educational media for Sesame Street and exciting work with the Mayor's MOME team to curb waste in the TV & film business I am beginning to understand how everything is connected and how our mutual actions reduce harm to our neighborhoods and neighbors. So as a huge fan of smart urban programming I wish to save, support & boost the NYC composting program and their respective processing sites.

Thank you for restoring 2.8M funding to community composting in this year's budget. Community composting is now threatened by eviction by the Parks Department and I am asking that you help find a long term solution to help Commissioner Silver & his Park's department shift their position on evicting community compost sites on Parks land in general and specifically from evicting Big Reuse from the Queensbridge site under the Queensboro bridge.

Big Reuse is our neighborhood partner and has helped transform 150,000 pounds of food scraps into soil amending compost since 2015. And the LES Ecology center supports many neighbors with composting and safe waste management efforts as well. LES needs support with a temporary site while the East Side is shored up against future storms and then a permanent place, ideally back where they are now as part of the redesign plans.

Parks Department leadership plans to evict Big Reuse as their 3yr lease ends under the Queensboro bridge on 12/31/20.

Though Commissioner Silver recently responded, citing a lawsuit which has shifted his understanding and is now resulting in a view to solely process park's organics on park's land and no longer serve the community composting efforts. We wish the Park's Commissioner would reconsider his stance and support the vital resource and service to keep NYC healthy while reducing the use of fossil fuel's pollution by trucking organic waste to landfills where organics emit harmful methane gas.

Every issue has two sides and we hope that this hearing and your leadership can help find a solution that protects and supports NYC's composting efforts and the sites they use.

Respectfully,

Christina

Christina Delfico

iDig2Learn, founder

Exploring science through plant life.

@iDig2Learn on Instagram

917 371 1986

christinadelfico@gmail.com

I am writing in support of keeping the NYC composting program, and to renew the license for Big Reuse to maintain its composting operations.

I have participated in the organics pick up in my neighborhood since its inception. Since that has been suspended i have saved and taken my food scraps and compostable materials to drop off sites in the city.

I believe it to be one of the most valuable programs in existence toward reducing our ecological footprint on the environment.

This program MUST be allowed to continue!!

**cynthia gubish**

Testimony to Save Big Reuse & Lower East Side Ecology Center's Community Compost Sites  
Committees on Parks and Recreation and Sanitation, Joint Oversight Hearing  
Friday, December 18, 2020 at 11am

Name: Dale Rohrbaugh  
262 12th Street, Apt. 4R  
Brooklyn, NY 11215

**I support the nonprofits Big Reuse and the Lower East Side Ecology Center. They provide vital environmental work for the city. Their license agreement for community compost sites must be renewed so they can remain in the Parks. Community composting belongs in Parks.**

I grew up in upstate New York and have lived in Brooklyn for 13 years. I now live around the corner from Mayor de Blasio's house in South Park Slope. I have been composting for most of those 13 years whenever I could. I composted at the farmer's market site in Greenpoint. I composted at the Added Value farm in Red Hook. And I was fortunate enough to live in a testing neighborhood for the city's municipal compost collection program when I moved to Park Slope six years ago.

I was devastated when I discovered that the city would be suspending its municipal collection of compostable material at the beginning of the pandemic, but I kind of understood. We had limited resources and essential emergency services had to come first. But then I heard that the city might suspend this compost collection indefinitely even when the pandemic was over, and I got angry. Suspend recycling before you suspend compost collection. Recycling is basically a sham process anyway, possibly contributing as much CO<sub>2</sub> to our atmosphere as it reduces. People should be reducing their one-time-use plastics, glass, and metal container usage instead of relying on recycling to avoid the waste. But composting is incredibly important and effective at reducing CO<sub>2</sub> emissions and reducing contributions to limited landfill space.

Composting is one of the simplest and most effective ways we city dwellers can limit our contribution to climate change. Where the municipal program existed, people used it. It's so popular in my neighborhood that I see people are still putting their compost in the municipal bins during the pandemic even though the collection program has been suspended. People want to compost and places like Big Reuse & Lower East Side Ecology Center's Community Compost Sites are providing a service for people to do so; we just need to spread the word. I only just found out that these drop-off sites are open, and I was planning to begin composting again for the first time since the municipal collection stopped earlier this year, which has been the only time I haven't composted since I moved to Brooklyn 13 years ago.

I understand the city has limited resources these days, but there will be no city period if we don't work toward fighting climate change. I lived in a first-floor apartment in Red Hook during Hurricane Sandy. I had to evacuate my home for a week and watched on TV as my neighborhood flooded. When I returned home, my apartment was covered in oily residue from the harbor and I had no heat, hot water, or electricity for a month during a freakishly cold November. I know firsthand what effect climate change is going to have on our city if we don't

work toward reducing our harmful impact on the environment. There is no point in saving money and jobs in the short term if there is no long term. And if we cut programs like composting, there will be no long term.

The LES Ecology Center site should be built into the East Side Coastal Resiliency Project and moved to temporary space in the interim. LES Ecology Center's license agreement should be renewed and include return to their historical site in the East River Park.

Big Reuse should be allowed to continue composting at their current site and have their license renewed.

These small compost sites are the backbone of the Sanitation Department's newly restored food scrap recycling program—a nimble and already highly popular sustainability program that dozens of City Council members and tens of thousands of committed New Yorkers pushed to fund in this year's budget.

Mayor de Blasio and Commissioner Silver's eviction of the sites not only undermines the City Council funded compost programs, but also the City's greenhouse gas emissions, Zero Waste, and environmental justice goals.

It will result in even more recyclable organic waste being hauled to landfills and incinerators, passing through transfer stations and utilizing waste infrastructure overwhelmingly located in low-income communities and communities of color polluted by particulate matter linked to severe cases of COVID-19. These community compost sites compost the organic waste and use the compost to green New York City, repair our depleted soils and fight climate change.

**We should be moving forward in the fight against the climate crisis—not backward.**

TO: New York City Council  
FROM: Dana Lobell  
DATE: December 18, 2020  
RE: Decision by the Parks Department to Evict the Lower East Side Ecology Center and Big Reuse from Parks Department properties

Good afternoon, and thank you for the opportunity to present written testimony to you as a citizen who strongly supports composting.

My name is Dana Lobell, and I have been a homeowner and resident in the Bay Ridge section of Brooklyn for 5 years.

I have also been an avid composter for nearly 20 years – ever since I learned that putting food waste into the trash creates methane, a powerful greenhouse gas that contributes significantly to climate change. I believe that climate change is THE Existential Crisis of our generation, and I am personally committed to doing all I can to reduce the damage.

For the past few years, I have been able to take my food scraps to my weekly neighborhood farmer’s market. That program, run by GrowNYC, has been suspended since the spring due to budget cuts resulting from the pandemic. During the winter, when my local farmer’s market was not operating, I used to take my food scraps on the subway to one of the year-round markets – that’s how devoted I was! However, during the pandemic I have been trying to limit my use of the subway for safety reasons. So sadly, all of my food scraps have been going into the trash.

This has been a cause of great distress to me – not only am I personally contributing to more climate change, but with nearly all of the city’s composting programs suspended, I assume we can multiply that by hundreds of thousands. In addition, while the city may save some money by closing these programs, it must be spending MORE money on putting waste in landfills, all while taking us in the wrong direction on addressing climate change.

Which leads me to this - New York City Parks Commissioner Mitchell Silver’s decision to oust the Lower East Side Ecology Center and Big Reuse from park properties runs directly counter to the City’s and the State’s ambitious global warming reduction goals, as well as the City’s pledge to send “zero” waste to landfills by 2030.

Therefore, I urge the City Council to reverse this decision, and to reinstate funding for all of the community and curbside composting programs as soon as possible.

Thank you.



Testimony to Save Big Reuse & Lower East Side Ecology Center's Community Compost Sites  
Committees on Parks and Recreation and Sanitation, Joint Oversight Hearing  
Friday, December 18, 2020 at 11am

**Dana Triwush**  
**540 Ocean Parkway #5S**  
**Brooklyn, NY 11218**

**Dear City Council:**

**I am a composting superfan and support the nonprofits Big Reuse and the Lower East Side Ecology Center. They provide vital environmental work for the city. Their license agreement for community compost sites must be renewed so they can remain in the Parks. Community composting belongs in Parks.**

The LES Ecology Center site should be built into the East Side Coastal Resiliency Project and moved to temporary space in the interim. LES Ecology Center's license agreement should be renewed and include return to their historical site in the East River Park.

Big Reuse should be allowed to continue composting at their current site and have their license renewed.

These small compost sites are the backbone of the Sanitation Department's newly restored food scrap recycling program - a nimble and already highly popular sustainability program that dozens of City Council members and tens of thousands of committed New Yorkers pushed to fund in this year's budget.

Mayor de Blasio and Commissioner Silver's eviction of the sites not only undermines the City Council funded compost programs, but also the City's greenhouse gas emissions, Zero Waste, and environmental justice goals.

It will result in even more recyclable organic waste being hauled to landfills and incinerators, passing through transfer stations and utilizing waste infrastructure overwhelmingly located in low-income communities and communities of color polluted by particulate matter linked to severe cases of COVID-19. These community compost sites compost the organic waste and use the compost to green New York City, repair our depleted soils and fight climate change.

Over 4,000 letters have been submitted to Parks in support of the sites in addition to letters of support including over 50 community groups. The sites are supported by their local Council Members and Borough Presidents. We urge Mayor de Blasio, Commissioner Silver and our elected officials to listen to the overwhelming public support for these programs and renew the license agreements for our community composting sites. **We should be moving forward in the fight against the climate crisis--not backward.**

I would like to encourage the parks dept and Mitchell Silver to not evict Big Reuse's composting site. It's imperative we keep these composting sites to ensure the sustainability of NYC and to combat climate change. I would also like to add that it's concerning that Mitchell Silver has been very hard to communicate with this on this subject. I've emailed multiple times and have only received a pre written vague statement. I've also called and his staff has given inconsistent messaging. I hope this hearing will allow him to hear our concerns and to ensure we keep this composting site.

Daniel Podesta



Testimony to Save Big Reuse & Lower East Side Ecology Center's Community Compost Sites  
Committees on Parks and Recreation and Sanitation, Joint Oversight Hearing  
Friday, December 18, 2020 at 11am

From Daniel Sacks

**I support the nonprofits Big Reuse and the Lower East Side Ecology Center. They provide vital environmental work for the city. Their license agreement for community compost sites must be renewed so they can remain in the Parks. Community composting belongs in Parks.**

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Good afternoon counsel. I'd like to begin by summoning the spirit and legacy of David Buckel who was a lawyer and fierce advocate for civil rights. He was also a master composter, a prolific compost educator and a relentless advocate for Community Composting. I was a student of his. David took his own life in the spring of 2018 by using resources that are destroying this earth *to destroy himself*. His last action was an environmental protest against indifference and apathy, against benign neglect and alienation. So I summon the spirit of David Buckel in an act of remembrance.

Compost exists at complex crossroads in the effort to achieve environmental and social justice amidst a climate crisis. Reduce. Reuse. Recycle is what we've been taught. Yet composting embodies all three simultaneously. By composting we substantially *reduce* what *lands* in a landfill. We *reuse* organic matter that has been scrapped or discarded. We *recycle* organic matter into a nutrient dense substance that is particularly beneficial to soils, plants, and people.

Compost is not waste. It is a resource. Historically it has been a wasted resource. Organics are not currently handled by any single agency, rather a hodgepodge where no agency or Organization is left holding the proverbial bag. My testimony today urges the council, if the mayor will not take a leadership role, to mandate compost now city-wide. Composting, whether residential collection or Community efforts, should never be on the chopping block again. Nevermore should composting be towed away because the Parks department needs, ironically, more parking.

Counsel, what mandating compost now looks like:

- 1) A revision to New York City's charter making compost a critical resource and requiring the creation of a Dept. of Compost or Composting Council.
- 2) Legislation requiring all city agencies, commercial entities, organizations, businesses and residences to participate in a city-wide compost program.
- 3) Further legislation permitting organics micro-haulers equal access to the Carting Industry and for tipping at decentralized processing centers.
- 4) The Adoption and expansion of the CORE act of 2020 and the Commercial Waste Zones Plan of 2018. Currently private carting is a 20th C. backwater, a public and environmental menace.

Thank you counsel and everyone working to Save Our Compost  
Rest in Power David Buckel  
Mandate Compost Now

DANIEL WENDLEK

12/20/2020

City Council Members:

It is well-documented (if not always well-recognized throughout our country) that climate change poses the largest and most terrifying existential threat to our world and way of life, followed, perhaps, by the peril of nuclear warfare. While we as private citizens generally cannot have an impact on the latter issue, we do have the ability from within our communities to effect change regarding the former. The Red Hook compost site is an example of a critical effort to do so. Through education initiatives regarding the benefits of and technical methodologies involved in composting, broad inclusion and acceptance of every person, and innovative programming, the site has demonstrated that it is an essential entity within the Red Hook—and wider Brooklyn and New York City—communities.

I have personally witnessed the dedication of this extraordinary group of people, who welcome volunteers and visitors with a shovel and open arms (or, rather, a signature compost elbow bump initiated by the beloved David Buckel to address the challenges of properly greeting someone with hands covered in materials at various stages of the decomposing process). This is a vital component of the Red Hook compost site: Within the network of city-funded composting programs, there is a need for organizations that embrace the values of diversity and inclusion. These principles are central to the mission in Red Hook and critical to the equitable growth of the surrounding area, both environmentally and culturally.

To conclude, I would like to express my profound belief that community compost sites are essential to the fabric and well-being of this city as we continue to work toward a cleaner, more inclusive society. To lose the Red Hook compost site permanently would be hugely detrimental to the Borough of Brooklyn and its citizens. I implore the Council to take this account into consideration and save the Red Hook compost site.

Regards,

Danielle Quick Holmes  
NYC Resident

Danika Lam  
10 River Rd, Apt 11D  
New York, NY 10044

December 18, 2020

Committee on Parks and Recreation & Committee on Sanitation and Solid Waste Management  
New York City Council  
New York City Hall  
City Hall Park  
New York, NY 10007

**Testimony for the Oversight Hearing on Community Composting  
Friday, December 18 at 11am**

Good morning. My name is Danika Lam and I am a founding member of Haki Compost Collective on Roosevelt Island. I am also a former Compost Coordinator with GrowNYC, for whom I managed the Roosevelt Island food scrap drop-off site until all sites were shut down at the end of March. In the devastation of the coronavirus pandemic and the City Council's earlier decision to slash the budget for City-funded compost programs, Haki Compost Collective was born of a group of humble Roosevelt Island residents determined to bring back what we knew to be an essential service to our community.

It is only thanks to our partnership with Big Reuse that we have been able, since September, to resume food scrap collection on Roosevelt Island at scale, though now our operations are entirely different. Our site is wholly volunteer-run, and recognizing the unifying potential of composting, is now paired with community building programming. At our renewed food scrap drop off-site, we have not only diverted more than 10,000 pounds of food scraps in just the past few months, but also registered new voters leading up to this year's pivotal presidential election, and hosted an Indigenous Peoples' Day community reflection to assess our responsibility to the people from whom this land was stolen. This is the power of community composting, and this is *exactly* the kind of program a City government should build up rather than tear down. What kind of government is this—to whom are you accountable—if you cannot support programs by and for your constituents?

The City now has a choice. It can partner with the community and make good on its commitments to send zero waste to landfill by 2030 and reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 80% by 2050, or it can follow in the footsteps of the current administration, repealing environmental protection laws and disgracefully forcing a pipeline through Indigenous land. I think I need not specify upon which side of the line evicting community composting sites would fall.

Thank you.

During the recent brown-bin household composting initiative in the city (unfortunately now shut down), every night after supper I put our food scraps into the bin in the back of our apartment building. I was amazed to see the result: our bags of non-recyclable, non-compostable trash were nearly empty. Almost everything we discarded was on its way to being transformed into something useful for people and for the environment.

The neighborhood centers now under threat of eviction are my compost pail multiplied thousands of times.

The City Council and Mayor de Blasio have an important and absolutely necessary plan to achieve zero waste and combat the climate crisis: “OneNYC 2050 is a strategy to secure our city’s future against the challenges of today and tomorrow. With bold actions to confront our climate crisis, achieve equity, and strengthen our democracy, we are building a strong and fair city.” (<http://onenyc.cityofnewyork.us/>).

Dumping food waste into landfills or incinerators instead of composting increases the production of greenhouse gases and adds to unhealthy air pollution. It accelerates the climate crisis and is hostile to the goals of OneNYC 2050 -- goals which we must achieve in order to save our city and help save the planet.

Evicting Big Reuse and the Lower East Side Ecology Center's community composting sites means more food waste will go to landfills and incinerators. And that will make it even more difficult to turn our city around and achieve the goals of OneNYC 2050.

Please don't evict them.

Darice Birge

My name is David Eng, and I have lived on the Lower East Side, adjacent to East River Park, since 2007. In my building, there are a significant number of residents that participate in composting. Our building had developed our own composting facility, which later led to a partnership with New York Department of Sanitation for municipal compost pickup. It's estimated that our residents diverted 1,200 lbs of organic waste a week towards sustainable composting through this program. The City has since suspended its municipal composting program at the onset of the Covid pandemic crisis. As a result, many of the residents were left with the only viable option of composting in the composting facility near us at East River Park, run by the Lower East Side ecology center. During the pandemic, I have weekly brought over my organic waste to the facility at East River Park, and oftentimes also bring my neighbor's food scraps.

The benefits of composting are:

- 1) Greater cleanliness within our own buildings of separating organic waste from our trash stream.
- 2) Supporting the City's goals of increasing sustainability by diverting and reducing landfill waste stream.
- 3) Providing the means for citizens to participate in a civic duty towards the above 2 goals.

I encourage the city to work with the Lower East Side Ecology center to maintain the facilities for composting that greatly benefit our community. In addition, I would like the city to re-engage on how it could resume its municipal composting programming.

Thank you for considering my testimony.

David Eng  
530 Grand Street, Apt F9F, New York, NY 10002

**From:** David Pike

**Sent:** Sunday, December 13, 2020 2:49 PM

**To:** NYC Council Hearings

**Subject:** Renew the license agreements for Big Reuse's Queensbridge Community Composting Site and LES Ecology Center's Composting in East River Park

Good afternoon,

My name is Dr. David L. Pike, and I am writing to urge you to vote to renew the license agreements for Big [Reuse's Queensbridge Community Composting Site](#) and LES Ecology Center's Composting in East River Park. It is my understanding that the Parks Dept is planning to evict the composting site to replace it with equipment storage and parking, and that Parks Commissioner Mitchell Silver and Mayor Bill de Blasio have the power to renew the license agreements for community composting sites. I cycle in the East River Park regularly, and would much rather see the site used for its current purpose than for the intended reuse. In terms of composting, I have been composting at the Union Square Greenmarket twice a week for over 12 years, except when it was suspended during the pandemic. This service is part of the LES Ecology Center's essential presence in the neighborhood. As a consequence of the LES Ecology Center's efforts, I have reduced my non-composted and recycled garbage to only one grocery-sized bag every three weeks. I have been able to educate my son in the necessity and practice of sustainability. Knowing I can recycle non-packaged foods has helped change my habits to buy food with less packaging. And at the Greenmarket, I have witnessed firsthand the outreach efforts of the LES Ecology Center with the many groups of schoolchildren who visit the market each week. They're an essential member of the community, and need to keep their base where it is.

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

I ask that the City restore funding to community compost and e-waste collection programs.

David L. Pike

111 4th Avenue

Commissioner Silver and Mayor de Blasio:

I am a member of Smiling hogshead Ranch, a volunteer run community farm collective in LIC, Queens that accepts our neighbors food scraps. I am troubled that licenses for community compost sites operated by Big Reuse (in Queens) and the Lower East Side Ecology Center (in Manhattan) have not been renewed by the Parks department. Removal of these sites (and the Brown Bin program) has and will again dramatically increase the amount of food scraps our community brings to our site. This overburdens our volunteers (me) with work that the city should be doing.

The Big Reuse and the LES Ecology Center sites are vital to progress on our City's zero waste, emissions reduction, and environmental justice goals. They support dozens of local green jobs, engage thousands of volunteers and food scrap donors each year, and donate composted leaves, wood chips, and food waste back to our parks as rich organic fertilizer.

There is no good reason to evict longstanding community organizations from small parcels of City land. If our City agencies cannot see the inherent value in composting without rules or laws in place, then we believe parks should be mandated to compost.

Now more than ever, our green spaces must be places where we can learn about and practice sustainability.

I urge you to immediately renew the longstanding license for these sites AND to mandate composting citywide.

David Roy

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'David Roy', written over a horizontal line.

Hello, I hope you are well. Our community was collecting food scraps before the City's brown bin program, and since the program was suspended, we've been challenged to find places to bring the scraps, until recently when many community composting sites have opened up. We had help from Big Reuse who picked up our scraps on a temporary basis to help us get started again. LESEC has been a vital source of information for many here who support composting and ecological efforts. Big Reuse and LESEC vital to our city, and we need to find a way for them to stay open and continue to work toward Mayor de Blasio's *0x30* vision. Thank you very much.

Deborah Hersch Johns  
3967 Sedgwick Avenue, 18A  
Bronx, NY 10463-3316  
dihersch@yahoo.com

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 has chosen to opt out of composting. Something I've 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 this summer 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 in the late 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.

The effort by the Park's Commissioner to evict Big Reuse and other community composting from park's land is toned deaf and lazy. The parks are for the community and the community understands far better than Commissioner Silver that composting is essential. The mere fact that 500,000 dollars of tax money went into building Big Reuse's site means that it belongs to the community and we should decide whether it stays. We want it to stay. We've been

inconvenienced enough to keep it going. Commissioner Silver should be inconvenienced, too. He needs to stop doing the easy thing, because it is hurting our community.

The most disappointing thing about this ridiculous effort by the Commissioner is that we now see how clearly he and our city leadership have zero perspective or consideration for the health of our parks and our communities. To take away community composting is hurtful and damaging. Particularly during a pandemic. Not to mention that it shows just how easily he will abandon the green initiatives that the city desperately needs. To then defend this decision with no real sound reasoning or any attempt for a solution is just insulting to the community. No one needs another parking lot. We need more composting sites, not less. We need leadership committed to moving towards more green initiatives, not ones that cut them first.

Dear New York City Council,

I'm writing to let you know how much community composting sites mean to me, and how important it is for our great City. When New York stopped accepting food scraps in March, I was dismayed. Collecting food scraps that turn into compost, rather than going to landfill, is something that I take pride in doing. It's a meaningful way I can contribute to the future of New York, the environment, and the planet. During the spring, I was one of many neighbors who came together and volunteered their time, money and efforts to create a network of food scrap drop off sites. During the pandemic, connecting with others who cared about their neighbors and their city gave me so much hope, and helped me get through the roughest months of COVID-19 last spring and summer. When Big Reuse and the Lower East Side Ecology Center were able to resume operations, this was such great news to so many. Losing these critical sites would be such a blow to New York's environmental goals, environmental justice, and to all of us who care and work so hard for the green future of our City. Please consider allowing Big Reuse and the Lower East Side Ecology Center to remain and continue their important work.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Deborah Straussman

We cannot lose the ability to get our food scraps recycled and reused as compost to amend our soil.

Composting is an environmental justice issue too. When food waste is not composted, it is often sent to incinerators located primarily in low-income communities and communities of color and burned with trash and fossil fuels. This releases particulates and toxic chemicals into local communities.

Finally, sustainably disposing of organics is critical to achieving New York City's ambitious climate and zero waste goals. Dumping food waste into landfills or incinerators instead of composting them adds to air pollution, accelerates the climate crisis, and will mean that the people who provide these critical composting services will lose their jobs.

**Deirdre Newman**

Dear Council Members and Parks Commissioner Silver,

My name is Deliana Daskalova and I've lived in Astoria since 2006. I've never written testimonies to our city's council, other than just recently, filling out a survey by the Sanitation Department requesting more garbage cans in the neighborhood because we have to walk for at least 7-8 blocks before seeing one. No change so far!

In this regard, I'd like to say that upon hearing that **BIG REUSE** will soon be without a home, I felt compelled to write and plead with you on what is common sense in countries like the Netherlands, Sweden, Germany, Switzerland – saving food compost!

New York City is the most desired and admired place looked upon as an example for so many innovations, progressive thinking, and mainly for its open minded and caring people. Giving us the right to compost, not only by choice but also must be a requirement at every building, is the absolute **MINIMUM** we can do to preserve our environment, ease the burden at landfills, and minimize the amount of methane gas generated.

By now you must know all the endless benefits of composting so I won't list them here, however, what I want to stress is that people don't need much time converting on why they should compost – we only have to sincerely try and explain with care, as I did with my roommate, sister, friends, and colleagues. And frankly, to my surprise, it only took one passionate and clear rant from me about how they all (in their tiny NYC apartments) should start separating their food waste and taking precious freezer space for a bag or two of what has turned out to be a weekly Saturday morning dumping at my local pick up spot at 23<sup>rd</sup> Avenue and 33<sup>rd</sup> Street be it rain, shine, and most recently snow – and all thanks to **BIG REUSE** and Astoria Pug initiative. Never have I ever done it prior to the pandemic, or thought about telling and converting people to do it, or writing a testimony to convince our decision makers on why we should keep doing such an essential thing!

A parking lot is **NOT** more important than the life sustaining soil we produce with our food scraps! We need to expand, not destroy, what is good for the people and our health, its enough that the soil is already irredeemably destroyed by the likes of Monsanto! We, as a society, need to work together and have common sense on how to help our bodies, our children, and the Earth!

**“The nation that destroys its soil, destroys itself.” – Franklin D. Roosevelt**

**PLEASE SAVE OUR COMPOST! Save BIG REUSE!**

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,  
Deliana Daskalova  
Astoria-Ditmars Resident

Dear City Counsel,

I wish to testify to the city counsel to urge the NYC Parks to renew the lease with Big Reuse to continue composting in Queens. NYC has set forth ambitious goals to reach zero waste and composting is an essential part of this. It is a source of great shame to consider the backwards movement that this move represents. I personally use their drop off sites for composting thus diverting waste. Just as important Big Reuse gives back to the community by sharing the finished compost with the community. I have collaborated with Big Reuse to use the compost in community gardens, street trees and community-based projects. The production of finished compost supports the very activities with the Parks Department staff housed at the Queens facility supports. Ending this relationship and this resource for the community undercuts the activities of Parks Department Staff. The community uses this compost to enrich plantings in street trees, parks, community gardens, and schools. The idea of losing this essential resource for parking is shockingly backward looking. I urge the city to renew the lease for Big Reuse, create a permanent relationship, and support community composting in Western Queens. Many community volunteers working so hard to support our Parks and green spaces in NYC will be without an essential resource.

Thank you,

Denise Bolognino

Director Hellgate CSA, Director Flowering Queens

December 18, 2020

Dear New York City Council,

The Big Reuse composting facility is an essential service. Composting facilities divert 1.4 million tons of organic waste from landfills per year. By composting, we reduce civic costs for waste collection and also extend the life of landfills.

I compost because I am a young mother and physician who wants to make sure that my son lives in a world that is not taken over by climate change (intense and frequent hurricanes, heat waves, decades-long drought, flooding), and to ensure that vector borne/zoonotic diseases like Zika virus are easily controlled. Every week, I make the effort to collect my food scraps and place them in my freezer. Every Saturday, my son and I have made it a ritual where we drop off our compost and then head to the playground. We are so dedicated to composting that we started a small bin in our apartment, but we generate more food scraps than our composting worms can consume.

It is also short-sighted that the City would invest half a million dollars into a composting site that requires little maintenance and replace it with a parking lot. In college, I worked as an Urban Park Ranger in NYC, and was proud to be a Parks' dept employee. However, the decision to not renew the licensing agreement with Big Reuse for composting makes me disappointed in an organization that I was once a part of. I lived in San Francisco for ten years, where composting is a routine part of our garbage disposal. The compost was turned into fertilizer that was then used for SF's beautiful parks. NYC can do the same. Please don't take composting away. The New York City Council needs to continue thinking about the long term consequences of climate change and how it can further address this urgent crisis. Composting is a small, but important, component of the solution.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'D Ng', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Dianna Ng, MD

December 20, 2020

Dear Mayor De Blasio and Commissioner Silver,

I am asking you to stop the eviction of Big Reuse from its current location, to find an appropriate (and nearby) site for the Lower East Side Ecology Center's compost operations during ESCR construction, and to return LESEC's compost yard to East River Park when resiliency work for that area is finished.

I am a 34-year resident of the East Village, and compost at least weekly at farmers' markets or at LESEC's public drop off at the compost yard. I've taken this even more seriously over the last few years, as it's become clear that we – our country, but also New York City – are not doing nearly enough to combat climate change. My neighbors and I were excited when food scrap drop-off was able to resume this summer; every week at LESEC'S Tompkins Square Farmers Market I see barrel after barrel fill up with food scraps. The public commitment is strong.

It's especially important to me that LESEC's compost yard return to the new East River Park as soon as possible. The City is about to spend over a billion dollars to create a flood barrier. There will be signage in the new park talking about sea level, and Sandy – but signs aren't enough. We can spare an acre of the new park – we should gladly dedicate an acre of the new park – to fight back against the climate change that put us in this position. What better place to take a stand against waste mismanagement, and show how we need to move forward, than in a beloved park whose old life is being sacrificed to flood management?

The direct connection between the compost yard and the community is critical. A site miles away, or in another borough, does nothing to show our children how we need to responsibly manage waste, and how to turn that waste into something that supports and nurtures not only East River Park, but smaller local parks and gardens all around them. We're a city, and without places like the Lower East Side Ecology Center, our kids miss an important part of their civic education. It's their future – let's make it a part of their world, right in their own community, right where flood water once threatened their homes.

Please leave Big Reuse in its current site; please support LESEC properly during ESCR construction; and please return their compost yard to East River Park where it can remain a visible, working commitment to changing the disastrous course we're on.

Sincerely,

Dianne Lake

Composting saves resources, reduces the waste stream, and reduces climate warming emissions. More than that, composting in NYC is a large-scale ordeal that manages to be a tight-knit community. Not only does it contribute to community, it also creates jobs. The social, economic, and environmental signals all point to NYC's composting programs being essential, and cannot be allowed to be cut back on. I understand that there is a budget deficit, but investing in sustainable initiatives is crucial, especially in NYC. Please help make it a greener place by supporting composting programs.

December 21, 2020

Hello, this is Edward Hong, a NYC resident since 2000. I respectfully submitting this testimony to the Committee on Sanitation and Solid Waste Management and the Committee on Parks and Recreation, to humbly request that, in line with this administration's zero water to landfill goals, Big Reuse and Lower East Side Ecology Center community composting sites be kept open—renew their licenses!—, and receive additional funding to build out the Lower East Side Ecology Center into the East Side Coastal Resiliency Project, and move their community composting site to temporary space in the interim.

When we compost, we support the kind of balanced and harmonious living our ancestors practiced. Through composting, organic matter not fit for human consumption is transformed into nourishment. The business of composting is pro-people. These are the types of green jobs and services we want and need. The composting business is critical work in our communities. Supporting the compost business is part of economic and climate justice.

I understand the Parks Department has raised legal concerns about composting on Parks' land. Natural Resources Defense Council and New York Lawyers for the Public Interest have reviewed these concerns and determined they are a non-issue.

I would love to see my City officials decide to support the public good and the next seven generations of inhabitants of this Earth with their decision. Thank you for your time and attention to this matter.

This compost programming has been one of the few silver linings and positive events to come from COVID.

A group of scrappy and spirited local community members came together to organize a robust and extremely organized compost program. They're committed and motivated and are asking the city to simply support them and help keep this program going to its fullest extent.

After leaving NYC for 6 months, I came back and found myself with more time and energy and looking for ways to make a positive impact in my beloved North BK/Greenpoint. I started personally composting at home and after dropping off my scraps in McGrolick park saw how cheerful the volunteers were and decided I'd try my hand at it!

Being on the other side of the compost bin only further cemented how dedicated and passionate this group is about the program. We estimated approximately 500 people and 3,000 lbs of waste in just the one Sunday I volunteered; after that I was officially a convert!

I hope the city does everything it can to help and not hinder this program.

Elaina Levenson

12/20/2020

City Council Members:

It is well-documented (if not always well-recognized throughout our country) that climate change poses the largest and most terrifying existential threat to our world and way of life, followed, perhaps, by the peril of nuclear warfare. While we as private citizens generally cannot have an impact on the latter issue, we do have the ability from within our communities to effect change regarding the former. The Red Hook compost site is an example of a critical effort to do so. Through education initiatives regarding the benefits of and technical methodologies involved in composting, broad inclusion and acceptance of every person, and innovative programming, the site has demonstrated that it is an essential entity within the Red Hook—and wider Brooklyn and New York City—communities.

I have heard from friends about this extraordinary group of people, who welcome volunteers and visitors with a shovel and open arms (or, rather, a signature compost elbow bump initiated by the beloved David Buckel to address the challenges of properly greeting someone with hands covered in materials at various stages of the decomposing process). This is a vital component of the Red Hook compost site: Within the network of city-funded composting programs, there is a need for organizations that embrace the values of diversity and inclusion. These principles are central to the mission in Red Hook and critical to the equitable growth of the surrounding area, both environmentally and culturally.

To conclude, I would like to express my profound belief that community compost sites are essential to the fabric and well-being of this city as we continue to work toward a cleaner, more inclusive society. To lose the Red Hook compost site permanently would be hugely detrimental to the Borough of Brooklyn and its citizens. I implore the Council to take this account into consideration and save the Red Hook compost site.

Regards,

Elinor Krichmar  
Brooklyn Resident

Hi,

I am a NYC resident and have been composting here for years. I believe the severity of the climate crisis requires us to urgently seek solutions on every level from the personal to international regulations. In this light, I find it personally very important to compost my food waste, and also believe it should be a priority of our city's policy to support widespread, convenient, and equitable composting.

Like many aspects of life, composting has become harder since the pandemic started. My weekly drop off site closed, and Big Reuse has been critical in continuing to provide this service. As we now move into creating and planning our post-pandemic lives, there is a lot of talk of not returning to "normal", given the significant inequities that were "normal" before last March. However, I am appalled to see that not only is the city not using this time to expand composting services, but to regress, take away community composting sites, and ultimately direct MORE organic waste towards landfills than before COVID.

Lastly, I hope that the significant benefits of composting are not lost on you as you consider this issue. If you think of a older hippie-type mildly eccentric woman with dirty gloves and a backyard bin when you picture composting, you have completely missed the magnitude of this issue and I would encourage you to consider some facts and statistics. The average cost to landfill municipal solid waste in the US was ~\$55 per ton in 2019 (<https://www.statista.com/statistics/692063/cost-to-landfill-municipal-solid-waste-by-us-region/>). Compostable material (food scraps and garden waste) make up more than 30% of what we throw away, according to the EPA (<https://www.epa.gov/recycle/composting-home>). Investing in composting would allow the city to spend less on landfills.

Composting is also a major tool that can be used in the urgent fight against climate change. (As a side note, if you do not feel a real sense of urgency about this, wake up.) In a landfill, compostable waste gets buried and cut off from oxygen, and cannot decompose as it would in a compost. Instead, it is broken down in an alternative method without oxygen that produces a biogas that is roughly half methane and half carbon dioxide. Both of these are potent greenhouse gases, with methane being 28 to 36 times more effective than carbon dioxide at trapping heat in the atmosphere. Landfills are the third-largest source of human-generated methane emissions in the United States.

In short: closing down these composting sights is extremely dumb, short-sighted, and ignores environmental and economic facts. Please don't make this mistake.

Thank you,

Elise Fiala

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 reducing GHG emissions. With good infrastructure, composting in New York has been scaled and can have an even bigger impact.

Faced with the need to make budget cuts, New York City greatly reduced funding for composting operations earlier this year. All the work that has been done in educating and convincing New Yorkers that their individual actions count will soon be undone as people go back to old, convenient habits. But many New Yorkers have also refused to stop composting and have relied on non-profits and a number of smaller neighborhood community gardens have stepped up to the plate.

Now, one of those non-profit organizations, Big Reuse is facing eviction from its site under the Queensborough bridge, which seems like a final blow to the possibility of letting engaged citizens continue to do the right thing and contribute to the fight against climate change. In addition, these organizations provide jobs, which are sorely needed at this time. Finally, how can we forget that NYC Parks benefit from the compost produced in these sites?

I hope that through this hearing our public officials, especially the NYC Parks Commissioner, will understand the madness of thinking a convenient parking spot is more important than maintaining the lifeline of an activity that is helping fight climate change, create jobs and keep our communities together.

Thank you,

Elizabeth Aceituno  
Long Island City, NY 11101

Dear NYC Parks commissioner Mitchell Silver

As an Astoria resident for several years, nothing has made me feel like a part of the community more than when I compost. Not only is it good for the environment, but in turn, these benefits make their way back to my community and our neighbors. I urge you to extend the licensing agreements to the two biggest compost facilities in New York City (Big Reuse and the Lower East Side Ecology Center). These two facilities divert 1.4 million tons of organic waste from our landfills. That's a huge win for the health of our communities. This is one of the 3 reasons why I keep food scraps in my freezer every week and drop them off no matter the weather. I compost to help my community, to help the environment at large, and because it makes me feel good on a personal level to know that I'm doing my part. Honestly, it's been one of my joys during these pandemic times. Please choose to extend the licensing agreements for Big Reuse and the LES Ecology Center in order to help our communities.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth Berkman

Composting is critical to reducing our carbon footprint. I recycle, buy from sustainable brands or try to thrift whenever possible, and pursue carbon friendly forms of transportation (biking). Composting is another critical part of the way I can reduce my carbon footprint in order to delay climate change, so that our shores won't get encroached on by rising sea levels.

Without the ability to compost, this is another avenue that is being taken away from us from contributing to holding off on the disastrous effects of climate change. We have to do everything that is possible within our means to help our planet.

Elizabeth Chang  
3043 49th St  
Apt 2N  
Astoria, NY 11103

To: Committee on Sanitation and Solid Waste Management;  
Committee on Parks and Recreation

Date: 12/21/2020

RE: Lease renewal for community composting sites in Manhattan and Queens

I am writing in support of renewing the leases for the community composting sites operated by the Lower East Side Ecology Center and Big Reuse.

Last October, I attended a Make Compost, Not Trash community meeting at Big Reuse in Gowanus. I met other New Yorkers involved in community composting efforts, heard great ideas of how to expand organics collection, and learned about the Parks Department's history of solid waste recycling efforts and how they planned to keep expanding and moving toward the Zero Waste by 2030 goal.

The pandemic has upended all departments in the city, and I understand why organics collection was temporarily cut back. But what is so inspiring is the way community composting efforts have stepped up to cover this gap in services. Demand to compost food scraps has not diminished for New Yorkers, which is an incredible accomplishment that should make the city proud. This wouldn't have been true if it weren't for all the work that City agencies have put in working together with community groups like LESEC, BBG, Big Reuse and more.

That is why I am especially saddened that the Parks Department has not chosen to utilize other city land to park vehicles, given the importance of these programs.

Although there are efforts to expand small-scale community composting projects throughout the city, these large composting sites are crucial to meeting the current demand to compost food scraps. Without them in the short term, tons and tons of food waste will immediately be rerouted back into the waste stream. In the short term, we all will have to pay to transport that additional waste out of the city and pay for the privilege of burying it in another state's landfill. In the long term, the methane created by mixing organics into anaerobic landfills will have devastating environmental consequences.

Given the extraordinary circumstances of the pandemic, and the dire consequences of moving organics back into solid waste streams, the current community composting sites must be allowed to renew their leases for 2021. Please consider utilizing other land for the short term use of parking vehicles, to allow for these sites to continue operating.

Thank you,  
Elizabeth Schad

Testimony to Save Big Reuse & Lower East Side Ecology Center's Community Compost Sites  
Committees on Parks and Recreation and Sanitation, Joint Oversight Hearing  
Friday, December 18, 2020 at 11am

**Name: Ellen Garvey**

**Organization affiliation: Hillman Yard**

I support the nonprofits Big Reuse and the Lower East Side Ecology Center. They provide vital environmental work for the city. Their license agreement for community compost sites must be renewed so they can remain in the Parks. Community composting belongs in Parks, especially in this period when you have terminated citywide compost pickup.

It's only because I live 3 or 4 blocks from the composting center in East River /John V. Lindsay Park that I can manage to use it. I bring my compost there by bicycle or shopping cart, and it makes me feel good that at least my food scraps are making their way back into the earth. So much of our waste is being shipped abroad to other countries, increasingly unwilling to take it. When we throw something "away," it's HERE. I'd rather see and smell – yes, smell – that waste in my park, and know it's not being dumped into landfill, mixed with plastic bags, than turning into something useful.

As a garden member at the Hillman Yard on Broome Street, I see how the end product of the composting process enters into our lives again, fertilizing this strip of land reclaimed from a junk heap. The pairing seems fitting – food scraps remake a former scrap heap, with the intervention of the Composting center. I love that I can take my granddaughters here and show them this process in action. LES Ecology Center staff stop and talk with people about what they are doing, so this is not yet another way to make the results of our choices invisible, but instead shows how we might live in ways that waste less.

The general disregard of the needs of the Lower East Side has been disheartening. The LES Ecology Center site should be built into the East Side Coastal Resiliency Project and moved to temporary space in the interim. LES Ecology Center's license agreement should be renewed and include return to their historical site in the East River Park.

Big Reuse should be allowed to continue composting at their current site and have their license renewed.

These small compost sites are the backbone of the Sanitation Department's newly restored food scrap recycling program - a nimble and already highly popular sustainability program that dozens of City Council members and tens of thousands of committed New Yorkers pushed to fund in this year's budget.

Mayor de Blasio and Commissioner Silver's eviction of the sites not only undermines the City Council funded compost programs, but also the City's greenhouse gas emissions, Zero Waste, and environmental justice goals.

It will result in even more recyclable organic waste being hauled to landfills and incinerators, passing through transfer stations and utilizing waste infrastructure overwhelmingly located in low-income communities and communities of color polluted by particulate matter linked to severe cases of

COVID-19. These community compost sites compost the organic waste and use the compost to green New York City, repair our depleted soils and fight climate change.

Over 4,000 letters have been submitted to Parks in support of the sites in addition to letters of support including over 50 community groups. The sites are supported by their local Council Members and Borough Presidents. We urge Mayor de Blasio, Commissioner Silver and our elected officials to listen to the overwhelming public support for these programs and renew the license agreements for our community composting sites. **We should be moving forward in the fight against the climate crisis--not backward.**

My name is Ellen Polivy. I live on Roosevelt Island. Please find a way to maintain the composting program. It is working too well to stop it now and back slide from all the gains we have made.

When we first got the composting barrels on the Island, it took a tremendous effort of community education and engagement to get people saving and bringing their food scraps to the Saturday drop off. We had forums, trainings, hand-outs, emails, community education events. At this point, residents are not only bringing tons of organic waste, but also finding ways of saving their waste in reusable containers so they don't use up plastic bags.

On a personal level, my family is seeing real benefits in two ways..

- 1., our tall kitchen garbage bags last much longer as between the scrap collection and the recycling, and plastic bag recycling at the market, we only need to discard our left over household trash every 7 to 10 days.
2. Not wanting to have smelly garbage, encouraged us to eat less meat and more veggies so that we have more to compost and less waste to discard. And we now cook healthier and waste less. The meat we do eat gets used to the point that the bones are dry. Basically, composting made us healthier.

If you end the compost program now, we will have more family garbage, more smelly rat attracting stuff trucked or shipped to the landfill to produce methane and less compost to nourish the City plants and trees.

Please find a way to maintain this beneficial program. Going back to the old days with smelly garbage on the street seems penny wise and pound foolish.

Respectfully Submitted

Ellen Polivy  
531 Main Street apt 1019  
New York, NY 10044  
Ellenaction1@gmail.com

I'm a resident of Astoria who has been regularly bringing food scraps for composting since 2017. Composting (in the form that it currently takes in NYC) is inconvenient—food scraps take up room in your freezer, you need to go out of your way to drop them off, and yes, it can sometimes be a little gross. However, I believe in doing all I can to fight climate change. For me, these inconveniences are a small price to pay for the ability to meaningfully contribute to this cause.

This is why I hope that the Parks and Recreation department will allow Big Reuse and the LES Ecology Center to stay in their current spaces. It might be inconvenient to lose that space for other uses, but I believe the long-term benefits of this decision, especially for sustainability and mitigating climate change on a city level, are worth those inconveniences. Offering a space that allows NYC residents to prevent their food scraps from turning into methane and other greenhouse gasses should be something that is prioritized over something like having extra parking.

Thank you for your time and for reading this testimony.

Elysia Liang

Dear Parks Commissioner,

There is no legal justification for evicting the Big Reuse from their composting site. Hundreds of thousands of dollars have already been invested in the site, and the site serves an immeasurable number of members of the NYC populous.

The city of New York declared a state of emergency on the climate crisis in 2019, and yet the city continues to cut funding to composting programs throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. Composting at the Big Reuse diverts millions of tons of waste from landfills each year, and should be of the utmost importance if the city wants to pursue an aggressive climate agenda, as it claims. Composting is a huge part of the climate solution because it reduces CO2 and methane emissions, and the resulting compost nourishes the already existing greenery in our city, further reducing urban heat and CO2 emissions.

Although we are in the midst of challenging times, we can't lose sight of the long-term effects of the decisions we make now. Keeping the Big Reuse as a composting site directly benefits our fight against climate and our city's environment.

Thank you for your time.

Best,  
Emily Barns

Testimony of Emily Gallagher

Save our composting

I support micro haulers and am submitting this testimony to hold our leaders accountable to your zero waste to landfill by 2030 campaign. In NYC and believe we have only begun to scratch the service in saving our environment. We should be adding to our composting resources in NYC not diminishing them.

Big Reuse and LES Ecology Center are crucial to these efforts in NYC. I want our city to be a leader in the environmental sector. Please vote to keep us moving in the right direction.

Please save our composting.

-Emily Gallagher

NYC Resident since 2007

To Parks Commissioner Silver and Mayor de Blasio,

There is no legal reason why Big Reuse and the LES Ecology Center must lose their leases on their compost sites. New York Lawyers for the Public Interest is clear about this. Composting engages many, serves everyone and promotes the very mission of NYC Parks.

Evicting these two community organizations at a time when the city has also shortsightedly cut funding to all curbside composting makes me wonder if the current administration has an existing environmental plan. Composting is a huge part of the climate solution because it keeps organic waste out of the landfill, reducing methane emissions from decomposition and CO2 emissions from transporting trash. The resulting compost promotes greenery that mitigates the urban heat effect, and directly sequesters CO2.

Mayor de Blasio needs to renew Big Reuse's license agreement to continue operating at its Queensbridge site. The site is organized and being used to produce compost for local residents and community gardens. Before Big Reuse moved in, it was an abandoned lot filled with construction equipment. Big Reuse improved the space and transformed it into a boon for the neighborhood.

Mayor de Blasio needs to find a temporary space for LESEC to continue its compost program during the East Side Coastal Resiliency construction project. He needs to ensure that the compost yard is incorporated into the reconstruction plans for East River Park. The park serves the surrounding community, who rely on LESEC for compost, employment and volunteer opportunities.

Composting belongs on NYC parkland. It supports the agency's sustainability goals, and must be embedded into the future of NYC parks. The infrastructure of these nonprofits will prioritize the long term sustainability of urban living, and provide options for residents to reduce their carbon footprints. Enabling local residents to invest in collective action as a community is the best way to achieve long term improvements to our waste system.

LESEC and Big Reuse's compost programs are sustainability anchors in their communities. Closing these sites would undermine the City's goals in zero waste, carbon emissions and environmental justice. These sites should not be compared to the Spring Creek Lawsuit about a compost site on parkland. There is no legal standing on this comparison.

Dear Mayor de Blasio, Commissioner Silver, Assistant Commissioner Biederman, and Council Members:

My name is Emily. During the pandemic, I was fortunate to be able to compost with an NYRP community garden and have experienced the numerous ways that NYC has composted over the years in multiple neighborhoods.

Due to Big Reuse's pending eviction and due to the advocacy of the Save Our Compost campaign, I've gotten to learn more about Big Reuse and the importance of facilities of its size and expertise.

Before this pending eviction and before budget cuts, I thought about the expansion of composting with a much heavier focus on large commercial sites. I now see just how essential operations of the Lower East Side Ecology Center's and Big Reuse's size are to the city's compost expansion, and I see that NYC's community composters are true pioneers that are not to be taken for granted.

Big Reuse processes food scraps from numerous micro-haulers, which could shut down without the help of Big Reuse. They have also been on Parks' land for 9 years without any threats of eviction, and they serve as an ecological and educational hub. Without a tangible reason as to why this site would no longer be a fit for City Parks land, it is difficult to trust and collaborate with the Parks Department on issues that are so ecologically important. The following are some key concerns I have and appreciate you listening:

#### **COMMERCIAL WASTE ZONES:**

Sites like Big Reuse, Lower East Side Ecology Center, and Red Hook divert food scraps from creating greenhouse gases in landfill and turn them, instead, into nutrients that support healthy plants and healthy soil, including those on Parks land.

My biggest concern is that, by disrupting the stability of such major sites as Big Reuse and Lower East Side Ecology Center, the organics collection program will not be able to abide by [Commercial Waste Zoning laws](#), which were put in place to prevent waste from being transferred un-equitably and unsustainably.

This waste transfer has caused years of pollution in the South Bronx, and it's caused regular 10 to 20 hour work days for haulers that could otherwise go a shorter distance and emit less greenhouse gases by transferring waste within their own boroughs. Without sites like Big Reuse, Lower East Side Ecology Center, and Red Hook's abilities to take on food scraps, NYC will run into the same problems with composting as it has with the rest of municipal waste.

#### **REACHING CLIMATE GOALS:**

Without the Parks' continued support of food scrap collection and composting, we also delay the city's goals for net zero emissions, of which food waste plays an essential role.

According to the Food and Agriculture Organization, [food that ends up in landfill contributes about 8% of greenhouse gas emissions globally, and if food waste were a country, it would be the third largest polluting country on the planet.](#)

Without your support, communication, and collaboration with experts like the Lower East Side Ecology Center, Big Reuse, and Red Hook, NYC will not be able to meet its climate goals, and it will not be able to comply with Commercial Waste Zoning laws.

**Please keep supporting Big Reuse, Lower East Side Ecology Center, and Red Hook and their work to compost food scraps consistently and equitably in NYC, and please keep a collaborative dialogue with such key players in greenhouse gas reduction and green jobs.**

**WORKING WITH COMMUNITY GARDENS:**

I appreciate the Parks Department's acknowledgment of their composting support through sites like Greenthumb. I also want to acknowledge that micro operations like this are entirely voluntary, and while all of community composting currently relies on volunteers, the sites that really create and process significant compost employ composting staff and support green jobs. I'd like to see the financial support of composting operations and education within Greenthumb gardens in order to give them optimal support for their work.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,  
Emily Kichler

To Parks Commissioner Silver and Mayor de Blasio,

There is no legal reason why Big Reuse and the LES Ecology Center must lose their leases on their compost sites. New York Lawyers for the Public Interest is clear about this. Composting engages many, serves everyone and promotes the very mission of NYC Parks.

Evicting these two community organizations at a time when the city has also shortsightedly cut funding to all curbside composting makes me wonder if the current administration has an existing environmental plan. Composting is a huge part of the climate solution because it keeps organic waste out of the landfill, reducing methane emissions from decomposition and CO2 emissions from transporting trash. The resulting compost promotes greenery that mitigates the urban heat effect, and directly sequesters CO2.

Mayor de Blasio needs to renew Big Reuse's license agreement to continue operating at its Queensbridge site. The site is organized and being used to produce compost for local residents and community gardens. Before Big Reuse moved in, it was an abandoned lot filled with construction equipment. Big Reuse improved the space and transformed it into a boon for the neighborhood.

Mayor de Blasio needs to find a temporary space for LESEC to continue its compost program during the East Side Coastal Resiliency construction project. He needs to ensure that the compost yard is incorporated into the reconstruction plans for East River Park. The park serves the surrounding community, who rely on LESEC for compost, employment and volunteer opportunities.

Composting belongs on NYC parkland. It supports the agency's sustainability goals, and must be embedded into the future of NYC parks. The infrastructure of these nonprofits will prioritize the long term sustainability of urban living, and provide options for residents to reduce their carbon footprints. Enabling local residents to invest in collective action as a community is the best way to achieve long term improvements to our waste system.

LESEC and Big Reuse's compost programs are sustainability anchors in their communities. Closing these sites would undermine the City's goals in zero waste, carbon emissions and environmental justice. These sites should not be compared to the Spring Creek Lawsuit about a compost site on parkland. There is no legal standing on this comparison.

12/20/2020

City Council Members:

It is well-documented (if not always well-recognized throughout our country) that climate change poses the largest and most terrifying existential threat to our world and way of life, followed, perhaps, by the peril of nuclear warfare. While we as private citizens generally cannot have an impact on the latter issue, we do have the ability from within our communities to effect change regarding the former. The Red Hook compost site is an example of a critical effort to do so. Through education initiatives regarding the benefits of and technical methodologies involved in composting, broad inclusion and acceptance of every person, and innovative programming, the site has demonstrated that it is an essential entity within the Red Hook—and wider Brooklyn and New York City—communities.

I have personally witnessed the dedication of this extraordinary group of people, who welcome volunteers and visitors with a shovel and open arms (or, rather, a signature compost elbow bump initiated by the beloved David Buckel to address the challenges of properly greeting someone with hands covered in materials at various stages of the decomposing process). This is a vital component of the Red Hook compost site: Within the network of city-funded composting programs, there is a need for organizations that embrace the values of diversity and inclusion. These principles are central to the mission in Red Hook and critical to the equitable growth of the surrounding area, both environmentally and culturally.

To conclude, I would like to express my profound belief that community compost sites are essential to the fabric and well-being of this city as we continue to work toward a cleaner, more inclusive society. To lose the Red Hook compost site permanently would be hugely detrimental to the Borough of Brooklyn and its citizens. I implore the Council to take this account into consideration and save the Red Hook compost site.

Regards,

Emma Kang-Rosenthal  
Brooklyn Resident

Testimony to Save Big Reuse & Lower East Side Ecology Center's Community Compost Sites  
Committees on Parks and Recreation and Sanitation, Joint Oversight Hearing  
Friday, December 18, 2020 at 11am

**Name: Emma Schwarz**

**I support the nonprofits Big Reuse and the Lower East Side Ecology Center. They provide vital environmental work for the city. Their license agreement for community compost sites must be renewed so they can remain in the Parks. Community composting belongs in Parks.**

The LES Ecology Center site should be built into the East Side Coastal Resiliency Project and moved to temporary space in the interim. LES Ecology Center's license agreement should be renewed and include return to their historical site in the East River Park.

Big Reuse should be allowed to continue composting at their current site and have their license renewed.

These small compost sites are the backbone of the Sanitation Department's newly restored food scrap recycling program - a nimble and already highly popular sustainability program that dozens of City Council members and tens of thousands of committed New Yorkers pushed to fund in this year's budget.

Mayor de Blasio and Commissioner Silver's eviction of the sites not only undermines the City Council funded compost programs, but also the City's greenhouse gas emissions, Zero Waste, and environmental justice goals.

It will result in even more recyclable organic waste being hauled to landfills and incinerators, passing through transfer stations and utilizing waste infrastructure overwhelmingly located in low-income communities and communities of color polluted by particulate matter linked to severe cases of COVID-19. These community compost sites compost the organic waste and use the compost to green New York City, repair our depleted soils and fight climate change.

I urge Mayor de Blasio, Commissioner Silver and our elected officials to listen to the overwhelming public support for these programs and renew the license agreements for our community composting sites. We should be moving forward in the fight against the climate crisis--not backward.

This year has already seen the elimination of many community collection sites for composting waste, which has resulted in much more organic material being thrown in the trash instead of being recycled and reused. Please don't also cause the LES Ecology Center to shut down.

My name is Eri Iwasaki, and I am a volunteer at the Red Hook Compost Site, which is now shut down by the Parks Department. Red Hook compost site was the largest compost site in the United States that did not use fossil fuels. The organic materials were hand-processed by staff and volunteers, and it was the only composting site in New York City that consistently had a diverse base of staff, volunteers, and visitors, which is attributed to the site manager, who was a person of color, and represented the nearby NYCHA residents. I used to see residents from NYCHA houses and IKEA shoppers walk through to see the processing of materials, and pick up free compost. It was a welcoming and open space where people can see first-hand vegetable scraps that were otherwise going to landfills to generate methane gas, turned into beautiful soil for the New York City gardens and farms. This special site is shut down, and other remaining composting sites in New York City are either machine-operated or staffed by people who are not representing the communities that these sites reside on, (i.e. white staff in black and brown communities). So COMPOSTING IS NOW FOR THE PRIVILEGED ONLY. I understand that these composting sites have the best of intentions, and they are not making a conscious effort to NOT hire minority, or NOT serve the communities that the sites reside on. It is really easy to hire people within our network of people, a known entity, who happen to care about the same things we care about. However, this leads to NO DIVERSITY, and exclusion of most of the New York City residents. Here is what they should do: Composting sites that operate within or near lower income communities need to go above and beyond to (1) hire staff from these communities and (2) invest in education and outreach to the residents to drop off their food scraps. This is a lot harder than hiring from our own networks and serving just the privileged who are already eager to participate, but this is New York City, and we need to be inclusive of all residents. I am asking the City Council to (1) re-open Red Hook compost site, and (2) stipulate organizations that are receiving funding from the city to commit to hiring from and investing in local under-served communities.

December 19, 2020

## Testimony in Support of Community Composting in New York City

To the members of the Committee on Sanitation and Solid Waste Management, and the Committee on Parks and Recreation:

I write to submit testimony calling for continued support of community composting efforts in New York City.

My family and I have recently begun separating our food scraps from our other trash and bringing it to community compost sites for recycling. I have been amazed at the amount of our household refuse that this has redirected into more environmentally sound pathways. I have also personally begun volunteering at a community compost site near me, and it has been an amazing opportunity to engage with the natural landscape in the city in ways that are not generally available.

Our local composting site has seen an incredible uptick in food scrap drop-off since the onset of the Covid pandemic, reflecting how many New York City residents support composting. It has been difficult for us to keep up with processing everything, and also increasingly difficult to find alternative places to bring food scraps. The Lower East Side Ecology Center and the Big Reuse have both been able to continue with their composting programs even in these extraordinary times, showing a tremendous commitment to keeping this important environmental action running, and with this in mind, the eviction of these organizations from their composting sites is unfathomable. I cannot understand the rationale for doing so.

Composting is a simple, easy way for all of us to have a measurable impact on saving our natural world and reversing climate change, something that New York city purportedly supports. If this is the case, how can our leaders justify this unnecessary action against community composting? These are sites that are already being effectively used for this purpose – all I ask is that they be allowed to continue doing so. I find it particularly ironic that the Parks Department seems to be leading the charge against these community efforts, as healthy parks full of healthy plants and clean environments are linked to the ability to compost and recycle organic waste. Children and families utilizing our city parks should be able to see all of our efforts to save our world – it's an important part of teaching our next generation about the importance of environmental sustainability. It certainly has been for my own kids.

I hope to see the city allow the Big Reuse compost site and the LESEC's East River Park compost site to continue to do their important work in their current locations. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Esther Adler  
estherdoraadler@yahoo.com

To: The City of New York, Committees on Sanitation and Waste Management and Parks and Recreation.

Re: Joint hearing on December 18 regarding Composting Sites

Status: In support of saving our compost

Good morning,

I am writing to express my full support of the Big Reuse and LES Ecology Composting sites. These sites MUST be saved.

Big Reuse in particular is of importance to me and my community. Situated next to Queensbridge Houses where I was honored to work with residents to plant The Sacred Garden healing space, the composting site is part of a green ecosystem that is critical to the health and wellness of all residents but especially those in NYCHA housing.

To replace Big Reuse with a parking lot full of trucks is environmental racism. It is also penny wise and pound foolish, as composting in the long run saves our city money, decreases methane and harmful climate change triggers, and provides necessary compost for parks and gardens. After the city budget cuts, local composters and groups like Astoria Pug, Hellgate Farm, Smiling Hoghead Ranch, as well as individuals like myself who took neighbors' food scraps for backyard compost bins, stepped up when the composting program was halted. Now, the city needs to step up and save our composting sites.

Over \$500,000 in taxpayer dollars were spent building the necessary structures just over two years ago for the Big Reuse site. To destroy this facility and spend precious dollars to make it a parking lot, disrupt composting operations, and build new structures elsewhere, is an enormous waste of resources.

I urge the city to renew the agreement with Big Reuse and restore the full composting program citywide as soon as possible.

Thank you.

Evie Hantzopoulos  
Democratic Candidate for City Council District 22  
32-39 33rd Street  
Astoria, NY 11106

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Evie Hantzopoulos  
Democratic Candidate for NYC Council  
District 22 (Queens: Astoria, East Elmhurst, Woodside, Jackson Heights)

[www.electevie.com](http://www.electevie.com) | [Twitter](#) | [Instagram](#) | [Facebook](#)

Composting is immensely important to myself and countless other NYC residents – and impacts people who don't even realize it as it builds a healthier planet with less landfill waste – which MUST be a huge priority for New Yorkers, Americans, and the world. Myself and so many others make significant purchasing, cooking, eating, and other lifestyle decisions around composting because of this, but we need to make composting as easy as possible to help people who can't or won't do so. During the compost site shutdowns during the initial COVID peak, I learned to cook with peels, make syrups, dry orange peels, make eggshell fertilizer, and to buy produce with minimal inedible bits, as I kept around half of my freezer filled with compost until an unknown reopening of dropoff sites. Most people can't or won't make these efforts if composting becomes more difficult, dropoff sites become harder to find, etc. New York City should be leading the country in efforts to improve the environment – instead, I see cities like San Francisco leading the way with easy compost drop-offs and pickup throughout streets, businesses, and residences, while we lag behind. PLEASE, for those of us who care, and those who don't yet realize why they should, help keep the NYC composting ecosystem alive. We need to make these services more, not less, available in these critical times. As the city hosting the Climate Clock, let's also make a difference where it matters.

Felice Feit

Please allow Big Reuse to continue their community composting operation at their current site with their license renewed so that we may mitigate the effects of waste sent to landfill or incinerator.

I compost because I care about our environment and about the fundamentals of recycling. It's remarkable to me that composting across the city helps save 1.4 trillion pounds of food waste from simply rotting in landfills. By composting my food scraps, I know I am doing what I can to reduce waste and to help create reusable energy in freshly composted soil. Sure it's strange to keep coffee grounds and banana peels in my freezer for a whole week, but I love the feeling of knowing that such trash isn't going to waste. Please consider saving our composting facilities. They are so very important to our communities across the five boroughs.

Frank Sansone

Good afternoon,

I implore City Council and the Parks Department to renew the license for Big Reuse to continue their composting facility at the Queensbridge location. Every week my family and I save our food scraps in our freezer and make the effort to bring them in for composting. It is a very accessible way for us to have a big impact on reducing our ecological footprint. It has also become a very meaningful movement for us to participate in and we've been excited about how it has grown and the strides our city has made in expanding this practice. After all the gains we've made as a city and our commitment to achieving zero waste and environmental justice, it would be a devastating setback to have the city abandon this crucial component.

Thank you,  
Fred Maass

The composting program has been not only a way to feel good about doing my part to preserve the environment and reduce my carbon footprint, but also a means to unite with my community toward a goal for the greater good.

I regularly volunteer at the weekly McGolrick Park scrap collection site, which was set up on an ad-hoc basis when the city suspended curbside composting and cut funding for GrowNYC collection sites. I have found a lot of meaning and community in participating in this collection site, and it would be a shame for the city to add additional hurdles by evicting Big Reuse from their site for the use of municipal vehicle parking.

It's disappointing that New York, one of the most progressive cities in the country, would take steps backward in the fight against climate change. I ask you to please reconsider the eviction of Big Reuse and reinstating funding for the composting program for greater New York City.

Sincerely,  
Gabriela Moore

> Having outlets for composting in local parks, greenmarkets and other locations is important.  
> Vote yes to continue this valuable program and to expand it.

>

> Gail Fox

> 10 West 15 st apt 1820

> NYC. 10011

To the Committee on Sanitation and Solid Waste Management, and the Committee on Parks and Recreation:

I am submitting my virtual testimony to ask you to Save Our Compost.

Please do not evict any composting sites around the city, especially not to provide for a parking lot. It is hard enough to compost in the city, and food waste is a bigger problem even than single-use plastic.

Shockingly few people compost as it is, so to take away resources and physical space dedicated to reducing food waste in NYC, just puts us ten steps back. We need to be making it easier for people to find composting locations and encouraging and educating them on how to do so.

I implore you NOT to shut down any composting sites in New York City, and hope you will consider my virtual testimony in this discussion.

Genevieve Shuler  
Park Slope, Brooklyn  
17-year New York City resident

12/20/2020

City Council Members:

It is well-documented (if not always well-recognized throughout our country) that climate change poses the largest and most terrifying existential threat to our world and way of life, followed, perhaps, by the peril of nuclear warfare. While we as private citizens generally cannot have an impact on the latter issue, we do have the ability from within our communities to effect change regarding the former. The Red Hook compost site is an example of a critical effort to do so. Through education initiatives regarding the benefits of and technical methodologies involved in composting, broad inclusion and acceptance of every person, and innovative programming, the site has demonstrated that it is an essential entity within the Red Hook—and wider Brooklyn and New York City—communities.

I have personally witnessed the dedication of this extraordinary group of people, who welcome volunteers and visitors with a shovel and open arms (or, rather, a signature compost elbow bump initiated by the beloved David Buckel to address the challenges of properly greeting someone with hands covered in materials at various stages of the decomposing process). This is a vital component of the Red Hook compost site: Within the network of city-funded composting programs, there is a need for organizations that embrace the values of diversity and inclusion. These principles are central to the mission in Red Hook and critical to the equitable growth of the surrounding area, both environmentally and culturally.

To conclude, I would like to express my profound belief that community compost sites are essential to the fabric and well-being of this city as we continue to work toward a cleaner, more inclusive society. To lose the Red Hook compost site permanently would be hugely detrimental to the Borough of Brooklyn and its citizens. I implore the Council to take this account into consideration and save the Red Hook compost site.

Regards,

Georgia Hahn  
New York Resident

My name is Gil Lopez and I am here to say that this is not okay. It is not okay that the compost program was completely cut and we had to rally to save it. It is not okay that these two programs are being threatened with eviction. It is not okay that Commissioner Silver has refused to provide real answers until thousands of people called his office. It is not okay that DSNY kicked the can all the way down the road on this. It is not okay that Mayor DeBlasio has allowed all this to go on until now. In the final weeks of Big Reuse's license with Parks, it is not okay that our community has to spend our holiday season stressed out about the basic right to do the responsible thing with our kitchen scraps. Shame on the lot of you.

Let other composting sites accept food scraps. It is not okay that the head of Parks espouses love for compost yet clearly doesn't know the difference between compost and leaf mold. I'm an environmental educator, cofounder of the urban farm Smiling Hoghead Ranch, I currently work for Big Reuse as the USDA grant coordinator, and I am friends with the people who started the Western Queens Compost Initiative, which turned into a BIG Compost, which was essentially taken over by DSNY and became the New York City Compost Project hosted by Big Reuse. While I take specific issue with what I view as DSNY's mismanagement of both the Compost Project and curbside Brown Bin program on the whole, I will try to keep my remarks pertinent to the issue at hand.

The City has always spoken highly of the NYC Compost Project and pointed to it as a stake in a renewable future. Master Composters know that the work we do is important. But while the City uses our program to greenwash its programming, the people doing the work get next to nothing, most are volunteers and we purchase our own equipment and insurance. Perhaps we get grants from foundations and benefactors to build these systems and programs, like the Western Queens Compost Initiative did at its inception, and like Big Reuse had to do in March when the entire program was cut. Then, once we are successful, the City agencies swoop in and take the programming over. Many of us happily relinquish our autonomy in exchange for funding, we assume the City will be good stewards of the resources and programs we have developed for them. Unfortunately this is almost never the case. In fact, I am convinced that a systematic and insidious dismantling is taking place. Nevermind that for now, but this oversight hearing is a case in point, that the City simply can't take care of the systems we have built and is ready and willing to allow another agency, in this case, and with painful irony, the Parks Dept. wants to take the land we have improved and used for years to run our programs on. We started this program long before Silver was Commissioner or DeBlasio was Mayor and we will continue long after they are gone.

There are lots of things the City, and Parks in particular should be focused on right now. Creating more open space next to, or inside of one of the largest Parks in LIC is not on the top of the list. Especially if doing so means displacing one of the most successful and respected composting operations not just in NYC but in North America. And for what? Parking!? And storage, to create more 'open space'? I know folks in Queensbridge Houses, my current roommate grew up in Queensbridge, where he is still an active community organizer. Last summer, he and his neighbors created the Queensbridge Sacred Garden where, after Big Reuse was defunded and stopped collecting scraps at the Queensbridge Fstop, they started composting their own food scraps. While the Sacred Garden is going dormant for the winter, residents still want to compost. While Big Reuse never received funding to reopen any of our food scrap FDR op-offs (they are all staffed by volunteers now) we were told specifically not to reopen the

Queensbridge drop-off until other areas of the city which are not served yet get a local drop-off. But this is our community, so we recently reopened the Queensbridge F stop drop-off anyway (thanks to our USDA grant, not City council or DSNY money).

I speak to Queensbridge residents and they tell me there is plenty of green space and playgrounds in NYCHA, but they aren't maintained properly. As far as I can tell, and I have to make assumptions because Commissioner Silver has not been forthcoming with what nearby operations and equipment needs to be relocated. Since I'm forced to guess, I have to assume the six shipping containers at the northern edge of Queensbridge Park are probably the facilities Parks wants to relocate. If so, they will displace a productive compost site in order to free up a strip of land closest to the loud ConEd plant next door, in this 20+ acre park most people will never use this strip of open space.

If these are not the operations Silver is hinting at, then it must be the GreenThumb and Natural Areas office trailers and equipment that is in what is known as Baby Queensbridge Park. If this is the case, then I'm here to shed light on what many NYCHA residents refer to as eco-gentrification. This is when Parks (and expensive health food stores) are used as the bleeding edge of a massive development plan. In this case, I have to assume the developers of the Titan Steel Building and Silver Cup Studios just south of the bridge are the major player. These developers need this industrial area South of the bridge to get cleaned up and more connected to green spaces so they can transform (AKA gentrify) the area and attract wealthy investors. Compost facilities don't fit into this blueprint. Sure, Queensbridge residents would love Baby Queensbridge Park to actually be a park, and they do disperse this. But I'll tell you this Commissioner Silver, if you are truly worried about alienation of land, then stop pointing your finger at Big Reuse and answer me this. Why has Queens Block 465 Lot 325 remained fenced off and completely unused for years after it was cleaned of your rotting benches, rusty fences and rat warren piles of debris in 2018. Since then, a small sign claimed that lot is for Parks Dept. parking only but in reality, it sits unused left to the weeds while nearby residents are denied use of the space despite several requests to access that land. No excuses, no more blame game!

Another thing altogether here, when a license or lease ends, it does not predicate eviction. Furthermore, since Big Reuse entered into this agreement three years ago, a lot has transpired. In 2018, the city has passed a waste equity bill. This compost site has been helping reduce the burden to the environmental justice communities named in that bill long before our council ever drafted or passing that important resolution. In 2019 the city council declared a climate emergency. It has been shown by various groups including the Drawdown Project, The Institute for Local Self Reliance and many others that localized, community-scale composting is one of the best ways to not only mitigate greenhouse gas emissions, but also to recarbonize the Earth and actually sequester more GHGs over time. The NYC Compost Project and thousands of individual master composters are already helping the City reduce its impact and have been for years, decades even. But we are not funded and what little land we have or had access to is constantly being snatched away for golf courses and other baloney that is required for this luxury city to continue the oppression and assault on the working poor and others not in the elite. This is no way to act in an climate emergency. May your children inherit a landfill. And now, COVID-19 is bearing down on us, again! Many New Yorkers have taken a step back from the hectic pace of city life during this pandemic, we are reassessing what is real, what is

important and what is sacred. It is very clear to almost all of us that fresh water, clean air and healthy soil is paramount to human health. People with access to these things and healthy food are less susceptible to the ravaging affects of COVID-19.

To act like none of these things happened in those three years since entering into this agreement is shortsighted to say the least. To carry on with whatever plan to continue the gentrification march straight up the LIC waterfront and not take pause to reassess is just asinine. But to know all these things are true and to state that composting isn't a Parks mandate, I'm sorry, but wearing clean underwear isn't a mandate either. While I would normally assume your mothers raised you better, it is utterly clear that the people making the decision to eradicate composting for a parking lot, perpetuating waste inequity during a time of national racial upheaval, ensuring the continuation of environmental racism and increased GHG emissions during a climate crisis, and exacerbating negative health impacts during COVID-19 have not been raised properly and are not making good decisions in this desperate time. This is the moment that the village is stepping in and speaking our truth to your unchecked and bass ackwards policies and projects. This is absolutely unconscionable and we will not let it stand. This is not okay.

While I want desperately to save our compost it is abundantly clear that this won't happen based on the good will or well intentions of any of you. It is time to mandate compost. I doubt Mayor DeBlasio will do this so it is in fact up to the council and or any mayoral candidate next year. Sending organics to the landfill is unwise, unethical and unjust. If you won't stop doing it for those good reasons, then it should also be made illegal and a crime punishable by law, for both City agencies and residents alike.

Finally, I wanna talk about money and what it costs taxpayers when city agencies myopically guard their budget and don't work together to solve the bigger issues our city faces, as if there is no intersectionality across agencies. In 1997 the Parks and DSNY Commissioners at the time entered into an MOU stating that DSNY could compost on Parks land as long as the compost was used to improve NYC's soils. This agreement came about because nearby landfills had reached capacity and it was getting too expensive to dump our waste on poor people far away. This is still the case but the city just keeps increasing the already exorbitant multi-million dollar waste export budget. But in the late 90's the Parks Department realized that organics are not actually trash, they are a resource that should be stewarded, and the City was in a crisis on where to send its trash. So several large industrial scale composting facilities were created and organics were diverted from the landfills. Each composting site was shut down soon after it opened, usually for nefarious reasons that I won't go into here, but it's a bunch of bs if you really look into it all.

Today, commercial landscapers are required by law to compost all the yard waste they generate, yet our beloved Parks Department has no such mandate. Not only are the flaunting this lack of mandate to send organics to landfill, now that want to use this lack of governance to displace high functioning public service sites that do the composting for them. While Big Reuse processes about 400,000 pounds of Parks leaves and debris each year as a free service, it doesn't matter to Parks, because if Big Reuse wasn't there to do this work, a Parks employee would just call the local DSNY garage and have the leaves picked up for free. Then, instead of composting them locally, way more tax money is spent sending all those leaves to a landfill, maybe in Virginia or some other far away place. But Parks pays the same, zero dollars for either

option. While DSNY teucks Parks' leaves through the same environmental justice communities our 2018 waste equity bill is trying to ease off of, instead we are steadily increasing respiratory disease and susceptibility to COVID-19. Instead of being transformed into rich beautiful compost for the Earth, Parks' leaves mix with other landfill waste to create a toxic sludge that will surely leak into our water ways eventually. These leaves, instead of being used to recarbonize the soil and grow more trees , they create methan in that anaerobic landfill. This is called externalized costs, while the alarms Department saves money, paying zero dollars for all this death and distraction, our City, State and Federal tax dollars are sunk into cleanup, health costs and lawsuits.

Now, with the leave wasting away in landfills, Parks still needs compost, they may get some from the one industrial composting site left in NYC, Fresh Kills on Staten Island, any arborist or or soils specialist will tell you that the Fresh Kills stuff is just leaf mold and is far inferior to the real compost created by mixing nitrogen and carbon rich material, which is what all of the Compost Project sites do. By doing so, we produce a superior product. Without this nutrient rich compost, Parks need to supplement their leaf mold with additional compost and other fertilizers, the petrol derived stuff is the cheapest and since the budget has been cut, they will surely go for those. I'm an environmental educator and a can lead you deep down this rabbit hole, but I'm about out of time. And this is not the end, it is just the beginning.

I have little faith in Mayor DeBlasio, and Mr. Silver has already proven to be a scoundrel. I will pull every trick I have up my sleeve to save this site and any other site where the good work of our ancestors is being faithfully carried out. This is my war cry and while I may be arrested, caricatured by the media as a mad man, or worse, my tactics may not succeed. But if things don't change, and I mean quick, this is not the last time either of you will see my face or know my name. Win or loose, if we are forced to intensify this struggle, to simply defend what is sacred, then that is exactly what I will do. Damn the papers, the two of you will be remembered as fools while the entire community of composters will be heralded as champions. But who wants to be a champion on a dead planet? Please, I'm begging you, don't be a fool. Search within and do the right thing. If you cannot do it simply because it is right, then it is time to mandate compost and make it the law as well. Stop gambling away our future. We are in a climate crisis! Heed your sacred masculinity and lead us out of this. I will be at your humble service as I have been for the past decade, but only if you act with integrity and impeccability in this moment of truth.

Respect composting sites and green spaces!

Do not evict or redone them!

Cancel rent fir composting sites, and green spaces.

Create universal moratorium on eviction fir composting sites abd green spaces!

Find CityPHEPS fir composting sites and green spaces.

Gordon Lee

Testimony of Gregory D Todd for oversight hearing Community Composting with the Committee on Parks and Recreation and the Committee on Sanitation  
Friday December 18th, 2020

In June 2019 the City Council passed resolution 864 stating:  
“The City Council declares a climate emergency and calls for an immediate emergency mobilization to restore a safe climate”

Simpler and more clear words have rarely been written. But what has the City done to back them up?

By cancelling curbside pickup of organics and now allowing Parks to unilaterally not renew the licenses for composting sites under the Queensboro Bridge and on the East River, the current administration has made a mockery of this noble resolution by the City Council.

Despite the Paris Climate Accord and urgent alarms by climate scientists around the world about the catastrophic effects on our climate, global greenhouse gas emissions continue to rise. As a city surrounded by bodies of water, sea level rise caused by climate change will have devastating effects on our population.

Yet despite all of these bold declarations and clear science, the current administration continues on with business as usual.

Nothing shows this pattern more clearly than the recent decision by the Parks Department and its commissioner Mitchell Silver to evict the composting operations from Parks controlled sites under the Queensboro Bridge and on the lower east side.

Citywide composting cuts 4 billion pounds of CO<sub>2</sub> per year, the equivalent of taking 385,000 cars off the road. Yet despite this fact, Parks chooses to reduce composting opportunities, not expand them. The Community Organics and Recycling Empowerment Act (CORE) introduced into the

City Council last year by Powers and Reynoso demands that composting sites be created in every community board in the city. By making composting accessible in every community, we can greatly increase the engagement of the citizenry on this critical effort.

Accordingly Parks should not only renew the licenses for its composting sites, it should create composting sites on all Parks administered properties, including public parks such as Prospect Park and Central Park as well as the 500 community gardens under its jurisdiction.

It's beyond time for Mayor DeBlasio to get involved in this struggle and overrule the imprudent and detrimental environmental stewardship of the Parks Department as it's administered by its current commissioner, Mitchell Silver.

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Composting on NYC parkland is an essential asset in many ways. From creating green jobs to building stronger communities, caring for and protecting our ecosystem, regenerating the soil, diverting millions of pounds of food scraps from ending up in landfills, and mitigating harmful greenhouse gas emissions. It would be truly devastating to both the Lower East Side Ecology Center and Big Reuse, as well as the communities they serve, if their operating spaces were evicted, bulldozed and paved into parking lots - especially when there is ample vacant space available in the same vicinity without the need to displace and eradicate anchors for this community that have taken many years to coalesce. There have been too many cuts and strains put onto the composting community in NYC that do not align with the city's sustainability goals, such as the city wide curb side compost program being completely shut down without notice due to budget cuts. Because of this, many people have sought out these very organizations (LESEC/Big Reuse) to continue composting or seeking a sense of community, which has become increasingly necessary throughout the pandemic. It is also very important to realize the additional burden that will be bestowed upon on low-income and communities of color which will be exposed to a significantly increased level of air-pollution from various sources related to landfill waste. **Please! Please! Please!** I urge you to reconsider eviction for Big Reuse and incorporate the LESEC into the construction plans for the east side coastal resiliency plans while also providing a temporary space for LESEC during construction so vital community composting work continues in 2021. For many, including myself - community composting is a small, yet powerful and tangible act of ecological resilience and sustainability for our planet. This must be recognized as such by Parks Commissioner Mitchell Silver and Mayor Bill de Blasio.

Oversight Hearing: Composting in NYC & LES Ecology Center  
December 18,2020  
Testimony of Harriet Cohen, 387 Grand St., NY NY 10002

I fell in love with East River Park many, many years ago when I tried being a runner at the 5<sup>th</sup> St. track. Running never became a passion, but walking has been a constant over the years. My love for what East River Park has to offer has only deepened during the last 10 months & COVID. It has become my go-to place for walks, reading, meeting up socially distanced with friends and importantly COMPOSTING. I am truly grateful for the LES Ecology Center and all it has done to help our local environment and especially its composting stations. Now I carry my composting with me on my walks to ERP. I want to say that it is imperative that the Composting Station in East River Park, within proximity to the entrance at Corlears Hook, must become a permanent part of the Park as it is rebuilt for coastal resilience. Composting is another important aspect of rejuvenation and environmental enhancement that is sorely needed. Someone has said that composting is not compatible with a new park. But those of us who live within its locale – in public housing, the coops, the Mitchell Lamas and tenement buildings, know the importance of having this resource within proximity to our homes. We have an important personal relationship with the Park **and** with composting. The City must include an accessible composting station in its final plans for East River Park and importantly preserve this community institution that was created by the LES Ecology Center. Countless community residents use it and have learned much about critical environmental issues and concerns through this one institution. If coastal resiliency is why we are reconstructing the Park, then the City must understand that composting is another important part of that overall solution.

Thank you.

Dear City Council,

We are Nate and Hila a pair of artistic collaborators based in Bushwick — we make music and video content that educates about the environment. Composting is one of the main themes of our work — because it represents the perfect opportunity for city residents to participate in the life cycle of which they're a part.

We've heard a lot today about the vital ecological role that composting plays in this city — but to add to that, we want to talk a little bit about its significance for culture and community. Composting creates community — it literally grounds it.

We live in Bushwick, we bring food scraps to BK Rot. BK Rot is a pillar in our community, bringing people together in the shared task of turning waste into growth. People from different walks of life gather in these sites and make alliances in creating a greener city. Just as it's essential to us to have them here, *physically here* in our neighborhood, it is essential for Big Reuse and the Lower East side ecology center to continue to exist where they are.

The compost facilities at Big Reuse and the Lower East Side ecology center are cultural landmarks in this city, just like any other. The city needs them for their ecological function *and* their spiritual function, as a place of meeting, and a symbol of this city's leadership in creating a greener world. Like a cultural landmark, they cannot be replaced — because they are the product of a real history of community labor, permanently inscribed in the city's life history.

...

Like a famous and beloved arts venue, you don't just *move* it without uprooting the whole community around it, uprooting the whole *scene*. With these evictions, the city is sending a message not only that it doesn't prioritize sustainability, but also that it doesn't care about some of its most vibrant community institutions.

The culture of composting is growing as people become aware of the urgency of taking environmental action.

...

Does NYC want to be a leader in environmental solutions? Or it is content with sending the message that it doesn't actually care about the future of its people and its planet — because that's the message that these evictions, and the defunding of composting programs in the 2020 budget, send.

...

We really hope the Parks Dept can recognize the importance of compost; just as the rest of the city administration must recognize the importance of its other beloved institutions, in order to be a good protector of them.

...

We need *more* community composting sites, not less.

It is disturbing that the parks department is spending so much energy to evict big reuse when they could be including them in their plans and speaking to the numerous environmental solutions that the parks department could be involved in.

Fruit trees for the communities, solar energy, compost... These are the items of our future. Why are we discussing evicting one of the most important community environmental institutions when we need to be coming up with more sites like big reuse? We need healthy soil, we need more green spaces. NYC could be a leader in environmental action but y'all are too busy evicting the pioneers of this movement.

We all hope you do the right thing and expand community composting at these sites and all around the city. Thank you.

Best,

Nate & Hila

[www.nateandhila.com](http://www.nateandhila.com)

12/20/2020

City Council Members:

It is well-documented (if not always well-recognized throughout our country) that climate change poses the largest and most terrifying existential threat to our world and way of life, followed, perhaps, by the peril of nuclear warfare. While we as private citizens generally cannot have an impact on the latter issue, we do have the ability from within our communities to effect change regarding the former. The Red Hook compost site is an example of a critical effort to do so. Through education initiatives regarding the benefits of and technical methodologies involved in composting, broad inclusion and acceptance of every person, and innovative programming, the site has demonstrated that it is an essential entity within the Red Hook—and wider Brooklyn and New York City—communities.

I have personally witnessed the dedication of this extraordinary group of people, who welcome volunteers and visitors with a shovel and open arms (or, rather, a signature compost elbow bump initiated by the beloved David Buckel to address the challenges of properly greeting someone with hands covered in materials at various stages of the decomposing process). This is a vital component of the Red Hook compost site: Within the network of city-funded composting programs, there is a need for organizations that embrace the values of diversity and inclusion. These principles are central to the mission in Red Hook and critical to the equitable growth of the surrounding area, both environmentally and culturally.

To conclude, I would like to express my profound belief that community compost sites are essential to the fabric and well-being of this city as we continue to work toward a cleaner, more inclusive society. To lose the Red Hook compost site permanently would be hugely detrimental to the Borough of Brooklyn and its citizens. I implore the Council to take this account into consideration and save the Red Hook compost site.

Regards,

Holly Shulman  
Brooklyn Resident

705 Driggs Ave  
Brooklyn, NY 11211

12/13/20

Dear City Council,

I am writing as a concerned citizen of NYC of 22 years to urge the City to save our compost program which has been a vital part of our concerted effort to reduce waste and to better the fragile environment we all share and live. This is a matter of our future and not just a budget item for the coming year. Please save City Reuse and Lower East Side Ecology's compost program.

My points regarding saving the compost program:

- 1) Saving the environment
- 2) Reducing trash waste which is costly to City and taxpayers
- 3) EVERY MODERN MAJOR CITY IN THIS WORLD HAS A ROBUST COMPOST AND RECYCLING PROGRAM. A city of NYC would suffer a major setback if we cut compost and recycling relative to other cities. It would make an already deteriorating City in terms of public services, education, infrastructure, and social welfare even worse.
- 4) The city didn't give adequate time to the city-wide composting program to gain critical mass. It should not pull the plug after all the investment and infrastructure has been established.
- 5) To discontinue composting at City Reuse and LES Ecology would betray all the years of community effort that have helped make NYC an environmental minded city.

Please fund and keep/expand our compost program.

Best,

Howard Chen



***Howard Stern***

500-C Grand Street, Apt. #1F N.Y., N.Y. 10002

917 484 0923

To whom it may concern,

We have lived in the East Village since 1989. During that time my family first started composting at Union Square and on 7th Street in the LES in the 1990's which funnelled the compost to the LES Ecology Center. When we moved to Grand Street where we continued and even got the Co Op that we currently live in to participate in the city wide composting program. This was a great success in our community until it got gutted during the pandemic. I have heard Gale Brewer and others speak eloquently that the program to be fiscally responsible would need to be increased not decreased which I am also in support of. This may not be the focus of this council meeting but it should be kept in the back of your minds when considering to renew these leases.

Composting is an essential service if we are to ever come to grips with the climate crisis that is upon us. Let's stop kidding each other that it is down the line. And let's also not kid ourselves that the CMA and CLCPA will be enough to mitigate the effects. We need to do everything possible to reduce our greenhouse gases including in the short term continuing the leases for sites that are doing composting and bringing back the city wide composting program at a scale to make it fiscally responsible.

We do a great disservice to society by not addressing the climate crisis. The city says there is no money because of the pandemic. The city says that parks can't be used for composting. The city says the site needs parking for city agencies. How do we want future generations to look back at this period? As a period where the leaders took action or one where the political leaders kowtow to political complacency and expediency and pit groups against each other.

**And by the way, there is plenty of room under the Williamsburg Bridge for LESEC even with sanitation being there until the ER Park is complete.**

Please do the right thing.

Sincerely Yours, Howard Stern

Commissioner Silver and Mayor de Blasio:

I am a member of Smiling Hogshead Ranch (SHHR), a volunteer run community farm collective in LIC, Queens that accepts our neighbors' food scraps. I am troubled that licenses for community compost sites operated by Big Reuse (in Queens) and the Lower East Side Ecology Center (in Manhattan) have not been renewed by the Parks department. Removal of these sites (and the Brown Bin program) has and will again dramatically increase the amount of food scraps our community brings to our site. This overburdens our volunteers (me) with work that the city should be doing.

I have used to drop my compost off at the farmers markets, but once that was shut down I simply refused to return to throwing out my food scraps. In April of this year, I began volunteering at SHHR and joined its Compost committee. Over the summer I worked weekly with volunteers to process the enormous amount of food scraps we were receiving from peoples all across Queens. I saw that despite the city stopping to provide the service, the demand was still there, even during a crisis like COVID, the people of this city recognize that composting is in our vital interest- or we will have a the far great crisis of rapid climate change upon us. Which I will note is believed to not just cause increases in extreme weather but also disease, displacement of people and humanitarian crisis's. If we've learned anything this year it is that governments and people need to be proactive towards problems NOT reactive.

The residents of this city want and need composting.

The Big Reuse and the LES Ecology Center sites are vital to progress on our City's zero waste, emissions reduction, and environmental justice goals. They support dozens of local green jobs, engage thousands of volunteers and food scrap donors each year, and donate composted leaves, wood chips, and food waste back to our parks as rich organic fertilizer.

There is no good reason to evict longstanding community organizations from small parcels of City land. If our City agencies cannot see the inherent value in composting without rules or laws in place, then we believe parks should be mandated to compost.

Now more than ever, our green spaces must be places where we can learn about and practice sustainability.

I urge you to immediately renew the longstanding license for these sites AND to mandate composting citywide.

Sincerely,

Ian B. Headley

Dear Councilmembers,

I strongly urge you to reverse the decision by the Mayor and the city of NY to remove the LES Ecology center and Big Reuse from Parks Dept land. These grassroots organizations are leading in a place where the city, and especially the Parks Department, should be at the forefront.

I think we need to start thinking of parkland as more than just recreation for the community and, especially in these times when we are so divided and isolated, as space for education and communal involvement.

Small, volunteer community-based groups sprang up in response to a loss of composting opportunities and that kind of initiative can and should be nourished and supported. Yes, this falls under the auspices of the sanitation department, but we are one city. The Parks Department has a choice to extend a hand to not only Big Reuse and LES Ecology, but other, smaller programs. The commitment from the Parks is minimal, but the benefit is hardly immeasurable, with close to a million tonnes of organic material redirected from landfills per year.

Thanks for your time.

ilya m  
Brooklyn, NY

Hello,

I hope you're well. Our community was collecting food scraps before we signed up for the City's wonderful brown bin program. However, since the brown bin program was suspended, we've been challenged to find places to bring our scraps, until recently when many community composting sites have opened up. We had help from Big Reuse who picked up our scraps on a temporary basis to help us get started again. LESEC has been a vital resource for many here who support composting and ecological efforts. Big Reuse and LESEC are vital to our city, and we need to find a way for them to stay open and continue to work toward Mayor de Blasio's *0x30* vision.

Thank you very much.  
Ingeborg Reinecke

**From:** Isaac Esterman

**Sent:** Sunday, December 13, 2020 7:10 PM

**To:** NYC Council Hearings

**Cc:** [ecom@bigreuse.org](mailto:ecom@bigreuse.org)

**Subject:** Testimony on Community Composting for the Committee on Parks and Recreation and the Committee on Sanitation

Dear Honorable Councilmembers:

I write to you in support of Big Reuse and their efforts to renew their license agreement for your lot in Queensbridge for their composting program and the Lower East Side's license agreement for your Lower East Side for their composting program.

As a supporter of both organizations I know that getting these programs started and marketing them takes a tremendous amount of time - not just in getting those programs started but also in making the community aware of the sites.

Getting people (including me) to compost is not easy - it would be a shame for this effort, which I believe is synchronous with long term goals of DPR and DSNY, to take a huge step back, even as we have taught thousands of New Yorkers to work to minimize waste sent to landfills - a process that is only getting more expensive.

I understand that both agencies are in need of parking and space for fleets and operations - surely there are other places for this to take place, where evicting what is essentially a partner organization is not a requirement. I encourage you to do whatever you can to keep these important organizations in their current homes.

Thank you for your time.

Isaac Esterman  
281 Sterling Place  
Brooklyn, NY 11238

Hi ,

I am a resident of Astoria Queens. I live a few blocks away from Socrates Park. I only started bringing compost ( family of 3) a few months ago and can't imagine that this program might end.

It has taught my child about thinking about how we live,, how a city works and how to be sustainable . I am so glad to have this program in our neighborhood. I hope it will be of use to many other people as well.

Please keep this program going .

Thank you,

Isabelle Austria

I am testifying to oppose the effort to evict Big Reuse and LES Ecology center's composting sites from their current locations. These composting sites have been able to operate at no cost to taxpayers, diverting over a million tons of NYC's organic waste from landfills. They are extremely valuable and I can think of few better uses for the properties in question. As an NYC resident I support community composting and so should you!

I used to balk at the idea of separating my trash and going out of my way to compost my food scraps. As I've learned about the environmental impact and started diverting food scraps to a small bin in my freezer, I've become committed to composting and reducing my environmental impact. I regularly frequent LES ecology drop off sites and would be incredibly frustrated if my fellow New Yorkers and I no longer have access to compost.

Composting is a critically important piece of diverting waste from landfill. The fact that the city has failed to implement and maintain a successful city-wide program is embarrassing. To evict two large and impactful composting centers for people who go out of their way to compost is completely antithetical to the climate goals of this city. Alongside efforts to make composting the norm in this city, please find a way to not only keep, but also the Big Reuse and LES ecology operations.

Jackie Jing

Jacob Conway  
Manhattan Resident

To whom it may concern,

I am writing today to express how deeply important access to composting is for the health, safety, and well-being of our community.

Although I am only 26, I have been composting consistently and earnestly for the past 4 years. I moved to NYC from San Francisco, where composting is mandatory.

Composting is so much more than another form of waste retrieval. Composting teaches us about sustainability, and gives every citizen the opportunity to participate. Composting allows us to connect with our food, inspiring healthier eating and love for the soil and workers who make our food accessible. Composting quite literally heals the land we reside on. Composting reduces harmful methane emissions, which are critical to slowing global warming.

New York is already behind other major cities, by not mandating composting. How can you expect to foster healthier communities, or inspire people to take care of our city when you're actively removing the tools that allow them to do that?

If you remove these major composting facilities, you will actively be disregarding the will of the people. You will be complicit for further disenfranchising our ability to foster healthy, safe and resilient communities.

Do the right thing! Save composting!

Sincerely,  
Jacob Conway

Jacob Shipley

Testimony for NYC Council Hearing - Committee on Sanitation and Solid Waste Management  
Save Big Reuse & Lower East Side Ecology Center's Community Compost Sites

Hello,

My name is Jacob Shipley and I am a resident of NYC and a frequent user and promoter of the NYC composting sites. Since the pandemic has closed many sites through safety measures and budget cuts, composting has been very difficult.

Composting is massively important to the health of our city and the entire world as it is a fantastic way to curb climate change and reduce waste. NYC is a leader in the world for its climate resolutions and understanding of the horrible effects of climate change. For New York to continue being this leader, it needs to continue funding programs that the rest of the world can look to as accessible ways to fight climate change.

Composting not only reduces waste, it also can be reused to promote ecological growth which is imperative in supporting community agriculture and rebuilding endangered plant and insect populations.

We need to continue to support our composting programs and continue the fight against climate change. Please save Big Reuse and Lower East Side Ecology Center's Community Compost Sites.

Thank you,  
Jacob Shipley

December 17, 2020

Dear Sanitation and Solid Waste Management, Parks and Recreation Committee Members,

As you may be aware, New York City's composting program has been under attack for the majority of 2020. First coming under fire during the budget cuts earlier this year which sliced funding by 90%. While \$2.86 million is still helpful, it severely damaged the incredible work that the city was contributing to in order to reduce our collective carbon footprint.

It is backwards for the mayor to declare that the city is "committed" to reducing greenhouse gas emissions 80 percent by 2050, while actively trying to stop composting. Composting is one of the easiest, most actionable ways to get the community involved in contributing to this mission.

Now by evicting two of the largest composting facilities in the city, it appears as though the City of New York is actively destroying what little we as a composting community have left.

Now I say all these facts and figures as someone who has composted from an early age, but has really gotten involved in the science and local efforts in the last two years. It started by dropping off both food and textile scraps at Grand Army Plaza every Saturday. It was an easy way for me to reduce my own wasteful habits while being part of a community effort.

When it was announced that composting services and facilities were at risk of being underfunded, it was the first time I felt passionate about something on a local level to get involved. I began supporting and volunteering for the #SaveOurCompost efforts. I learned about who my local activists and politicians are, and began connecting with folks within the community to make my voice heard. Opening my eyes to this movement allowed me to see the true beauty of this community and the power that we have to make an incredible impact. I saw folks starting up their own compost efforts to fill the gaps that the city created. I saw information being easily communicated to educate those who lacked knowledge on the issue. It made me proud to be a New Yorker, a Brooklynite and most importantly a human on this planet, who could see firsthand how the simple act of composting can unite and benefit the world around her.

I have seen the incredible work the Lower East Side Ecology Center and Big Reuse continues to do for this city. Without these organizations, among the many many others, New York would have an even more horrific reputation for being a wasteful and environmentally harmful city. To even get political, they have been nothing but a positive force in reducing the work of the Department of Sanitation and Parks, employed hundreds of people with good paying green jobs, educated many of New York's young people, and empowered thousands to make a difference on a local level. To quote many of the politicians who have spoken on this issue, "this is just stupid" to destroy two spaces where these groups do this good work. Especially with one of them being evicted for the purpose of creating a parking lot. Doesn't that just scream "more carbon emissions for New York City"?

I hope that my voice, my story, much like the hundreds of other New Yorkers you will hear from, will help show how important to work of the Lower East Side Ecology Center and Big Reuse is. I hope it also encourages you to get involved in reducing the city's carbon footprint and making our city a greener place for generations to come.

Many thanks and kind regards,

Janine Moody

From: Jared Goldstein  
Date: 12/19/20 12:39 PM (GMT-05:00)  
Subject: Supporting Composting

My wife and I store our food waste in our freezer. When there were brown bins, we'd use those for all of it, a couple of times per week.

Now that that's cancelled, we only compost our vegetable waste. We go to the bins at the Tompkins Square Park Green Market.

Sometimes I buy the worm soil sold by the LES Recycling Center. I use it to care for the tree in front of my apartment building. Having street trees has improved my neighborhood.

Composting weekly gets us to the park, and to the Farmers Market. It is our weekly outing!

It also educates us about our food use.

We like that we are sequestering carbon.

I am sure that the LES Recycling Center uses composting to educate local youth.

The high quality soil improves gardening, gardens, and parks.

There are so many ways that the LES Recycling Center's composting is positive.

Sincerely,

Jared Goldstein  
368 E 8th St  
Apt 1C  
New York NY 10009-5308

Hello,

I wanted to submit a personal plea in an effort to save the city's composting program. I am a resident of Greenpoint, Brooklyn and I drop off my compost in McGorlick park every Sunday morning. This program is so vital to the health of our city especially in the wake of Covid19 when single use plastics and masks are used more than ever. Redirecting waste that can be repurposed to better our community should be an essential part of the Parks Department budget. Because of this program, I have personally educated others and encouraged them to compost as well. Climate change is a serious threat to our future especially the future of New York City. We should focus our resources in fighting the ways we contribute to this change the best we can.

Thank you,  
Jayne

## Testimony for the Committee on Land Use Hearing, Dec. 18, 2020

This is so clearly and evidently a no-brainer. With composting we are handed a common-sense, time tested solution. We must not be so short sighted as to turn our back on progress and the imperative to protect public health, well-being and our environment.

Composting is done worldwide. As just one example, composting is mandatory in Seoul, South Korea and residents actually pay to do so<sup>1</sup>. I think we can all agree, this year with the pandemic it's clear how much we have to learn from South Korea. Or we can learn from Germany where an elaborate and advanced system of recycling has been in place in their cities for decades. Or look at the city of Paris in France where the use of pesticides has been banned in their parks and public spaces since 2017. The vision and wisdom of New York City's parks system have traditionally been celebrated worldwide but proposals to remove composts sites in favor of storage and parking lots is nothing less than antiquated, retrograde, backwards thinking.

And so if the city does not intend to make composting mandatory immediately, we also now know from our experience with masks the importance of education and modeling behavior in order to replicate practices among a population to encourage large-scale adoption. This is

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<sup>1</sup> Galchen, Rivka "How South Korea is Composting Its Way To Sustainability, *The New Yorker*, March 2, 2020  
<https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2020/03/09/how-south-korea-is-composting-its-way-to-sustainability>

what the composting sites provide in addition to the actual important work of improving the environment and our health. These sites serve as public education models for composting at large. These composting sites need public visibility. They need to reside within our parklands as examples of innovative and proactive solutions to climate change and intelligent waste and resource management that our city must embrace. What's more we need our Parks Department and leadership to be forward thinking and take the bold and necessary steps, following the science, to protect our communities and the public good with intelligent and innovative solutions. Let us not waste time and proven opportunities for addressing climate change by moving backwards again.

Surely we are not a city, with all of our resources and collective expertise, that would thwart and impair important, desperately needed programs (requiring expansion!) that addresses a global crisis for the sake of storage and parking.

Renew the license agreements for the LES Ecology Center's Composting Program in the East River Park and Big Reuse's Queensbridge Community Composting Site Center's.

Jeanne Lawler

In addition to the testimony submitted earlier, I would like to add:

The city is about to face a glut in vacant commercial real estate. Surely some of this can be repurposed by the Parks Department for storage and parking. The amount of time, resources and energy it would require to interrupt and uproot the two composting programs (LES Ecology Center's Composting Program in the East River Park and Big Reuse's Queensbridge Community Composting Site) is not justified for the purposes of storage and parking. We can find a better solution.

Jeanne Lawler

Hi, my name is Jeff Farr, and I'm in support of the Big Reuse and LES Ecology Center compost programs staying on parkland. The compost yard is my favorite place in East River Park because I always meet interesting people there whom I don't know. It makes me feel like the park is part of our real lives and making a difference for the environment.

I also think the compost yard looks cool. It is something to be proud of as a New Yorker. Whenever my family or friends come from out of town, I take them there, and they are so impressed. They want to have the same things in their cities, but their cities aren't cool enough.

Hello,

As a lifelong New Yorker I am deeply disappointed in the loss of composting across the city. Composting is a vital part of our commitment to saving our (low-lying) city from the encroaching effects of climate change.

I've lost compost pickup at my Brooklyn home and city dropoff spots like **Lower East Side Ecology Center compost site**, and the **Big Reuse Queensbridge compost site** are even more important now. They are both facing evictions next year, which would be a true loss.

Parks Commissioner Mitchell Silver and Mayor Bill de Blasio have the power to renew the license agreements for community composting sites. **I implore our city to step up and renew these licenses and reinstate composting citywide.**

Thank you,  
Jemma

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[jemmarosebrown.com](http://jemmarosebrown.com)



My name is Jenna Tipaldo and I am a lifelong NYC resident. I grew up in the Rockaways and my home was impacted by Hurricane Sandy in 2012 when I was just 15. Even before Sandy, I was interested in environmental issues but then I was struck by all of the garbage that ended up in landfills. I learned about composting and I was super excited when the city rolled out its municipal program because my parents got a brown bin. It took a bit of getting used to, but soon we were regularly diverting our food and yard scraps from the landfill or incinerator. All throughout college, when I lived in CUNY Hunter College's dorm, I walked my compost to Union Square to drop it off with the Lower East Side Ecology Center. When I moved to Astoria, I walked to Socrates Sculpture Park and later to Astoria Pug's sites in coordination with the Big Reuse. Since the city's curbside composting program is suspended due to COVID and budget cuts, the very least the city can do is allow for community composting to continue on NYC Parks land.

Composting has many benefits aside from just transforming our organic trash into eco-friendly fertilizer for NYC's parks and gardens. By reducing the amount of trash that goes to landfills and incinerators, composting reduces health impacts on environmental justice communities that live near these sites, often racial minorities and low income people. When trash is burned, it can produce toxic gases that can exacerbate asthma. The documentary *The Sacrifice Zone* explores how NYC's waste is burned in the Ironbound district in Newark, NJ, a region with high rates of health problems like asthma and cancer. The Ironbound also consists of mostly people of color. Composting is an environmental justice and public health issue - if more of our trash were diverted into composting programs, we could reduce the harm to communities like this one.

Composting also has climate benefits. When organic matter decays in landfills, it can produce gases like methane, which is much more potent as a greenhouse gas than carbon dioxide, amplifying global warming that is causing climate change. The New Yorkers who will suffer most due to climate change are our city's most vulnerable - black, brown, indigenous, LGBTQ+, immigrant, low income, and elderly people will bear the brunt of impacts like sea level rise, heatwaves, storms, and food/water insecurity that are predicted by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change and US Global Change Research Program.

NYC prides itself as striving towards climate resilience; plans from Mayors Bloomberg and de Blasio illustrate a desire to be a "green" city. If the city cannot do something as basic as allow for community composting, then we are dangerously straying from that path.

Thank you for your time and attention regarding this matter. I hope that you will consider doing everything within your power to ensure the continuation and growth of composting in NYC.

As a resident of the Lower East Side who utilizes our compost program every week, I urge you not to cut the Lower East Side Ecology Center's compost program.

Compostable organics amount to one third of New York City's household trash and disposing of it sustainably is critical to achieving the City's ambitious climate and zero waste goals. Yet, since funding for curbside compost collection and community composting drop off services was drastically cut in New York City's budget, two community composting organizations -- the Lower East Side Ecology Center and Big Reuse -- face possible eviction by the New York City Parks Department.

When food waste is not composted, it is often sent to incinerators located primarily in low-income communities and communities of color and burned with trash and fossil fuels. This releases particulates and toxic chemicals into local communities and in some cases, they even drift back into New York City.

Composting is just too important for our environment, our health, and our economy -- please take action to protect the future of the Lower East Side Ecology Center and Big Reuse's composting services in New York City parks.

Thank you,

Jennifer Barton  
New York, NY 10002

I am committed to composting for my family of 5. We live in Park Slope, Brooklyn. With the suspension of the brown bin composting program in the spring, I was looking for ways we could continue composting. Fred from Nature Based filled in the gap due to suspension of city composting altogether, and I would drive my compost bin to him. With the resumption of city drop off sites, I now drop off compost in Carroll Gardens.

Composting is a doable way to significantly reduce our impact on the climate. It pains me to think of the massive amounts of organic waste that goes into landfills and contributes to greenhouse emissions. Organic matter can be used productively to enhance gardens as compost instead of contributing to climate change. It is a terrible waste to throw it carelessly into landfills. As global citizens, it is essential we do what we can to reduce our impact on the climate.

I am testifying against the potential eviction of composting sites at the Lower East Side Ecology Center and the Queensbridge compost site.

Thank you,

Jennifer Leng

Commissioner Silver and Mayor de Blasio:

I am a member of Smiling Hogshead Ranch, a volunteer run community farm collective in LIC, Queens that accepts our neighbors' food scraps. I am troubled that licenses for community compost sites operated by Big Reuse (in Queens) and the Lower East Side Ecology Center (in Manhattan) have not been renewed by the Parks department. Removal of these sites (and the Brown Bin program) has and will again dramatically increase the amount of food scraps our community brings to our site. This overburdens our volunteers (me) with work that the city should be doing.

The Big Reuse and the LES Ecology Center sites are vital to progress on our City's zero waste, emissions reduction, and environmental justice goals. They support dozens of local green jobs, engage thousands of volunteers and food scrap donors each year, and donate composted leaves, wood chips, and food waste back to our parks as rich organic fertilizer.

There is no good reason to evict longstanding community organizations from small parcels of City land. If our City agencies cannot see the inherent value in composting without rules or laws in place, then we believe parks should be mandated to compost.

Now more than ever, our green spaces must be places where we can learn about and practice sustainability. I have lead numerous community composting workshops at Smiling Hogshead Ranch, educating hundreds of people over the past seven years about how recycling food wastes benefits people and the Planet.

I also worked for 7 libraries in western Queens collecting food waste from people in front of each branch. This was a very successful program.

I urge you to immediately renew the longstanding license for these sites AND to mandate composting citywide.

Thank you!

Jennifer Plewka

SHHR Board Member & Compost Educator

Compostable- waste drop-off at Socrates

Dear NYC council ,

I am writing to ask for your continuing support for the BigReuse compost site. Compositing sites are very important to our community in Queens and having them at the Socrates park is so helpful. You can easily help the planet there while also enjoying the great sculptures and other activities.

I ask you to strongly consider the impact this service has for us.

Thank you very much for all that you do.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Villa

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**Jennifer Villa** | she/her

Mount Holyoke College '21

Art Studio, Anthropology double major

Co-chair | La Unidad Organization

[villa23j@mtholyoke.edu](mailto:villa23j@mtholyoke.edu) | (347) 775-0655



Dear Council Members,

For over 20 years, I have been sharing my compost with the Lower East Side Ecology Center. I used to drop off at the Union Square Farmers Market, and have been impressed with the subsequent DOS compost program (which was, until the budget cuts, in my current UWS neighborhood).

As you know, composting is a vital component to reducing waste and emissions. Over the past ten years, as awareness has increased about global warming and greenhouse gas concerns, I've noticed more and more of my neighbors have taken the time to compost — I'm seeing it across economic strata. We New Yorkers want to make NYC better, more efficient at reducing waste; we want to do our part.

Having spent time in Fresh Kills, I know first hand how difficult it is to reduce methane gas to make landfills habitable, and to mitigate harm to nearby communities. Composting programs make a difference, and get us closer to the City's zero waste goals.

As council members, you know better than most how community organizing makes a difference at the grass roots level. Lower East Side Ecology Center and Big Reuse have been demonstrating that for a long time. Please grant them the ability to continue to make a difference to our neighborhoods, and to our city writ large.

Thank you for taking the time to consider this issue.

Sincerely,

Jenny Gersten  
98 Riverside Drive  
New York, NY 10024

Commissioner Silver and Mayor de Blasio:

I am a member of Smiling hogshead Ranch, a volunteer run community farm collective in LIC, Queens that accepts our neighbors food scraps. I am troubled that licenses for community compost sites operated by Big Reuse (in Queens) and the Lower East Side Ecology Center (in Manhattan) have not been renewed by the Parks department. Removal of these sites (and the Brown Bin program) has and will again dramatically increase the amount of food scraps our community brings to our site. This overburdens our volunteers (me) with work that the city should be doing.

The Big Reuse and the LES Ecology Center sites are vital to progress on our City's zero waste, emissions reduction, and environmental justice goals. They support dozens of local green jobs, engage thousands of volunteers and food scrap donors each year, and donate composted leaves, wood chips, and food waste back to our parks as rich organic fertilizer.

There is no good reason to evict longstanding community organizations from small parcels of City land. If our City agencies cannot see the inherent value in composting without rules or laws in place, then we believe parks should be mandated to compost.

Now more than ever, our green spaces must be places where we can learn about and practice sustainability.

I urge you to immediately renew the longstanding license for these sites AND to mandate composting citywide.

Jenny Wang

To whom it may concern,

I, Jermaine Wilson, an employee of the NYC compost project, plead of you to reconsider maintaining the upkeep of this project. I kindly ask that you renew the license of both *Big Reuse* and the *LES Ecology Center*. These centers not only provide numerous opportunities and employment for people of all ages, races, ethnicities, and backgrounds; they provide a beneficial relationship between our local communities and composting services. With the loss of soil and exceeding levels of carbon dioxide in the environment, composting would result in a reduction of volume of organic waste. I ask of you to think about the harmful effects of our current environment in the absence of composting services, in reference to the beneficial factors that would result in the presence of such services. Please think about how we are trying to participate in making the world a healthier and more productive atmosphere to raise our children, and future generations; those whom will continue to give back to our communities, becoming the next leaders of cities, states, and even the country. Why remove something that could help save the world... OUR world? Instead of evicting the NYC compost project so that it is replaced with storage and parking, we should help one another in the rebuilding and recreating of a more productive compost yard serving the East River park, keeping compost alive.

Thank you for all your time and consideration. It is greatly appreciated, as we look forward to working together hand in hand.

Kind regards,

Jermaine Wilson

Testimony From Jerome Dutilloy  
Resident of 625 Main Street 10044

December 21, 2020

Written Testimony for December 18th Hearing

In response to the Climate Emergency declared by New York City officials in June 2019, New York City Parks should allow community scale composting on their lands. According to Sam Biederman, Assistant Commissioner for Community Outreach and Partnership Development during the December 18 hearing, the Parks are already practicing compost. However, this is mostly circular compost, reusing the organic materials produced by the parks and very little from the communities. What is needed is the education and involvement from communities to attain the goals of the city in reducing carbon emissions. Community composting programs that already exist do this and more.

As a Roosevelt Island resident, I have seen the composting program developing in the past few years with Big Reuse involvement. From one bin weekly, it is four bins that are now needed to accommodate the residents. It is also involving Roosevelt Island youth who are essential in fighting the Climate Crisis. The community compost program currently in place cannot be stopped for construction and the needs for a baby Queensbridge park that was planned before the Parks moved their vehicles into this location. This project should not be used as an excuse to vacate composting from Parks land. Green places and composting go hand in hand and NYC Parks should keep community composting and their very successful educational programs alive in the development of NYC green spaces.

Compost made with local food scraps from the community is essential and belongs in parks land that is the land of the citizens. We do not want the community to be divided by a capital project that was planned before parks moved their vehicles in this public space. I do not think that Parks want to divide recreational, sustainable and educational. Keep composting in parks land where the citizens of New York want it.

Jerome Dutilloy

To whom it may concern:

I have been composting in NYC for several years, and was eagerly anticipating the expansion of composting programs in the city to include home compost bins & pick-ups before Covid-19 hit and shut down even my weekly BigReuse compost drop-off site. I believe compost is an important way to reduce our waste in landfills and provide nutrients back to the soil. Composting has made me more conscious of how much waste I produce and how much of it is compostable, recyclable, and how much winds up in a landfill.

Living in a large, urban city such as New York makes it visible the staggering amount of waste we produce. It's visible when we walk down the street and see piles of trash waiting to be picked up, but I know I'm only seeing such a small part of the problem. In order to reduce our carbon footprint and join the ranks of global cities doing their part to combat climate change, we must support composting efforts. It is inspiring that local community members like Astoria Pug have taken it upon themselves to find a way to fill the gap left by the city government during the pandemic & make it possible for my neighbors & me to compost. The fact that they have amassed such a huge following in a short amount of time is evidence that there is demand for a better way to dispose of our waste, and that people are passionate about living in a more environmentally friendly manner. While I find it inspiring that local citizens have launched this effort, they should not have to fill the gaps left by our city government and bear this burden alone.

During the pandemic, many have changed their habits -- they are cooking and eating more at home, they are shopping local, they are giving back to their neighborhoods. This is a valuable opportunity to capitalize on this change in behavior & bring additional people in to the process of composting. I'm certain there are other places the city can use for parking. Please allow BigReuse to continue to use their space to serve the community and provide rich soil to the city in return.

Sincerely,  
Jessica Crowley

Jessica Kerr  
31-65 29<sup>th</sup> Street  
Astoria, NY 11106

December 18, 2020

Re: Testimony to the Committee on Sanitation and Solid Waste Management regarding the importance of composting

To Whom it May Concern:

The ability to compost is an important part of our community. I started composting when I was living upstate for the summer and had land where I can make my own compost pile. Now that I am back in the city, I would like to continue my composting efforts. However, access to compost drop-off locations is essential. Big Reuse is essential in our community's efforts to compost. Without Big Reuse, I, and many other environmentally- conscious New Yorkers, will not be able to easily or efficiently compost.

A few benefits of composting are as follows:

- The greenhouse gas emissions related to fertilizer production are avoided.<sup>1</sup>
- There is significant reduction in the use of pesticides (avoiding emissions associated with their production).<sup>1</sup>
- Helps soils hold carbon dioxide.<sup>1</sup>
- Saves water by helping the soil hold moisture and reduce water runoff.<sup>2</sup>
- Benefits the environment by recycling organic resources while conserving landfill space.<sup>2</sup>
- Provides many benefits to the health of the soil, such as increasing organic matter in the soil, providing nutrients, helping to balance pH, and helping to control soil erosion.<sup>2</sup>

Please allow Big Reuse to continue its composting mission under the Queensboro Bridge and the LES Ecology Center.

Sincerely,



Jessica Kerr

<sup>1</sup> [https://eurekarecycling.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/composting\\_factsheet\\_0.pdf](https://eurekarecycling.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/composting_factsheet_0.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> <https://anrcatalog.ucanr.edu/pdf/8367.pdf>

To the Committee on Sanitation and Solid Waste Management and Committee on parks and Rec:

I am a Queens resident, and I am writing to express my concern about the closing of organics collection sites operated by the Lower East Ecology center and Big Reuse. If NYC is truly committed to sending zero waste to landfill by 2030, why are you proposing to close some few remaining composting sites in the city? After slashing the budget for organics collection, the sites operated by Lower East Ecology center and Big Reuse have become crucial composting resources for residents throughout the city.

NYC residents need more options for organics collection, and closing these sites is step in the wrong direction. Composting and organics collection are can make a huge difference in reducing the amount of waste going to landfills and reducing carbon emissions. NYC should be a leader, taking bold action to fight the climate crisis locally and serving as a model for other cities throughout the country.

Sincerely,  
Jill Ryan

Dear City Council Members,

Please Read Why We Need Composting Services in NYC:

I have been composting for the last 10 years in NYC. I have relied upon the services provided by Lower East Side Ecology and Big Reuse throughout that time and especially since NYC's discontinuation of its Food Scrap Drop Off Services. I am extremely concerned that these two essential organizations may be evicted from their locations in 2021. This must not happen!

Composting is essential for the environmental health of our city and the world. Food scraps represent 28% of what we throw away. I used to dump my garbage can every other day until I started composting. Now I dump my garbage about once every two weeks.

Food waste is also a significant burden on the economy. The average cost to landfill municipal solid waste in the US was around \$55/ton in 2019. The US generated about 267 million tons of municipal waste in 2017, two-thirds of which went to landfills and incinerators. That's billions of dollars spent on waste management. So composting at home allows us to divert some of that waste from landfills into something practical for our gardens, parks and yards.

When organic matter decomposes it undergoes aerobic decomposition, being broken down by microorganisms that require oxygen. When compostable waste goes to a landfill it gets buried under huge amounts of other trash, cutting off a regular supply of oxygen for the decomposers. The waste then undergoes anaerobic decomposition, generating biogas, which is 50% methane and 50% carbon dioxide, potent greenhouse gases, trapping heat in our atmosphere, contributing to global warming. Landfills are the third largest source of human-generated methane emissions in the US.

Composting is also an environmental justice issue. When food waste is not composted it is often sent to incinerators located primarily in low-income communities and communities of color and burned with trash and fossil fuels, releasing toxic chemicals and particulates into local communities.

Sustainably disposing of organics is critical to achieving New York City's ambitious climate and zero waste goals. Dumping food waste into landfills or incinerators adds to air pollution, accelerates the climate crisis, and will mean that the people who provide these critical composting services will lose their jobs.

Do Not Let This Happen!

Keep Lower East Side Ecology and Big Reuse as the good, community-benefitting tenants they are. Let them continue to provide essential composting services to this community that relies so heavily on them!

Thank you!

Sincerely,

Jim Richards  
250 West 104th Street, #42  
New York, NY 10025

**From:** Joan Flynn

**Sent:** Monday, December 14, 2020 9:58 AM

**To:** NYC Council Hearings

**Subject:** Renew license agreements for Community Composting Sites.

We need your help to renew the license agreements for Big **Reuse's Queensbridge Community Composting Site** and LES Ecology Center's Composting in East River Park. Parks Dept is planning to evict our composting site to replace it with equipment storage

This is unacceptable! LES Ecology Century is providing a great service to all the citizens of New York City.

The biggest **benefit of composting** is the obvious one: creating an environmentally friendly alternative to landfill disposal.

According to a [2015 EPA study on Municipal Solid Waste \(MSW\)](#), national waste consists of 26.5% paper product, 7.5% wood, 7.6% yard trimmings, and 16.4% food scraps. Added together, that's 57.8% of total waste that could be used for composting! Imagine reducing landfill waste by over 50%! This is not only good for the environment, it makes financial sense too.

Composting programs that remove food waste from the MSW significantly reduce some of the greenhouse gases associated with landfills.

Landfills produce extraordinary amounts of greenhouse gases, including methane, which is 28 to 36 times more destructive than carbon dioxide. Also, landfills are typically located far away from cities, so the collection and transportation of waste further contributes to greenhouse gases. In total, the EPA estimates that landfills are the third-largest contributor of greenhouse gases in the world.

There is no downside to this! Please renew the license agreement.

Thank you,  
Joan Flynn

**Testimony of Joann Lee, resident of District 34 and former Organics Outreach Associate.  
December 18, 2020**

My name is Joann and I am a lifelong resident of East Williamsburg. Several years ago, I became interested in the local sustainability movement and wanted to learn about how I could do my part in mitigating the impacts of climate change right here in New York City.

At the time, I was a few years out of college, and I had the privilege to quit my full-time job and take up an unpaid internship with NYC Parks under the Sustainability Division. I worked under an incredible mentor who taught me not only the practical skills needed to build and sustain green infrastructure, but also the ins and outs of navigating institutional bureaucracy. He taught me how to be an advocate for sustainability in a world where sustainability is seen as an inconvenience, a financial burden, and an afterthought.

My experience with NYC Parks led me to my first paid green job, where I conducted outreach for the citywide composting program under Big Reuse. My colleagues and I went door-to-door and educated New Yorkers on how to use their brown bins, oftentimes conducting outreach to non-English speakers in their native languages. Growing up, I had always believed that I couldn't participate in the climate movement as a woman of color living in an urban environment. Climate change was portrayed in school as a distant issue that affected polar bears and tropical rainforests and was solved by White professionals. My work at Big Reuse completely recontextualized how I understood our climate emergency and for the first time, I felt as if I was part of a community that was working together to create a cleaner and more equitable future. This community was comprised of people of all ages, all backgrounds, all socio-economic groups and gave me a strong sense of both unity and purpose.

These two experiences pushed to where I am today. I am working as a sustainability professional at New York University and am pursuing my Master's in urban planning to help me achieve my goal of contributing to a more equitable, just, and sustainable city. I urge you to stop NYC Parks from evicting Big Reuse and the Lower East Side Ecology Center from their land. These two organizations are providing an invaluable resource where the City has fallen short when it paused all municipal composting earlier this year. Ending Big Reuse and LES Ecology Center's composting would be devastating for New Yorkers looking to make a difference, young professionals kicking off their green careers, and low-income communities of color that will suffer from increased air pollution when more waste will be sent to landfills. Allowing these sites to continue their operations will, on the other hand, promote justice, sustainability, and the economy. We're running out of time to address climate change and if both Mayor deBlasio and Commissioner Silver say that this is a priority, we must act now to save community composting. Thank you.

I'm a lifelong New Yorker, born in Manhattan and a Brooklyn resident for the last 23 years. I love this city and I'm so proud of how the people of this city have rallied together in this pandemic. We've been supporting each other through mutual aid, community fridges, neighbors caring for each other in quarantine – and we've been working together to figure out how to continue to compost our food scraps while the government of this city has deemed this unnecessary. Community Gardens have opened their doors (once allowed by the City), individuals have offered up space, people have communally researched and provided resources to their neighborhoods on what to do.

The people of this city recognize, even when their leaders do not, that the climate crisis is as much of a crisis as this pandemic is – and we are not willing to give up on doing everything that we can to slow this crisis. So when the City cut composting services at the beginning of the pandemic, we found our way. But much of that way depends on Big Reuse and LESEC being able to continue to use their facilities. And I understand that agreements had been made with Big Reuse to find a new space by the end of the year, but we're in a pandemic – agreements made 2 years ago (or whenever) should be re-looked at. The city also cut their compost program so that should contribute to prior agreements being re-examined.

So many people in this city have made it clear that composting is essential to them – we can see that through their actions and efforts to make this happen despite the pandemic. Listen to them and allow Big Reuse and LESEC to keep their facilities or, if that's absolutely impossible, find new facilities for them BEFORE shutting these down.

Thank you for your time.

Jody Kuh  
Brooklyn, NY 11238

Hello,

I'm a community member and am writing in support of keeping composting sites at LES Ecology Center and Queensbridge compost site. As a city, we need to be moving forward and supporting green practices like composting. I know this year has put the city in a tough spot with the budget - forcing composting to be cut throughout the city. Let's not decimate what few resources are left for supporting community composting. Please #SaveOurCompost!

Sincerely,

Johanna R.  
Brooklyn, NY

**Testimony re T2020-6956 Joint Oversight Hearing on Community Composting  
and  
T2020-6972 Resolution**  
*(calling on DSNY and Parks Dept. to continue to engage and collaborate with local communities  
and allow community composting to be carried out on parkland)*

Page 1 of 2

**John B. Senter  
115 East 9th Street  
New York, NY 10003-5421**

December 20, 2020

To: NYC Council Committees on Parks and Recreation *and* Sanitation and Solid Waste Management

Dear Co-Chairs Kim, Reynoso and Members of the Committees:

My name is John Senter. I have been a resident of the Lower East Side of Manhattan for more than 40 years. For more than 25 years, our household of two has composted our food scraps with the Lower East Side Ecology Center (LESEC). My wife and I are strong supporters of LESEC; of their director Christine; of their staff and volunteers; and of the important work they do for ALL New Yorkers. I watched about four-and-a-half hours of Friday's joint oversight hearing on Community Composting live, and then yesterday watched the rest of it on the recording. Thank you for holding the hearing. I truly wish that it had not been necessary and that the hundreds of person-hours of time that hundreds of New Yorkers spent on it had been able to be used in addressing other important issues facing New Yorkers rather than in merely holding OUR city agencies – and specifically the NYC Parks Department – accountable.

I **SUPPORT** NYC Council Resolution **T2020-6972**. That said, a resolution alone is NOT enough. A Parks Department press release announcing a 6-month permit extension for The Big Reuse is NOT enough. The news that the Parks Department has committed to allowing LESEC to use a renovated agency building for its educational programming during ESCR construction, while welcome, is NOT enough. The Mayor mouthing support for community composting for a few seconds in a daily press briefing is NOT enough.

I demand that New York City **LEAD** by tangibly supporting – NOT by stonewalling – the Lower East Side Ecology Center and The Big Reuse and other high-performing community composting efforts. Allow those groups to continue to operate ON NYC parkland, preferably in their current locations. During ESCR construction, **COMMIT** in a binding and enforceable agreement – not just with vague, possibly unenforceable oral statements – to finding, setting up, and reasonably funding a **SUITABLE** temporary location for LESEC's composting operation; and **COMMIT** in a binding and enforceable agreement to allow LESEC to return and resume its composting operation permanently at its current location in East River Park when it is safe to do so during or upon completion of ESCR, whichever comes first.

More than 50 members of the public, and several elected officials, spoke eloquently on Friday about the importance to New Yorkers of The Lower East Side Ecology Center and The Big Reuse and other programs such as Red Hook Compost Site. After listening to them, and to the representatives from DSNY and the Parks Department, here are points that I believe should be emphasized.

1. **Composting is important to help meet NYC Zero Waste goals.** By reducing materials that are landfilled or incinerated, **composting helps to achieve environmental justice** for communities through which discarded materials would be transported and then landfilled or incinerated. Out of a \$420 million bill for solid waste disposal, by spending a miniscule amount of it – less than one per cent – on community composting, New York City achieves an out-sized return on its investment. Tangible results include high-quality, finished compost for public lands; reduced solid waste transportation costs and tip fees; and strong support and participation by passionate New Yorkers in ALL boroughs. In Friday's hearing I heard residents from four out of five boroughs speak. Several reported that since the city stopped its curbside compost pick up due to the pandemic and budget woes, after community composting programs were allowed to resume, public participation in them has dramatically **INCREASED**.

**Testimony re T2020-6956 Joint Oversight Hearing on Community Composting  
and  
T2020-6972 Resolution**

*Page 2 of 2*

2. **Community composting MAKES SENSE; community composting BELONGS in NYC Parks and on NYC parkland.** Composting should not be limited to Parks Department programs only. The Parks Department’s reasoning at the hearing was flawed and unconvincing; it was unworthy of a department headed by a Commissioner who lists so many professional initials after his name. In my opinion, the Parks Department’s arguments on Friday paled – by a lot – compared to some made by NYC students – such as one by Bed-Stuy high schooler Brys Peralta-Grant, a composter, who noted that “composting and parks go hand-in-hand” and from Brooklyn educator Anna von Muehlen, who related several COMMON-SENSE statements from her FIRST-GRADERS, including, “Why turn something good into something bad?”
3. It was reported Friday that **on-the-ground Parks Department staff members have been and often continue to be cooperative and supportive partners with community composters.** It appears that the difficulties have been coming from upper management.
4. **The legal argument put forth by a non-lawyer representative of the Parks Department was weak at best and, in my opinion, based on ONE decision that is NOT applicable to the situations of The Big Reuse and the Lower East Side Ecology Center.** In his testimony Friday, a lawyer with 40 years of experience dealing with New York environmental issues called the Parks Department’s argument “among the most illogical and unreasonable city agency actions in memory.”

A commercial company who took over 20 acres of public parkland to generate private profits from nuisance-causing activities is NOT the same as small not-for-profit organizations who have SUCCESSFULLY partnered WITH city agencies for years – sometimes decades – and who use one acre or less of parkland for their operations, the fruits of which in turn, benefit PUBLIC land.

5. More than one person testified on Friday that **participating** in community composting – which hundreds of New Yorkers voluntarily do – is a form of **recreation**. I agree. For my wife and I – especially during the pandemic – after community composting was resumed, regularly we have been dropping off our food scraps in the bins at LESEC’s compost yard in East River Park; it has become PART of our long walks through the park. Both of those activities have contributed to our physical and mental well-being during these difficult times. **Community composting is a valid source of recreation fulfilling an important Parks Department mission.**

For all of the above reasons, and more, I urge the NYC Council, the Mayor, and ALL NYC agencies immediately to stop stonewalling community composting programs; to support them meaningfully; to allow them to keep their operations on public parkland where they rightfully belong and BENEFIT the public; and to acknowledge and respect the community pioneers who have helped to point NYC toward a more sustainable future, but who now are threatened by illogical, poor public policies that should be easy to correct. I thank all of the elected officials who have been supportive of community composting; I urge you to continue to fight with us to preserve community composting and to enable it to thrive – before it is too late.

Sincerely,  
*John B. Senter*

Composting in Parks

**Please keep composting a community  
based activity.**

John R.

Zip Code 11218



Testimony to Save Big Reuse & Lower East Side Ecology Center's Community Compost Sites  
Committees on Parks and Recreation and Sanitation, Joint Oversight Hearing  
Friday, December 18, 2020 at 11am

**Name: Jolie Warbet**

**I live across the street from the Ecology Center site and it is a very vital part of the East River. Our buildings currently do not accept compost but we can drop off food scraps across the foot bridge and this helps divert thousands of pounds of waste into usable soil to grow food in!**

**The LES Ecology Center** site should be built into the East Side Coastal Resiliency Project and moved to temporary space in the interim. LES Ecology Center's license agreement should be renewed and include return to their historical site in the East River Park.

**Big Reuse** should be allowed to continue composting at their current site and have their license renewed.

**We should be a progressive city!! Let's be better than San Francisco and let's move forward with plans that will ultimately better our citizens.**

Hello, I am a resident of Sunnyside and composting is important to me. I was greatly disappointed but understanding when the city had to shut down support for composting services because of the pandemic. Now that the community has finally banded together and organized their own infrastructure to serve the neighborhood's composting needs, it feels like the city is hamstringing these efforts while ignoring the voice of the community. Composting is clearly a popular program. Personally, it is important to me that we reduce what we send to landfill, lower emissions, and allow these volunteer-led programs to continue operating.

We aren't even asking for the city to allocate new resources. I received an email from Commissioner Silver citing that Big Reuse's original agreement with the city was predicated on the fact that Big Reuse would vacate the current location by the end of 2020, and I want to ask, if so many things have changed during this pandemic, why can't this change too?

Please allow the existing infrastructure to continue to be available to citizen efforts for bettering our communities.

Joyce Huang

I have been composting for several years. When it was suspended I noticed that I had to take garbage out of my apartment daily. When composting, my compost bin filled in 2 days, while my general garbage did not need to be removed for 3-4 days. The deterioration of plants supports the earth, but takes much longer to break down in landfills. It makes ultimate sense for our environment to compost: less in landfills and healthier for the environment.

*Rabbi Judith B. Edelstein, Doctor of Ministry, BCC  
817 West End Ave., 7A, New York, NY 10025  
H: 212-662-3631 C: 646-247-2614*

# Save Compost Processing Sites

(646)379-6204

Jui-An Wang

December 20, 2020

Dear City Council,

I live on Roosevelt Island, and I give my food scrap for turning them into compost every week. I see how important is this process that benefit for our agricultural community. Please save the compost processing sites for us.

Sincerely yours,

Jui-An

12/17/2020

Dear Committee,

I would like to submit this testimony in support of KEEPING Big Reuse in it's current locations at the Queensbridge Compost Processing Site and Lower East Side Ecology Center. These programs are vital to the well-being of our communities and for our planet. We know that climate change is real and the negative impact on our lives is happening at an alarming rate. In such a large city with so much garbage produced it would be UNETHICAL and IRRESPONSIBLE to close these sites which help to off-set the impact we have on our environment. I am a resident of Greenpoint Brooklyn, a place I am proud to call home and where I want my children to grow up. I want them to learn how to compost and recycle and they need a venue like this to make that happen. Parks has the ability here to be leaders and show the community that composting is their responsibility. Too often, composting is neglected and Parks can now take a stand to show that composting is just as important as having safe and clean green spaces for our city.

Thank you,  
Julia Canestraro  
702 Leonard St, Brooklyn, NY, 11222  
646-531-3378

To the uneducated brain, requests to extend the licensing agreements to the two biggest compost facilities in New York City (Big Reuse and the Lower East Side Ecology Center) may seem like a hippy-dippy request. But take a step back and do a little bit of forecasting and you'll see it is actually a wise business decision. Maintaining a robust composting system is good for the literal health of its residents, but it is good for its economic health.

New York and its rat problem is a joke. Literally. You can find memes, pictures, and even snow sculptures making fun of it. Less food waste in the garbage means fewer rats which means more liveability and attractiveness for the city -- something it could use now more than EVER thanks to the pandemic.

Making space for cars is ridiculous and unnecessary. Hire better operations employees and figure out a way to improve the systems we already have. The future of this city depends on it.

Julia Farina

Testimony from Julia Ferguson  
Resident of 625 Main Street 10044 Middle School teacher in 10010  
Outreach Chair for Roosevelt Island Garden Community

December 17, 2020

Dear Parks Commissioner Silver,

I invite you to see the importance of community composting. I sincerely hope you will join us in this understanding.

Composting is one of the top 100 solutions for reversing global warming, which is possible. To cite [Drawdown](#) technical calculations – optimizing urban composting can lead to billions of dollars in savings by 2050. As [Drawdown.org](#) explains, composting *converts organic waste into soil carbon, averting landfill methane emissions in the process.*

In 2015, I reached out to NYC Compost hosted by Big Reuse alongside other Roosevelt Island neighbors. Working with our local government, we succeeded in establishing one of their collaborative Food Scrap Drop Off sites in our neighborhood. We have worked very closely with Big Reuse since that time. At every contact, they are helpful, friendly, and informative. It is Big Reuse and their work located so near to us, which has brought our entire Roosevelt Island community together in quiet, generous ways. They teach and serve through composting.

Ten years ago, I bought my first small composter from Lower East Side Ecology and started my learning with LES. Both sites are key stone places organizations for our city. I dream of a day when so many more New Yorkers can pass by local composting sites with new earth steaming in the sunrise.

Why do we need to save these compost sites on our street corners and add more? Composting leads to healthy soil, urban health, deep personal learning, and community connections. Our earth is sacred and we are all a part of her. Thanks to community composting, we can know this and teach this even in one of the largest megacities on earth. I have seen this over and over again during the past five years.

I have seen elderly friends jump at the chance every Saturday to get out and compost the resources that are their food scraps. They enjoy the exercise and camaraderie at the drop off near the green market.

I have seen toddlers' eyes light up at worm bin education displays with compost sponsored Pumpkin Smashes. The micro fauna in the soil is alive! Some spend an hour with the magnifying glass while their parents begin to see, too.

I have seen kindergartners gleefully shout “browns and greens” when asked what you need to make compost. They get it. And they also already know that their future lives are endangered by parking lots, not by composting.

I have watched older elementary children “get it” in a flash as they sift rough compost to create beautiful, fine soil amendment for a plant give away or as they help to share the “black gold” throughout the garden--freely.

I have worked with international middle school students who wrote emails to Lower East Side Ecology. They received immediate responses for their learning and projects about compost. The students show great relief when they learn how compost is a solution to global warming---somehow parking lots and park lawns never inspire this same relief.

I have mentored high school seniors who volunteered their time for graphic design projects in support of Big Reuse. Others have volunteered with community composting and then understood practical science in a way they never learned in advanced biology classes.

I have seen Cornell Tech graduate students trek down to our Roosevelt Island Food Scrap Drop Off site, ask for composting at their campus, and volunteer for composting days on breaks from their PhD studies.

I have seen middle-aged friends look around them at a sustainability presentation. When they saw one hundred hands raised in answer to the question “Do you compost at our local food scrap drop off site which sends all the resources to Big Reuse?” These friends began composting, too.

I have personally had time speaking with the Big Reuse staff at Food Scrap Drop o=Off collections. This informal learning is deep, connected, and happens outside in the fresh air when compost is involved. This is learning that sticks with you: our city is filled with resources, not trash.

I invite you, Commissioner Silver, to step away from thinking that another NYC Parks parking lot is more urgently needed than Big Reuse composting. Please stop imagining that Lower East Side Ecology can just disappear temporarily without harm to the community. Parks land is ideal for community composting. These compost programs are running well and can easily continue to provide us all with so much.

These places and people are vitally connected across our city. All of us who are compost supporters share the ground and the soil that that we walk upon daily with you, Commissioner Silver, and with all of NYC Parks. Organic scraps and community composting are resources that feed us over and over again. Our earth heals us quickly

Big Reuse Composting and Lower East Side Ecology are already doing so much for New Yorkers. Please reframe and reconsider the plans for their removal from their current key-stone sites.

Julia Ferguson  
625 Main Street Apt 1131  
New York, NY 10044



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

Hello,

In this testimony, I stand in support of the thousands of people who have chosen to change their behaviors by composting their food scraps, one of the most basic ways people can directly contribute to sustaining a greener NYC. I ask that the city keep Big Reuse and the Lower East Side Ecology Center compost operations on NYC Parks land. Local, larger scale composting sites on Parks land are essential in the NYC composting ecosystem, especially since curbside composting is no longer in effect. Getting rid of their access to NYC Parks land is incredibly short-sighted and has long-term implications, setting the City back further from its sustainability goals.

Today I stand with 100s of New Yorkers - we urge the City Council to ensure that the City at least maintain the ability to continue some sort of organics recycling and composting, and not toss away the progress we have made in the past few years.

I cannot understate the urgency of this ask, and hope the Council ensures that this important priority not be left behind in the budget process.

Thank you.  
Julia Tejada

To Parks Commissioner Silver and Mayor de Blasio,

There is no legal reason why Big Reuse and the LES Ecology Center must lose their leases on their compost sites. New York Lawyers for the Public Interest is clear about this. Composting engages many, serves everyone and promotes the very mission of NYC Parks.

Evicting these two community organizations at a time when the city has also shortsightedly cut funding to all curbside composting makes me wonder if the current administration has an existing environmental plan. Composting is a huge part of the climate solution because it keeps organic waste out of the landfill, reducing methane emissions from decomposition and CO2 emissions from transporting trash. The resulting compost promotes greenery that mitigates the urban heat effect, and directly sequesters CO2.

Mayor de Blasio needs to renew Big Reuse's license agreement to continue operating at its Queensbridge site. The site is organized and being used to produce compost for local residents and community gardens. Before Big Reuse moved in, it was an abandoned lot filled with construction equipment. Big Reuse improved the space and transformed it into a boon for the neighborhood.

Mayor de Blasio needs to find a temporary space for LESEC to continue its compost program during the East Side Coastal Resiliency construction project. He needs to ensure that the compost yard is incorporated into the reconstruction plans for East River Park. The park serves the surrounding community, who rely on LESEC for compost, employment and volunteer opportunities.

Composting belongs on NYC parkland. It supports the agency's sustainability goals, and must be embedded into the future of NYC parks. The infrastructure of these nonprofits will prioritize the long term sustainability of urban living, and provide options for residents to reduce their carbon footprints. Enabling local residents to invest in collective action as a community is the best way to achieve long term improvements to our waste system.

LESEC and Big Reuse's compost programs are sustainability anchors in their communities. Closing these sites would undermine the City's goals in zero waste, carbon emissions and environmental justice. These sites should not be compared to the Spring Creek Lawsuit about a compost site on parkland. There is no legal standing on this comparison.

Why do I compost? Mainly logic. I am a high school biology teacher that has been teaching about climate change since I started my career. In that time, I have seen New York City begin to take real action to do our part to lessen the negative impact we have on the Earth, and by extension ourselves. Compost, particularly at the level that BlgReuse is capable, is incredibly beneficial process all the way through, from keeping the scraps from decomposing and create unnecessary green house gases in a landfill to providing nutrient rich soil to neighbors, communities, and education projects. We have already made some significant strides, there is a long way to go, but replacing an extremely efficient composting operation for a parking lot is not moving us in the right direction. Logic. Composting is logical.

Kailyn Fox

Greensboro compost site

Dear City Council,

As you are well aware, composting food scraps is one way that everyone can contribute to the betterment of the city and the greater environment. The decision to replace a valuable composting site that serves thousands of NYC residents and the environment with a parking lot that serves the needs of a few, and not to mention is merely perpetuating our reliance on fossil fuel powered cars, seems like a decision that moves us in the wrong direction. I would implore you to make the right decision and steer clear of any shortsighted choices. Please think about the greater good.

Best regards,

Kaori Goto  
Brooklyn, NY

Testimony in favor of RENEWING LEASES FOR BIG REUSE AND LES ECOLOGY CENTER  
COMPOSTING FACILITIES.

To Parks Commissioner Silver and Mayor de Blasio:

Let's be clear, there is no legal reason why Big Reuse and LES Ecology Center must lose their leases on their compost site (New York Lawyers for the Public Interest clarifies this point). Composting engages many, is in service to all and promotes the very mission of NYC Parks.

Evicting these two community organizations at a time when the city has also shortsightedly cut funding to all curbside composting makes me wonder what the environmental plan of the current administration is, or if one even exists. Composting is a HUGE part of the climate solution because it keeps organic waste out of landfill, thus reducing methane emissions from decomposition as well as CO2 emissions from transporting trash, AND the resulting compost promotes greenery that mitigates urban heat effect, and directly sequesters CO2.

Hurricane Sandy was a Climate Change issue, and COVID 19 is not unrelated to changing environmental conditions, yet your response to these issues is to decimate NYC Composting (which was already pitifully small when compared to programs other US cities like San Francisco and Seattle), destroy East River park and add more parking lots? We should be growing composting programs and green space.

These are challenging times for all of us, and I appreciate what the city has dealt with this last year, but these evictions were put into motion before last spring and COVID 19 should strengthen the city's resolve to make decisions that do not put us at greater environmental and health risk in the near future.

Dr. Karen Weissman

[@closetheoopnyc](https://twitter.com/closetheoopnyc)

Testimony to Save Big Reuse & Lower East Side Ecology Center's Community Compost Sites  
Committees on Parks and Recreation and Sanitation, Joint Oversight Hearing  
Friday, December 18, 2020 at 11am

Katarina Medakovich

I support Big Reuse and the Lower East Side Ecology Center in their efforts provide vital, grassroots environmental work for the city. Community composting has picked up the slack that resulted from the halting of curbside collection during the COVID-19 crisis. Their license agreement for community compost sites must be renewed so they can continue supporting necessary services for the city. Composting is not a luxury, but rather a critical act in moving New York City forward in its Zero Waste, climate change, and sustainability goals.

please save the LESEC composting program and find a new home for it!

I have been composting in NYC since 1985, bringing it to the LESEC's community garden until they started collecting it at city farmers' markets - and when the city began its own composting program, my entire building could contribute. It was crushing to me when the city stopped its composting program this summer to have to throw my compost into regular trash after all those decades. Thank goodness the LESEC started collecting again around the same time.

As I'm sure you know, composting benefits us in the following ways:

Reduces the Waste Stream

Cuts Methane Emissions from Landfills

Improves Soil Health and Lessens Erosion

Conserves Water

Reduces Personal Food Waste

Composting is an environmental justice issue too. When food waste is not composted, it is often sent to incinerators located primarily in low-income communities and communities of color and burned with trash and fossil fuels. This releases particulates and toxic chemicals into local communities.

Sustainably disposing of organics is critical to achieving New York City's ambitious climate and zero waste goals. Dumping food waste into landfills or incinerators instead of composting them adds to air pollution, accelerates the climate crisis, and will mean that the people who provide these critical composting services will lose their jobs.

Lastly, the Parks Department should host composting sites instead of landfilling their yard waste.

Sincerely,

Kate K Puls

I have been taking my food scraps once a week to a drop-off site for Lower East Side Ecology Center since the 1990's, first to Union Square and then to a site in Chelsea. I do this because I think it is everyone's responsibility to help the environment.

Parks Commissioner Silver's decision to oust both the Lower East Side Ecology Center and Big Reuse goes against the DeBlasio Administration's global warming reduction goals and its' pledge to send zero waste to landfills by 2030. It also goes against the Department's Sustainability Plan issued in 2011. The global warming reduction goals are for the health of all New Yorkers.

Katherine Bini

Dear Council,

We need your help to renew the license agreements for Big Reuse's Queensbridge Community Composting Site and LES Ecology Center's Composting in East River Park. Parks Dept is planning to evict these composting sites to replace it with equipment storage.

This is unacceptable! LES Ecology Century is providing a great service to all the citizens of New York City.

The biggest benefit of composting is the obvious one: creating an environmentally friendly alternative to landfill disposal. There are many additional benefits to composting, but this one hits right in the wallet.

According to a 2015 EPA study on Municipal Solid Waste (MSW), national waste consists of 26.5% paper product, 7.5% wood, 7.6% yard trimmings, and 16.4% food scraps. Added together, that's 57.8% of total waste that could be used for composting! Imagine reducing landfill waste by over 50%! This is not only good for the environment, it makes financial sense too.

Composting programs that remove food waste from the MSW significantly reduce some of the greenhouse gases associated with landfills.

Landfills produce extraordinary amounts of greenhouse gases, including methane, which is 28 to 36 times more destructive than carbon dioxide. Also, landfills are typically located far away from cities, so the collection and transportation of waste further contributes to greenhouse gases. In total, the EPA estimates that landfills are the third-largest contributor of greenhouse gases in the world.

There is no downside to this! Please renew the license agreement.

Thank you,  
Katie Flynn-Jambeck

Dear City Council Members, Mayor de Blasio, and Commissioner Silver:

Thank you for coming together on a Friday during the holiday season to hold this important hearing on the future of community composting in New York City. If 2020 has taught us anything, it is that community services are crucial to the progress and success of this incredible City.

My message for Commissioner Silver and Mayor de Blasio is this: To jeopardize the future of Big Reuse and the Lower East Side Ecology Center, two vital nonprofits that are beloved by and vital to the communities in which they operate, is misguided and inappropriate. To do so during a global pandemic that has deeply affected New York City and during the ongoing climate crisis is, quite frankly, indefensible.

My message for City Council Members, especially those who have been vocal in their support of Big Reuse and the Lower East Side Ecology Center, is: Thank you for listening to your constituents and acting in the best interest of New York City, the environment, and the greater good.

I feel deeply connected to Big Reuse and to the thousands of New Yorkers who have rallied around compost, even during a truly unprecedented and challenging year.

Since June 6th, I have been working with an incredible team of volunteers from North Brooklyn to collect food scraps from the community every weekend. We have been out there during record high temperatures, rain, and frigid cold days. We have paid for rental vans out of pocket to transport scraps to community partners who selflessly dedicated their own time to collecting and processing other peoples' food waste. This is tireless work. But every volunteer has said they look forward to helping with compost. We have people who drop off their food scraps each week and tell us that it's their favorite activity.

In late summer, Big Reuse reached out to us and we formed a partnership that dramatically improved our entire operation. We no longer worried that we would run out of space to accept food scraps, nor did we need to pay for rental vans out of pocket. In six months, our volunteer initiative has diverted nearly 55,500 pounds of organic waste from landfills. This would not be possible without Big Reuse. They are an incredible partner to us and to countless other community composters throughout New York City.

The closure of Big Reuse and the Lower East Side Ecology Center would have lasting negative effects on New York City for years to come. These organizations create green jobs, contribute to a regenerative, circular economy, and produce nutrient-rich compost that has the power to amend and clean polluted urban soils and reduce atmospheric carbon. Instead of evicting and closing these sites, we should look to them as models to replicate and seek opportunities to insert community compost sites into more neighborhoods throughout the five boroughs.

Thank you for listening to the voices of thousands of New York City residents calling for support and protection for Big Reuse and the Lower East Side Ecology Center. This is a crucial decision that will deeply affect all of us, but especially those living in vulnerable, polluted communities that deserve better environmental action and responsibility.

Thank you,  
Katie Zwick  
District 33  
Greenpoint, Brooklyn  
Organizer for North Brooklyn Compost Project

To Parks Commissioner Silver and Mayor de Blasio:

The Big Reuse and LESEC composting sites are vital to our city, our community, and our planet. Food waste is such a huge problem in landfills, and a dangerous source of methane emissions. New York City should see composting as a no-brainer solution to the grave food waste problem, since it not only helps reduce food waste in landfills, but the composted soil itself is given back to our community gardens with the help of organizations like Big Reuse. It is hard enough to try to live sustainably in such a big city, therefore large-scale composting sites like Big Reuse and LESEC are not only vital to our city in the fight against climate change—they are a necessity. Furthermore, they belong in NYC Parks; they benefit the parkland and support the sustainability goals.

Evicting these sites is counterintuitive to the city's goals to reduce waste in landfills, and will also affect our city's ability to process all the food scraps collected at various drop-off points. If a composting site like Big Reuse is removed, the city is removing composting accessibility to me in my neighborhood/borough of Queens. The bottom line is that the city and parks department need to do better, and they need to make composting a priority instead of evicting these sites that have done so much good for the community, sustainability, and our environment. The leases for these sites need to be renewed.

Dear NYC Council,

I would like to provide a written testimony in support of keeping and expanding compostable waste drop-off locations in NYC Parks.

Compostable food scraps, if processed within the traditional waste system, contribute to land and water contamination and greenhouse gas emissions. Instead of decomposing naturally, food scraps in the context of a landfill exacerbate existing issues by absorbing nearby toxins leached from other trash and ultimately release methane. For the net benefits of cleaner environments, reduced emissions, and the result of a usable end product (compost!), it is in the best interest of the city to invest in maintaining and expanding accessible compostable waste drop-off locations.

Most residents of New York do not have space or access to compost other than these drop-off locations. Just as parks themselves are valuable resources for the health and wellbeing of NYC residents, compost drop-off locations are valuable services that many New Yorkers rely upon. Every week I drop off my compost at Socrates Park in Astoria, which is made possible by the partnership between BigReuse, Grow NYC, and the Department of Parks and Recreation. Socrates Park is the closest public green space I have access to year-round, and this compost drop-off is the most accessible from my home.

Please continue to allow compostable waste drop-off locations to remain in NYC parks. This is a necessary service that should be adequately supported and expanded.

Thank you,  
Kelly L  
Resident of Astoria

--

Kelly Li  
[www.kellyli.net](http://www.kellyli.net)

Dear members of the New York City Council,

Before I was able to convince our co-op board to join in curbside composting, we saved our compost and brought it to the local farmers market every weekend. As a teacher, I lobbied successfully for our school to join the DSNY organics collection program. For several years, many residents of my building felt connected to the greater mission of making our city and planet more sustainable, and the students where I teach felt a sense of accomplishment knowing they were diverting hundreds of pounds of refuse from landfills every week. With all of these programs discontinued, my neighbors have returned to the antiquated practice of throwing everything into the trash, and our school community is heartbroken as we see years of student engagement and education take a back seat to our NYCs short sighted budget. I am not sure what the alternative universe looks like we are New York meets its zero carbon goals.

With funding for curbside composting cut, it seems unconscionable that composting services are being dismantled.

Please step up and support composting in New York City.

Sincerely,  
Ken Higgins  
Coordinator- New York City sustainability Educators group  
Teacher-The Town School

I am a resident of Bushwick, Brooklyn. I have only recently started composting over the past month with BK Rot, an organization near me that relies on Big Reuse to process some of their scraps. Through BK Rot, the waste I contribute to the landfill bin has been cut down dramatically (at least 75% of my trash), and the food waste that would have gone into that bin is now being used to ultimately make NYC a better place to reside in. The services that organizations like BK Rot and Big Reuse provide have given me hope during this uncertain time; while the world seems to be buckling under the weight of a problem like climate change, it is the collective actions of these local organizations that give us a fighting chance. I urge NYC to not take away resources from these composting organizations. Supporting the recycling of our waste is a key way for NYC to invest in its own communities and to create a future city that we will all be able to be proud of.

Members of the Council, and Members of the Committee on Sanitation,

I'm a resident of the Greenpoint section of Brooklyn. I am writing in support of Big Reuse and North Brooklyn Compost. I contribute weekly to the compost program for a number of reasons.

- 1) I am concerned about the city's enormous waste output. Particularly in the pandemic, a massive rise in disposable, non-biodegradable sanitation products are going to our landfills.
- 2) I believe strongly in community engagement to improve the health and sustainability of our environment, particularly urban areas.
- 3) New York City had a functioning Compost project, and it was cut. The City should, at a minimum, allow space for citizens to establish their own continuation of these efforts.

I'm an active voter and will be reminded daily of the City Council's failure on composting by the excess trash I have to take out.

Kevin McHugh  
203 Norman Avenue  
Brooklyn, NY 11222

To remove composting is unbelievably short sighted and detrimental to the city - where will the food waste go???? It will only create more landfill waste, pollution and [methane](#) . All of which is against the parks agenda and goals. - what happened to *A Plan for Sustainable Practices Within New York City Parks* (2011)? The argument that the 2013 court case "ties your hands" is complete BS. To say that the small areas used for composting is even remotely comparable to the 20x larger site run by sanitation department is a cop out - what developer pay roll are you on? This is run by and for the community. To call this a non" park purpose is also BS. Parks are meant to be used by and for the people, 1000's of volunteers come to these sites and learn about nature and food chains through these sites - what could be more community oriented park purpose. Both locations have strong community support - so again I ask whose payroll are you on?

Kicking out two highly functional, highly beneficial, non profits which only stand to benefit the city for generations to come is shortsighted and yet another sign that this city only cares about whose pocket book is the biggest, the communities have not complained about these but have actively engaged with them and supported. What rich old white man is dictating your agenda?

Kim Belk  
Brooklyn, NY

Dec. 21, 2020

Dear Councilmembers,

Composting is not a nicety. In the years that my building had implemented a composting program, I saw my trash output shrink drastically—to the point where some weeks I had nothing to throw away in trash bags. Although I was disappointed the program ended, I've been glad to be able to walk over to East River Park to continue to compost my food scraps.

In a world where we personally and as a City have limited control over climate change and how we will handle its mitigation, composting is something tangible each of us can do to mitigate the creation of methane, which contributes to the depletion of the ozone layer. We can't manufacture electric cars, but we can compost our food leftovers, with a relatively small cost to the City and with benefits that greatly exceed the price.

I remember reading the City's *80x50* publication for the first time with great excitement—it seemed as if the City were truly committed to fighting to keep climate change within the most limited temperature increase possible. Evicting composting programs for our parks makes a mockery of this commitment.

As environmental lawyer Melissa Lachan testified, composting sites are completely consistent with the proper use of City parkland. Please do not force a single composting program out of its parkland home. Evicting the programs would be the equivalent of acknowledging that City's professed embracing of curbing climate change is really all for show. Please keep composting easy, convenient, and in the public eye.

A handwritten signature in brown ink that reads "Kim Sillen". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Thank you very much,

Kim Sillen

Dear City Councilmembers,

I am troubled that the City has not worked out solutions with Big Reuse and the Lower East Side Ecology Center to sustain their essential community composting sites. As a concerned New Yorker, I rely on local community composting programs, namely that of the LES Ecology Center. I drop off my household compost to their program weekly for over 3 years, only pausing when COVID-19 hit. Over the years, the amount of waste diverted to composting that would have ended up being hauled by DSNY in the trash is VAST.

Parks must work with DSNY and LES Ecology Center to find a suitable location to use during East Side Coastal Resiliency Project (ESCR). The administration must ensure that the compost yard is incorporated into the reconstruction plans for East River Park.

I ask that the same action be taken for Big Reuse. Composting belongs on NYC parkland as it directly supports Park's sustainability goals.

I understand that the agreement between Big Reuse and the NYC Parks Department was time-limited and expires this month. However, I find it ironic that Parks intends to take over the space for parking. Parks has said that, "The arrangement was predicated an understanding that Big Reuse would seek a permanent location by this time." However, it is common knowledge that nonprofits and community-based organizations are severely underfunded and lack resources. How is Big Reuse expected to find a permanent location during a worldwide pandemic?

CBOs depend on the City for partnership to bring essential services to New Yorkers. I believe that the City should assist Big Reuse in finding a permanent location or extend the current license agreement.

The time to act on climate change was yesterday. We are running out of time. The city needs to prioritize initiatives that mitigate climate change, NOT parking.

Do the right thing.

With great concern,  
Kim Truong  
NYC Resident (Midtown East, Manhattan)

Dear fellow human being reading this testimony,

I have been using the composting program these last few months. I visit the drop off site at Union Square every saturday. The drop off sites are a godsend because they make it so easy for me to contribute positively to the fight against climate change simply by accepting the food scraps that i so carefully separated and stored during the week. It is the ideal situation for a person that lives in a place like NY.

Without them what are we supposed to do?? Try to compost on our non existing back yards??

Try to keep composting bins in our micro apartments and risk getting pests in apartments that might already have them? Why make life so much more difficult when this is working for everyone.

Please do not let this program die.

NYC needs this, composting is one easy and powerful way that we can help in this climate change fight.

Lets face it, if things keep going like they are, NYC is in danger of suffering major consequences. We are on an island on a planet that sees sea levels rising due to climate change.

Pardon my indignation but is it ridiculous that this is even being discussed, this should be a no-brainer.

If not for the environment, then think of self preservation.

I am honestly disappointed at the political leaders that are considering eliminating this program by removing them from the places they have occupied for years.

I don't know how else to express how important this is to me as a NY resident that cares for our island/state and as a human that is trying to do right by our planet.

Whoever is thinking about eliminating this program, about not supporting this program knows that you should be ashamed of yourselves.

This is too important to be dismissed so easily.

This is just too important.

What happened to NYC's goal to be zero waste to landfill?

We should be encouraging more of these wonderful efforts in our city in order to reach these goals.

Please please please do not end these programs.. please support them.

Your job as politicians is to represent us and we are begging you to do the right thing and let us keep our precious composting.

Thank you very much,

For taking the time to read my testimony.

Sincerely,

Alejandra

PS: apologies if this is not how testimonials are written, it is my first time doing this. But this subject is too important for me to sit in the sidelines watching and not doing anything just because I am not sure how to go about this.

## Kristen Misak Testimony for 12/18 Committee on Sanitation and Solid Waste Management

My name is Kristen Misak, and I am 25 years old and a resident of Long Island City, Queens. I have been volunteering with Astoria Pug since the summer, which is now partnered with Big Reuse for the collection and processing of food scraps and organic waste.

As a volunteer with Astoria Pug, I have seen a community come together in the face of enormous budget cuts to composting operations in NYC. Thanks for the efforts of Astoria residents, we continue to divert food scraps from landfills and create compost that nourishes our community gardens, parks, and more.

Astoria Pug's relationship with the Big Reuse has elevated our operations, and allowed for Astoria Pug to grow and service more areas in Queens. Taking away Big Reuse's land could eliminate all of the progress that Astoria Pug has made since starting in April, and could cripple composting efforts in Queens in general.

As a member of the Queens community, I am so proud to see how our community has stepped up to save what little vestiges of composting remain after this summer's budget cuts. We are asking for a small kindness on behalf of the Parks Department – save this space, and build your parking lot somewhere else. Big Reuse serves NYC in so many ways, and NYC needs to show the same commitment back that Big Reuse has shown to the city.

December 21, 2020

Dear City Council,

Several actions by the city's administration has proven that the city wants to discourage community composting. Those actions are the closure of Red Hook Farm, the brief extension for The big reuse to operate under the Queens Bridge and the lack of effort to find temporary site for the Lower Eastside Ecology Center.

While the city claims fallen in hard time and has to suspend the city wide organic recycling, it should embrace the community effort to keep organic recycling going but instead, the city is taking a step backward completely and disregard the importance of these community organizations that step up and fill in for the function that the city can't afford. Composting is number ingredient for the city to achieve the goal to send Zero Waste to Landfills by 2030. Please require the administration to change its course support community composting immediately.

Thank you,

Kusalee Vachananda

Dear council members,

While the volume of discards dropped since the pandemic, I am very hopeful that our bustling city will be bustling again and when that happens, the city wide organic recycling program must come back. But for the time-being, please support community based organizations who have been doing great work to maintain composting. How do we claim to build back better if we don't maintain the mindset of smart trash management

The pandemic doesn't make us throw away less stuffs if anything, the volume of single use food service supplies must have gone up. How does it help the city budget to cut the organic recycling program? Does DSNY have the numbers to show that they are spending less or more on handling our trash since the organic recycling program was put on hold? The suspension of the city-wide program must be temporary. Much like everything that we hope to return after the pandemic is over, it must come back at a better form and what we do in the interim, must support the better outcome of our next step.

Thank you for your time and attention on this matter.

Kusalee Vachananda

Written Testimony in support of LES Ecology Center and Big Reuse  
by Lara Kaufman  
12.18.2020

I live in Carroll Gardens, Brooklyn and participate in the (now reduced) composting program operated by GrowNYC at the weekly farmer's market. When all operations were suspended during the early pandemic, I walked my compost weekly down to a local volunteer landscape designer who hauled the material to an upstate NY farm on Sundays. I have volunteered in the past at the GrowNYC composting operation at Red Hook Farms and have signed up to volunteer again at the CG farmer's market operation. Through these experiences I have witnessed the important role composting and urban agriculture play in communities, and the benefits for individuals/families who make composting a part of their everyday routine.

As you know, composting is important for the environment. New York City needs to support compost programs in all neighborhoods, not just in a few. The health of the city's ecosystem can thrive only when all the communities are invited to participate in a zero-waste program including composting. Composting also raises personal awareness of the natural process of capturing waste for reuse and regeneration. It's an essential and clean engine of the natural world ("natural" includes city living). This is why I'm taking the time to voice my support for LES Ecology Center and Big Reuse's efforts to stay at their current sites and maintain operations during this time of reduced city services.

Composting is an environmental justice issue too. When food waste is not composted, it is often sent to incinerators located primarily in low-income communities and communities of color and burned with trash and fossil fuels. This releases particulates and toxic chemicals into local communities.

Finally, sustainably disposing of organics is critical to achieving New York City's ambitious climate and zero waste goals. Dumping food waste into landfills or incinerators instead of composting them adds to air pollution, accelerates the climate crisis, and will mean that the people who provide these critical composting services will lose their jobs.

Thank you for your consideration of this crucial issue which affects all New Yorkers.

Sincerely,  
Lara Kaufman

## Save Our Compost Testimony

Councilmembers,

The processing centers at Big Reuse and the Lower East Side Ecology Center are essential for an equitable and sustainable waste management system in NYC. Organic waste currently makes up over one third of residential waste in the city. Centers like Big Reuse and LES Ecology center are able to divert over 1.4 million tons of this organic waste from landfills annually. Without these centers, more food scraps will end up in landfills which directly contributes to pollution and climate warming emissions. This is in direct conflict with the city's stated climate and zero-waste goals.

The NYC composting program has already been decimated in the wake of covid-19. In the absence of a city-run program, local groups stepped up to fill the gap where the city left off. I am a resident of Greenpoint, Brooklyn. When the curbside collection program was shut down, I was concerned about what would happen to the program long-term and began looking for other options for recycling my food scraps. Fortunately, I soon learned about a new compost drop-off site that was being organized by the NBK Compost Project, a volunteer run and donation based program. Scraps collected by the NBK Compost Project currently get processed by Big Reuse in Queens.

I've had the opportunity to volunteer with the North Brooklyn Compost Project and have seen first-hand how important community composting is to residents of my neighborhood. The support for community composting has been overwhelming – the dropoff was essentially doubling in size each week to accommodate all the scraps that were being dropped off! The dropoff site has also been a great tool to educate members of the community about the benefits of composting and its impact on the local environment. I initially began collecting food scraps for environmental reasons (plus it is nice to not have stinky trash - especially in a small apartment!). However, through this experience I've learned about the ways composting supports green jobs and helps build community. I now have a much better understanding of the waste management system in NYC and have seen how important composting is on a local scale.

The Parks Department must recognize how important these sites are and how much the local community benefits from the work these organizations do. The decision to evict these sites is shortsighted and is in direct conflict with the will and well-being of the communities they serve. I urge you to protect and preserve these community composting sites.

Thank you,

Laura Hechtlinger

Good Morning City Council Members,

My name is Laura Picallo and I am testifying today regarding the potential eviction of the composting site under the Queensboro Bridge. As you are aware, the site which Big Reuse utilizes for their composting operation, will be evicted at the end of this month to make room for a parking lot.

Community composting, an essential program, is being threatened by the Parks Department. I would truly appreciate it if you could work with Commissioner Mitchell to find an alternative space for the proposed parking lot, which would replace the Big Reuse location. I can guarantee you, you would be hard-pressed to find passionate individuals rallying around in support of a parking lot, yet so many people in Queens and in other boroughs are rallying here today, to save this composting space. We not only see the good it produces but we experience and are engaged with its usage.

During the pandemic when composting was virtually paused throughout the entire City, local community members took it upon themselves to keep it going. I volunteered with a local Astoria group - Astoria Pug - to ensure that the community's needs continued to be met and that our city's commitment to Zero Waste remained a possibility. Meeting people in the community, speaking with our neighbors and working in the field, the magnitude of composting's importance and having a local composting site, was truly realized. Local, easy to access composting sites that create jobs for the community are of infinite more value, than parking lots or storage facilities.

According to the Department of Sanitation's website: "There's no "away" when we throw garbage into a can or litter basket. A majority of our waste can be recycled or composted. New Yorkers can fight climate change, support green jobs and reduce our environmental footprint by sending zero waste to landfills." The Zero Waste initiative strives to send zero waste to landfills by 2030 – a mere 10 years from now. The decisions we make today can have decade long repercussions on achieving this goal.

Let us align and have all New York City agencies work towards a common goal of a more sustainable City. The Land Use Committee has the ability today, to take a stand and support the community, the environment and most of all, to be on the right side of history ensuring our community is being used to its fullest potential for the maximum amount of good. Please stand with us today.

Thank you,

Laura Picallo

Laura Shepard  
Woodside, NY

I support community composting in Parks. Please let Big Reuse and the Lower East Side Ecology Center continue their operations in their current locations.

December 20, 2020

To whom it may concern,

As a Brooklyn resident, I am deeply concerned by the proposal by the Parks Department to end the Big Reuse's lease on the Queensbridge Compost Processing Site and reallocate the space for parking. The Big Reuse is critically important in the city's sustainability efforts and processes massive amounts of compost each year. This year they have stepped up during Covid to enable New Yorkers to continue to live sustainably by composting food scraps when sanitation canceled its collections. This reduces the burden on the Department of Sanitation and reduces the amount of garbage in landfills.

Individual household composting is a habit, and disrupting this habit by halting greenmarket and other local collections will have a long-term impact on the city's sustainability. This short-sighted decision will be devastating to the immense progress that has been made in the prior years.

Please do not allow this immensely harmful plan to go forward.

Sincerely,

Laura Vert

60 Turner Place, 1J  
Brooklyn, NY 11218  
([laura.vert@gmail.com](mailto:laura.vert@gmail.com))

## Save Big Reuse's Compost Processing Queensbridge Location Site

If NYC Parks' vision is to "build a park system for present and future generations" (as stated on their website) how can they be allowed to shut down a thriving, successful community composting program funded by taxpayers to make space for parking? This program is exactly what future generations want and need. Compost is great for our parks and gardens and helps the environment in so many ways. It's a no-brainer.

Lauren Blankstein

To the Committee on Land Use—

Composting means everything, to me, to my community, and to the climate.

Since the pandemic, composting has been made more difficult and intensely less accessible—and it has been individuals in my community who have grouped together to pick up where the city left off. The Big Reuse and The Lower East Side Ecology Center are integral parts of the fabric of NYC and the environmental movement in the city, and to threaten their funding, is not only an insult on what this city has worked so hard to create but it also undercuts the city's climate and zero waste goals. Dumping food waste into landfills or incinerators instead of composting them adds to air pollution, accelerates the climate crisis, and will mean that the people who provide these critical composting services will lose their jobs.

Sincerely,

*leah tanner*

To whom it may concern,

I am a resident of Astoria, Queens, since October of 2019. I would like to testify that I believe making composting a priority for NYC waste management is crucial for the city to achieve its carbon reduction goals. To eliminate Big Reuse's site at Queensbridge would be senseless and to the detriment of the city as a whole. Valuable resources have already been spent on creating the site, and moving it is no small matter. After the brutal budget cuts to city composting during the pandemic, we cannot afford to further jeopardize its availability.

It is already very difficult for many New Yorkers to make composting a sustainable habit, due to inaccessibility of collection sites. I would love to live in an NYC where every residential building has a compost bin just like that for garbage and recycling. In my community, in order to compost, I have to save scraps in my freezer and then travel about half a mile on Fridays or Saturdays to the closest collection site, and this situation is enough of an inconvenience in this convenience-driven world that the majority of my community members haven't even considered composting.

We ought to be transitioning as rapidly as possible to drastic carbon-reduction energy and waste management infrastructure, no matter the cost. It is shameful that the city is willing to dump massive sums of money into the policing and jail system while denouncing something like improving waste management, which could be done for considerably less than, say, the NYPD's annual budget, as too expensive.

Renew Big Reuse's contract, and invest in NYC's future by making access to compost collection and processing a bigger priority.

Respectfully,

Ledah Finck



Testimony to Save Big Reuse & Lower East Side Ecology Center's Community Compost Sites  
Committees on Parks and Recreation and Sanitation, Joint Oversight Hearing  
Friday, December 18, 2020 at 11am

## **Leigh Celentano**

**I support the nonprofits Big Reuse and the Lower East Side Ecology Center. They provide vital environmental work for the city. Their license agreement for community compost sites must be renewed so they can remain in the Parks. Community composting belongs in Parks.**

The LES Ecology Center site should be built into the East Side Coastal Resiliency Project and moved to temporary space in the interim. LES Ecology Center's license agreement should be renewed and include return to their historical site in the East River Park.

Big Reuse should be allowed to continue composting at their current site and have their license renewed.

These small compost sites are the backbone of the Sanitation Department's newly restored food scrap recycling program - a nimble and already highly popular sustainability program that dozens of City Council members and tens of thousands of committed New Yorkers pushed to fund in this year's budget.

Mayor de Blasio and Commissioner Silver's eviction of the sites not only undermines the City Council funded compost programs, but also the City's greenhouse gas emissions, Zero Waste, and environmental justice goals.

It will result in even more recyclable organic waste being hauled to landfills and incinerators, passing through transfer stations and utilizing waste infrastructure overwhelmingly located in low-income communities and communities of color polluted by particulate matter linked to severe cases of COVID-19. These community compost sites compost the organic waste and use the compost to green New York City, repair our depleted soils and fight climate change.

Over 4,000 letters have been submitted to Parks in support of the sites in addition to letters of support including over 50 community groups. The sites are supported by their local Council Members and Borough Presidents. We urge Mayor de Blasio, Commissioner Silver and our elected officials to listen to the overwhelming public support for these programs and renew the license agreements for our community composting sites. **We should be moving forward in the fight against the climate crisis--not backward.**

## Composting Sites In City Parks

Please take the necessary action to keep our composting sites active in NYC. Household organic waste is a major emitter of greenhouse gases in land-fills. Composting is how we control such emissions and are able to reduce them to zero — including benefitting from energy and carbon capture.

Len Wasserman  
lwasserman@edc.nyc

Dear City Council Members,

I am extremely disappointed to learn that the Parks Department is planning to evict Big Reuse and the Lower East Side Ecology Center from their current spaces. Both of these organizations perform vital environmental and educational services for the city, and getting rid of these facilities that the city relies on is mismanagement.

Just two years ago the Department of Sanitation invested almost half a million dollars of tax payer money to make Big Reuse a highly efficient compost processing center to serve the public good. And now the Parks Department wants to flush our money down the drain. **That is completely unacceptable and a gross mismanagement of tax payer money.**

At Friday's oversight hearing Assistant Commissioner Biederman claimed that the Parks Department is committed to composting and the environment— but their actions prove otherwise. He claimed that Parks needed the space Big Reuse currently occupies because they are planning to return a previously existing park for recreational use for Queensbridge residents. I'm thrilled to hear that Queensbridge residents will finally get their park back, after it was stolen from them by the Parks Department to build yet another parking lot. **It seems that the Parks Department has a habit of ripping Parks land away from the community so they can store their cars. That is a true misuse of Parks land.** There is no reason that revitalizing the park for NYCHA residents and retaining Big Reuse should be mutually exclusive.

**Composting belongs on Parks land.** Extending the license for Big Reuse by 6 months is not sufficient. I encourage the City Council to intervene in the Parks Department's insistent war against community composting in this city.

Thank you,  
Lena Frey  
Brooklyn, NY

My name is Lily Susman and I live in 10003. I've been composting at the Union Square Greenmarket site for a few years now, and being able to bring my food scraps to be processed has been wonderful for my family. Not only is it crucial for our city to deal with organic waste for reasons of sustainability, greenhouse gas emission, and environmental justice, but on the personal level, composting makes us more aware of the food we eat and waste. In September 2019, I temporarily relocated to California (where composting is the norm) for graduate school, and I was thrilled that my parents in NYC continued composting. All of us enjoy being more responsible with our scraps, and seeing others at the compost collection sites doing the same. Although we drop off our scraps and go, the presence of the collection site and its volunteers does foster a sense of community and shared purpose.

When I returned home to NYC at the beginning of the pandemic, I was extremely disheartened that the composting services temporarily disappeared. Naturally, I was thrilled when it was announced that the Union Square site—run by the LES Ecology Center—would reopen late in the summer. I am very lucky that collection has resumed near me, but I know that across the city collection has been reduced since the city budget for these services was cut. The fact that LES Ecology Center and Big Reuse now face a possible eviction by the New York City Parks Department is a giant step backwards at a time when it is increasingly important for NYC to become greener. It has been said that 2020 will be a major inflection point for our society, governance, and culture. I hope that you will prioritize environmental justice. Thank you.

My name is Linda Tatlow, a native Brooklynite, a financial and real estate professional and avid composter. In this testimony, I ask that the City does not evict the LES Ecology Center and Big Reuse composting sites from NYC Parks. Following the cut of curbside composting collection, this would be an additional step backwards – and the city moves further away from reaching its zero waste and climate goals. In the aftermath of 9/11, the city's recycling program was cut and it took many years for the city to regain progress made.

To me, composting is a clear win win for the city, its residents and the environment. It's a basic and natural process that achieves many goals for a very modest investment:

- Reduce harmful **methane** gases (30x more powerful than CO2) produced by food scraps sent to landfills
- Reduce the cost and CO2 created by shipping food waste to landfills
- Creates nutrient rich compost that further fortifies the cities' green spaces

COVID has underscored the vulnerability of our communities to short sighted budget decisions and the lack of investment in vital programs that protect the health of our communities and planet. **The time is now to expand participation through marketing and education.** Organics collection in many cities in California is 90%+ - we can and must do much better in NY. In the aftermath of COVID, it is my belief that city residents will be far more open and receptive to increased messaging on organics collection. This is the time as people are more focused than ever on the importance of protecting the environment coupled with more time at home and a significant increase in eating and cooking at home.

Let's think bigger on these problems – **we need to keep these sites open. Every move in the other direction will only increase environmental, health and economic costs to the city in the long term.** This funds and space allocated to these programs are a **VERY MODEST INVESTMENT relative to the city budget WITH A HUGE PAYBACK.** While I recognize that hard decisions will need to be made given the financial pressures facing the city, this is not the right one. There are other budget cuts that can be made. (ie. School cafeterias: Lets revise the school cafeteria model so that families that can afford to buy lunch do so anonymously and enable kids to take just what they want rather than the whole tray resulting in exorbitant waste). Let's be smart with our resources, and invest in the future of our great city in a way that reflects our values.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Linda Tatlow

**Lisa Kaplan**  
**52 East First Street #2A**  
**New York, NY 10003**  
[Lkaplan23@nyc.rr.com](mailto:Lkaplan23@nyc.rr.com)

Antonio Reynoso, Chair Committee on Sanitation and Solid Waste Management  
Peter Koo, Chair Committee on Parks and Recreation  
Carlina Rivera, Councilwoman District 2  
250 Broadway  
New York, N.Y. 10007

December 18, 2020

Dear Councilmembers Reynoso, Koo and Rivera:

I submit the following as written testimony to the hearing held today on community composting.

I have been a supporter of the Lower East Side Ecology Center (LESEC) since its inception over 30 years ago, and I am convinced of the invaluable contribution this organization has made to my community throughout those years. LESEC was and still is ahead of its time in addressing environmental issues by education, promoting responsible stewardship of gardens and street trees, recycling of e-waste, and particularly of composting.

The LESEC has been a responsible occupant of East River Park for decades. This occupancy has been both for its administrative headquarters and then for its composting yard. This occupancy began when this East River Park was drastically undermaintained and neglected. LESEC became a mainstay and stabilizer of this beloved park.

LESEC has established a major and essential composting project that serves at least 3500 households in this community and beyond. This composting initiative has become an ever more important undertaking given the environmental conditions facing our world. Composting is a critical public good and it belongs in New York City parks.

It is outrageous that at this critical time LESEC is facing an existential threat. The LESEC's composting yard must be preserved in perpetuity. It is not acceptable that neither the Mayor, the Sanitation or Parks Department are stepping up to guarantee that the LESEC compost yard will remain in East River Park.

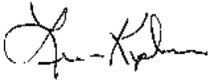
It is not acceptable that the City has failed to plan for the composting yard to remain in the Park during the construction of the East Side Coastal Resiliency Project (ESCRP) there. It is utter negligence that at this time there is no plan what-so-ever for placement of the yard during the next three years while that construction is underway no is there a stated commitment that the yard will be accommodated in the redesign of the park after the ESCRP is completed.

This situation must be corrected immediately in fairness to this community based and beloved non-profit organization. **The City of New York must provide a temporary solution for the compost yard to continue to operate during the term of the construction and it must immediately provide an iron-clad commitment for the LESEC's compost yard to continue in perpetuity in the East River Park.**

The Lower East Side community wants the LESEC compost yard in East River Park. Community Board #3 and the local community leaders have gone on record saying that. The NYC Department of Parks and Recreation should not overturn the will of the community and determine that composting does not belong in this park.

I strongly support Resolution 1510.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Lisa Kaplan". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Lisa" and the last name "Kaplan" clearly distinguishable.

Lisa Kaplan

My name is Lia Lucero. I am a born and raised New Yorker, child of immigrants, descendant of indigenous Andean people, and supporter of open space and community composting. I am also an employee of the Lower East Side Ecology Center.

I've been working for the Lower East Side Ecology Center for the past five years, and throughout those years, held various roles in the composting program.

Community compost sites like the Lower East Side Ecology Center and Big Reuse's are nationally and internationally recognized in the compost sector. In my role, I've conducted tours of the Ecology Center's compost yard for K-12 students, university students, urban professionals, and even diplomats and municipal employees from countries like Sri Lanka and Japan.

To have composting happening within a waterfront park, where thousands of New Yorkers frequent and waste barges can be seen from a short distance, helps people not only understand the complexity of our existing waste infrastructure but to see it all in action.

The Lower East Side Ecology Center's compost yard is not just a place to process food scraps into composting, it's a demonstration site. Visitors get to see sustainability in action and leave inspired to see it be replicated in their communities.

It's disappointing to hear that Parks is not open to expanding programs like these in its land and it's devastating to hear that existing ones are being evicted.

As an open space enthusiast, I'm a huge proponent for parks being for the people. Growing up my family has benefited from NYC parks, so I understand the importance of having public land being dedicated for the purpose of recreational needs. It can be a life-line for many families, particularly those that live in low-income communities that have long been burdened with waste infrastructure and other highly polluting industries.

Community composting is a tool to break these discriminating patterns that past city leaders have perpetrated.

The scale in which the Lower East Side Ecology Center and Big Reuse operate is large enough to see the social benefit but small enough to not alienate community members. These sites draw people in and can be used to educate people about the alternative way of thinking about our waste, as a resource. Through discussions this unravels the social injustice of our current waste infrastructure and the hope for a greener, more equitable future.

Parks agency on its own cannot achieve sustainability. Having spent a lot of time in East River Park and other parks, I don't see much being done on this front. The Parks agency barely recycles unless it's park conservancies and friend groups do the grunt work. I suspect more than half of yard waste generated in Parks land is being landfilled. With Parks consistently not having enough funding for its maintenance, and relying on volunteer groups and nonprofit organizations to carry the burden of maintenance, it seems irrational to evict its partners in sustainability.

Please include Lower East Side Ecology Center's compost yard in the ESCR plan and allow Big Reuse to continue operating under the Queens Bridge overpass. If we lose these sites, we are going backwards and it'll be difficult for these two nonprofits to start from scratch in new locations. Being community composting sites, these sites have developed relationships with residents in the community they operate. As you know Mayor DeBlasio and Commissioner Mitchell Silver, that's not an easy feat, and these organizations have been doing it with little resources and their ingenuity. Think about our city's future. Our city's future will depend on collaboration on a massive scale. Community composting is one of the tools in the toolbox. You decide whether you want to use it or not. I sincerely hope that you do

Save our composting site!

Composting is important to our community...please renew the Queensbridge site.

LitsasJNSD

I was shocked to see the LES Ecology Center report that two compost sites, one in Queens and one in Manhattan, are being slated for closure in 2021.

This is a sad state of affairs. The compost which has been collected privately after the city stopped their program earlier this year helps keep methane out of the atmosphere. Methane is a far worse gas than CO2 and contributes badly to the greenhouse effect heating the planet and destroying climate equilibrium.

No matter what circumstances are involved in evicting this non-profit it is essential to the survival of coastal cities to mitigate climate change and the compost programs must be given sufficient facilities to proceed whether in the park or elsewhere. Devoted compost scrap givers such as myself and many friends rely on this non-profit, as the City program is unreliable due to budgetary constraints.

Thank you for your attention to this issue.

Sincerely,  
Liz Taub

Liz Taub, LCSW-R  
917-539-2037  
Spotify/Violizzy  
Violizzy.com  
Facebook/Violizzy

Sent from my iPhone

Dear Parks and Sanitation Committees,

I'm extremely disappointed to hear that NYC Parks plans to turn the Queensbridge Composting Site into a parking lot. Every Sunday I drop off my food scraps at the Forest Hills Market. For me and many other residents, composting is a weekly ritual that ties us to our Queens community.

Composting is not only good for the environment, but also a source of green jobs and community pride. A parking lot is a source of nothing but vacant spaces. The Queensbridge site is essential composting infrastructure for our borough. To replace it with a parking lot—especially when there is no shortage of parking in LIC—reflects a degree of cynicism and short-sightedness that will shock NY residents. I sincerely hope the Committees rethinks this decision

Thank you,  
Lorand Laskai

Hello, I am writing to urge you to find a way with funding so that Big Reuse and the Lower East Side Ecology Center can stay open and continue to educate New Yorkers about composting and other programs that will promote environmental justice throughout the city. After the city suspended the Sanitation Department's organics collection program that some of us came to love, many people in my community felt a great sense of loss. The drop-off programs supported by Big Reuse that many local organizations created to fill the void began to give people hope and a sense of community again. It is crucial that Big Reuse and LESEC find sites where they can continue to support these local initiatives. Thank you.

Loretta Ryan  
92 Van Cortlandt Park South – 4A  
Bronx NY 10463-2925  
347-391-4062

**Statement in Support of Resolution 1510-2020**  
**Submitted to the New York City Council**  
**Committees on Parks and Recreation and**  
**Sanitation and Solid Waste Management**  
**December 18, 2020**

My name is Lou Venech. I am a long-time resident of Sunnyside, Queens, and formerly of Manhattan and Brooklyn. I am writing to urge your support for the above-cited resolution and other actions to sustain continued cooperation by the departments of Parks and Recreation and Sanitation with community-based composting programs.

From my perspective, I can understand the necessity of suspending DSNY's composting collection program due to the current COVID-driven deterioration of municipal budget resources. However, this is all the more reason why the concerned City agencies should sustain – and if possible expand – cooperation with established community-based organizations that provide opportunities for residents to compost household organic waste.

It is distressing to hear reports that both the BigReUse and the Lower East Side Ecology Center composting programs are in jeopardy of closure due to determinations by the Parks Department regarding their current agreements with these groups. These are proven partners recognized as a resource by many New Yorkers.

My wife and I have the good fortune to be Queens homeowners, who have been able for more than 30 years to compost our kitchen and garden waste and sidewalk leaves in our backyard. We know the benefits firsthand. We have seen many of our neighbors also take up backyard composting through the years, reflecting New Yorkers' growing sense of individual responsibility to make NYC a more sustainable city. For apartment dwellers and others unable to compost at home, community-based composting programs facilitate their joining in this effort and collectively contributing to a reduction in the amount of municipal solid waste bound to landfills.

Perhaps there are be particular circumstances that require a change in the current arrangements between the Parks Department and these two groups. The department should seek solutions that do not put an end to these programs. The proposed resolution before your committees strikes the right tone in urging that these agencies commit to continue accommodating these and related initiatives.

Thank you for your consideration.

###



12/20/2020

City Council Members:

It is well-documented (if not always well-recognized throughout our country) that climate change poses the largest and most terrifying existential threat to our world and way of life, followed, perhaps, by the peril of nuclear warfare. While we as private citizens generally cannot have an impact on the latter issue, we do have the ability from within our communities to effect change regarding the former. The Red Hook compost site is an example of a critical effort to do so. Through education initiatives regarding the benefits of and technical methodologies involved in composting, broad inclusion and acceptance of every person, and innovative programming, the site has demonstrated that it is an essential entity within the Red Hook—and wider Brooklyn and New York City—communities.

This is a vital component of the Red Hook compost site: Within the network of city-funded composting programs, there is a need for organizations that embrace the values of diversity and inclusion. These principles are central to the mission in Red Hook and critical to the equitable growth of the surrounding area, both environmentally and culturally.

To conclude, I would like to express my profound belief that community compost sites are essential to the fabric and well-being of this city as we continue to work toward a cleaner, more inclusive society. To lose the Red Hook compost site permanently would be hugely detrimental to the Borough of Brooklyn and its citizens. I implore the Council to take this account into consideration and save the Red Hook compost site.

Regards,

Louisa Baum  
Brooklyn Resident

I write to urge the New York City Council to consider intervening in the Parks Dept's proposed eviction of the Lower East Side (LES) Ecology Center from East River Park at the end of term of its license agreement.

The LES Ecology Center has been providing educational programs at their East River Park location for over two decades. Where children learn valuable lessons about ecology which is ever more important to preserving our future.

Christina Datz Romero has been there from the beginning of this organization creating the ecology center and working continuously as positive force on the Lower East Side and coordinating with other partners to bring awareness to composting.

The Parks Dept plans to end the license agreement with LES Ecology Center in order to reclaim the property for Parks Dept equipment parking. This equipment parking area surely could be sited elsewhere.

It is so important that this organization not be displaced or the mission of promoting composting be interrupted. Please use your oversight powers to persuade the Parks Dept to revisit this shortsighted decision and allow LES Ecology Center to remain in their East River Park location.

Thank you for the opportunity to share my testimony.

Respectfully submitted by:

Anne Hayes  
58 East Third Street  
NYC 10003

Longtime East Village Resident and supporter of the Lower East Side Ecology Center

Sent from my iPhone



*Photos (clockwise from BigReuse logo): Ashley Cruce, Master Composter; Riis/Queensbridge Senior Gardeners--MAP N'hood Stat Program (Q-shaped bed, Aug. 2019); Gardeners at McIntosh Community Garden, E. Elmhurst*

### **Dec. 18th 2020 Hearing Testimony by Ashley Cruce:**

Dear Councilmembers of the Committee on Sanitation and Solid Waste Mgt. and Committee on Parks & Recreation:

My name is Ashley Cruce (resident of Jackson Hts) and I am a furloughed 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 **BigReuse** (and other NYC Compost Project orgs), and also NYC Parks thru its valuable urban green spaces and Community Gardens overseen by GreenThumb.

**The current situation with the Parks Dept. and BigReuse & LESEC is just unbelievable....it's a no-brainer. Sadly, it is just another let down to the dedicated composters of NYC. It's a total waste of everyone's time and efforts that should instead be spent on collaborating for ecological sustainability and addressing the climate emergency!!**

**Currently, I am a Master Composter volunteer with 3 different community compost sites in Queens (two in Jackson Hts & one in E. Elmhurst). I want to share all the ways that BigReuse has been essential for both my composting and gardening efforts:**

- 1) Late August-September 2020: BigReuse assisted with Food Scraps Overflow at JHScraps Community Composting Site when we rec'd 500-600 lbs. of food scraps weekly due to the closure of the JH GreenMarket FSDO and the overwhelming commitment by local residents to continue to compost!! The partnership assisted us to keep up with the huge volume!**
- 2) For many years, I worked as a Garden Consultant at Queensbridge Houses with Riis Senior Gardeners and the MAP N'hood Stat Program where we relied on BigReuse Compost supplies every gardening season. Because NYCHA did not allow composting on public housing grounds, we had to rely on external sources of compost for our vegetable and herb gardens, butterfly garden and other ornamentals.**
- 3) For many years, my community garden in E. Elmhurst (McIntosh Garden) was also a recipient of free bags of compost from BigReuse. They were even able to deliver it directly to the garden back then.**

Therefore, I am so concerned about the dire situation that BigReuse (and also LESEC) are facing now since the Parks Dept. is refusing to renew their site leases. BigReuse and LESEC have stepped up to the challenge to keep composting alive given that the city has cut curbside organics collection! BigReuse has diverted 7 million lbs. of organic materials from landfills in its 9 yrs.

With curbside organics collection suspended until June 2021 (and it must be mandatory when it returns), the eight vital organizations of the NYC Compost Project--including BigReuse & LESEC--MUST BE SUPPORTED and ALLOWED to do their work.

Please find a sane, smart solution for both BigReuse & LESEC!!

Sincerely,  
Ashley Cruce, MA, LMSW

*QBG Environmental Educator (furloughed)--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*

Concilmembers,

Keeping the compost processing yard occupied by the Big Reuse is crucial to our community, especially now. NYC composting had been decimated in the last year. Reviewing the documents for the fiscal year 2021 - the sanitation and parks department received HUGE cuts to their budget and can no longer service this green initiative.

These composting sites are some of the only publicly funded composting options left for NYC. Composting is ESSENTIAL to our city. The DSNY spent \$500K in taxpayer money to create a compost processing yard only for the Dept. of Parks to convert it into a parking lot? What a load of shit. I want to live in a cleaner, greener city.

Building a parking lot would be a slap in the face to all New Yorkers working towards a green future. The Big Reuse is diverting tons of organic waste from landfills. Not only are they diverting tons of this organic waste, they process the leaves and yard waste from Parks for free and the soil in our parks and community gardens are replenished and rejuvenated by this compost. Compost and parks, especially public parks, go hand in hand. It boggles my mind that the Dept. of Parks is not advocating for compost as it directly benefits them. The Big Reuse is making this lot useful to our community by two folds. This is definitely something the community supports as shown by the multiple compost drop-off sites that have moved to bigger areas to accommodate compost drop off from the community. To remove this is to show that we as a city aren't committed to combating climate change and be an example for the country at large.

Your trucks can be parked somewhere else - there's plenty of empty lots the city is harboring that can be turned into a lot for your surplus vehicles. Don't get rid of composting; Especially after learning recycling is pretty much a lie and that NYC can only sustain level 1 plastics to recycle.

To quote Concilmember Jimmy Van Bramer, "The eviction of Big Reuse is not only wrong, but it cements the city's shameful policy of walking away from composting and a more sustainable future that literally could leave no waste unturned...But to do this so that this site would become a parking lot is an absolute disgrace."

Do better, NYC. The life of the generations after us is actually on the line now. Be smart, do the right thing.

Lucienda Chung

Queens (Woodside, Jackson Heights, Elmhurst), NY

Hello,

Hope all is well. I unfortunately had to leave the Zoom to attend a seminar. I wanted to send along my testimony in support of Lower East Side Ecology Center and Big Reuse:

Now more than ever, we need essential services to continue in this city, our city. It's high time we stop treating composting as something special or unnecessary, a nice to have, rather than what we all know it to be: something vital.

I've composted for years. When I lived in the East Village, I used Lower East Side Ecology Center all the time for composting services. They make composting convenient and easy-- something the city has neglected to do for many of us. Now it's nearly impossible to compost with the city service cut altogether and farmer's markets unable to take people's food waste. We can't afford to lose this integral part of dealing with our city's waste. We must do everything we can to keep Lower East Side Ecology Center and Big Reuse around for generations to come.

Maybe some of you can pretend that composting doesn't matter, that the food waste our city creates doesn't end up in trash sites predominantly located in low-income communities and communities of color that already deal with the brunt of things we don't want to face. Maybe some of you can pretend that waste isn't a huge contributor to air pollution, carbon emissions, and the urgency of climate change. I, however, can no longer pretend. I don't have a choice. My future, our future, depends on our continued commitment to composting.

We can continue on the path of ignorance, shoving the woes of climate change to the next generation. Or, we can take a stand now and show our children and our children's children that we do care about the environment, we do care about this city, and we do care about leaving them a habitable world.

Thank you for your time.

Cheers,

Lucy

Lucy A. Phillips

Composting is an essential service which has become far less accessible after the Covid 19 pandemic, making composting significantly harder. This impacts citizens who are now either unable to compost or have to travel long distances in order to compost, the environment and climate, which benefit immensely from composting, and the compost employees who had jobs because of NYC's formerly comprehensive composting system. Please bring back former composting sites (I personally dearly miss the Tuesday morning compost site at Franklin st station) and save Big Reuse and Lower East Side Ecology Center's Community Compost Sites. NYC desperately needs more composting locations and options, not less. The loss of these sites have been a huge inconvenience and grievance for me and many other New Yorkers, please listen to us when we ask you to keep these sites and bring back the old ones.

**From:** lydia f

**Sent:** Monday, December 14, 2020 10:12 AM

**To:** NYC Council Hearings

**Subject:** Community Composting Site hearing

Dear committee,

Please support the renewal of licence agreements for BIG Reuse Queenbridge Community Composting Site and LES Ecology Coposting in East River. Parks Dept is planning to evict our composting site to replace it with equipment storage. We need your support now more than ever! NYC was thriving with city supported compost, our communities need this and our landfills do not need more waste. BIG and LES are both providing such an important service to our NYC citizens.

The biggest **benefit of composting** is the obvious one: creating an environmentally friendly alternative to landfill disposal.

According to a 2015 EPA study on Municipal Solid Waste (MSW), national waste consists of 26.5% paper product, 7.5% wood, 7.6% yard trimmings, and 16.4% food scraps. Added together, that's 57.8% of total waste that could be used for composting! Imagine reducing landfill waste by over 50%! This is not only good for the environment, it makes financial sense too!

There is no downside to this! Please renew the license agreement.

Thank you,

Lydia Fleck

Queens, NYC

December 18<sup>th</sup>, 2020

To Whom It May Concern:

I have been composting since 2017 when I started taking my organic waste to my children's school composting brown bins provided by the city. I later learned that my local green market also had brown composting bins so I continued saving my organic waste and taking it there every Saturday. Composting not only reduces the waste stream and associated landfill processing costs, but it also cuts methane emissions from landfills thus contributing to the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, which is imperative. This compost turns it into soil that can then be used in our parks or homes.

I was so inspired by the concept of composting that in 2018 I created and led the Parent Sustainability Group at the United Nations International School and have since then trained all students, faculty and administration on how to properly compost. We also learned more about composting through work we did with Common Ground Composting, which helped us with a waste audit that looked to optimize the school's composting system.

Since the pandemic started I found it extremely hard to continue my composting efforts and had to stop composting for a few weeks, before I was able to find an alternative through a paid service called Reclaimed Organics. This service came every two weeks to pick up my compost. However, the high cost of the service did not allow me to get pickups more regularly and this presented other issues at home. Consequently, since there aren't any viable drop off options near my home since September I started going to the Lower East Side Ecology Center a few times a week to drop off my organic waste as it is relatively close to my children's school.

Finally, sustainably disposing of organics is critical to achieving New York City's ambitious climate and zero waste goals. Dumping food into landfills or incinerators instead of composting them adds to air pollution, and accelerates the climate crisis. Composting is a HUGE part of the climate solution because it keeps organic waste out of landfill thus reducing methane emissions from transporting trash and the resulting compost promotes greenery that mitigates urban heat effect and directly sequesters CO<sub>2</sub>.

BigReuse and the Lower East Side Ecology Center are vital to the community and they need to have their leases renewed. We do not need another parking lot, we need organizations that engage the community in climate promoting initiatives.

Magda Torres

Dear Members of the City Council,

I am a resident of the East River Housing Cooperative in the Lower East Side. I carry my vegetable and fruit food waste, which I keep in my freezer until I am ready, every other day to the facility at the Lower East Side Ecology Center. Doing so has cut down my personal trash output by an impressive amount: I only need to throw a bag of garbage down my building's chute approximately once or twice a week now.

To provide my compost to the LESEC gives me so much: a chance to feel that I am personally participating in the effort to reduce trash and fight climate change in my own neighborhood; a chance to engage with an important and unique community resource; a chance to teach my son about the importance of recycling, composting, natural processes and soil; and a chance to get out of my apartment during Covid-19 times for a walk to my beautiful local park, where I can enjoy at the same time fresh air, trees, birds and the river.

Unfortunately, my beautiful local park, which I depend on so much for my health and well being during these terrible times, is slated to be completely destroyed as a part of the ecologically disastrous and anti-community East Side Coastal Resiliency plan. And as part of that plan, community composting will, at best, be put on hold with an uncertain future. That means my trash will once again fill with food scraps, I will have nowhere to take a walk, I will have nowhere to take my son to observe the birds who enjoy the bugs in the compost piles and their warmth in the winter, and I will have less of a way to fight climate change in my very own neighborhood.

I use the compost created by LESEC to fertilize my own houseplants and container plants on my balcony, creating a beautiful cycle--my own food goes into a way to beautify and improve my own life. And my family and I have become more engaged with LESEC--volunteering to weed the park, pick up garbage and plant bulbs in the fall.

I love what my park is and what the LESEC composting program brings to it. It is an active and engaged place, where urban experience and engagement join to nature and mental wellness. People dance, drum, perform, meet, picnic, bicycle, all next to the compost yard, which exemplifies true city activism--the ability to really engage with your environment and help it, as opposed to a sterile park filled with astroturf and coated concrete (which is very much what the new plan for the park looks like).

I am so very disappointed in my city for failing to support and protect such important--essential community resources. But I am not entirely surprised as the city has a long history of breaking trust with the Lower East Side. This time, however, your breaking trust with our neighborhood has larger consequences for the planet as your decisions will directly add to climate change emissions and environmental injustice and racism. I sincerely hope you come to your senses and provide a new location for the compost yard in the area, or even better, go back to the original community-developed plan for East River Park, which preserved the park at the cost of closing one lane of the immensely disruptive FDR.

Best wishes,

Marcella Durand  
570 Grand Street, Apt. H204  
New York, NY 10002

Community Compost Sites  
Committees on Parks and Recreation and Sanitation, Joint Oversight  
Hearing  
Friday, December 18, 2020 at 11am

**Marge Othrow**

**Please renew the license agreements for the nonprofits  
Big Reuse and the Lower East Side Ecology Center.**

**The city has canceled all neighborhood Compost pick-up.  
When the program was first initiated in Clinton Hill, Brooklyn,  
I noticed that it saved about 1/5th of my recycling output.  
It gave city residents a chance for SATISFACTION in cooperating  
with the NATURAL ORDER of things: FOOD WASTE RETURNING  
TO SOIL.**

**They provide JOBS for those engaged in an ESSENTIAL activity.  
Their license agreement for community compost sites must be  
renewed so they can remain in the Parks. Community composting  
belongs in Parks.**

**PLEASE ACT ON THE FOLLOWING:**

The LES Ecology Center site should be built into the East Side Coastal Resiliency Project and moved to temporary space in the interim. LES Ecology Center's license agreement should be renewed and include return to their historical site in the East River Park.

Big Reuse should be allowed to continue composting at their current site and have their license renewed.

To: Committee on Sanitation and Solid Waste Management

From: Maria Fernandez  
3136 37<sup>th</sup> Street, Apt B3  
Astoria, NY 11103

Re: Oversight Hearing Big Reuse and LES Ecology Center's Community composting sites Dec 18, 2020

Thank you for the opportunity to submit a testimony in support of the Big Reuse and LES Ecology Center's Community composting sites

In order to work towards zero waste in 2030 as the Department of Sanitation and Mayor de Blasio have been advocating, please help save our biggest compost site in the city.

Renew Big Reuse's license and let them continue their community composting operation at their current site.

City wide composting cuts 4 billion pounds of carbon dioxide per year which is the equivalent of 385,000 cars off the road. This is just one of the many benefits and reasons why community composting is vital for not only our city but for the rest of the world.

The LES ecology center community composting site should also be built into the East Side Coastal Resiliency Project and moved to temporary space in the interim.

Help us invest in a brighter future!

Thank you in advance!

Sincerely,

Maria Fernandez  
Astoria, NY

Written Testimony, 12/20/2020

To whom it may concern,

Please consider these significant points re: the current situation between NYC Parks and the compost programs of LESEC and Big Reuse.

- Composting belongs on NYC parkland. It supports the agency's sustainability goals.
- LESEC and Big Reuse compost programs are sustainability anchors in their community.
- Closing these sites would undermine City's goals in zero waste, carbon emissions and environmental justice.
- These sites should not be compared to the Spring Creek Lawsuit about a compost site on parkland. There is no legal standing on this comparison.
- Mayor DeBlasio needs to renew Big Reuse's license agreement to continue operating at its Queensbridge Site.
- Mayor DeBlasio needs to find a temporary space for LESEC to continue its compost program during the East Side Coastal Resiliency construction and to ensure that the compost yard is incorporated into the reconstruction plans for East River Park.

Please recognize the importance of keeping these essential services for New Yorkers: community composting is necessary for achieving the City's sustainability goals. Parks should host composting sites instead of landfilling their yard waste.

Best regards,

Maria Korolkova

To Mayor De Blasio and Parks Commissioner Mitchell Silver,

I am sure that you are both familiar with Joni Mitchell's 1970 hit song, "Big Yellow Taxi" where she belts the lyrics: "We don't know what we've got till its gone. They paved paradise and put up a parking lot!" The difference between this song and our current reality is that WE DO know what we have and we DO NOT want it gone! You want to pave our community's composting paradise to put up a parking lot. The community is urging you both to please, rethink this decision.

It is imperative that you uphold your promise of making our city a greener place and save these compost sites. How do you expect to keep up with having zero waste for our landfills by 2030? This a direct break to that promise especially after the city already did away with the brown bin program without warning. There are plenty of other options for your parking lots. Why must you choose these specific sites? Do you have an ulterior motive? **THE COMMUNITY DOES NOT ADVOCATE THIS DECISION.** There are clearly better options that do not involve displacing community and environmental strongholds.

I know you are completely aware of what these composting sites do for our community, but allow me to reiterate what I am sure so many others have reiterated this morning for you since clearly, you are not hearing us. Composting helps to: create green jobs, combat millions of pounds of food scraps turning into harmful CO2 emissions, instill a sense of environmental engagement within individuals, as well as to help keep the air in low-income & POC communities cleaner as incinerators are often located in these neighborhoods. All of these things **SHOULD** be in direct correlation with the sustainability goals of our City and the Parks department.

Joni Mitchell would save our compost, why won't you?  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=94bdMSCdw20>

Thank you for your time, I hope you do the right thing.  
Sincerely,  
Marian Lee Martin

Dear NYC Council Members,

As a resident of NY it is sad to see the City moving backwards with programs dedicated to doing better with our refuse. It is very sad to see the city put a stop on composting programs. Now the City has the opportunity to support the self-organized composting movements that started in the last months. Please, help those projects come to fruition!

There is move food insecurity in the city, which is another way of saying hunger. And even when hunger is not a problem there are many people that cannot afford healthy, nutritious, whole foods. The city should dedicate more space for food production. And at the same time dedicate space for composting. Composting food scraps locally addresses 3 problems: waste management, soil nutrition and cost and emissions reduction by not having to send it far away. The City has spent a lot of resources on education already, about the brown bins and its use. By walking away from it, the City should know of the implications to future such initiatives. The City knows the devastating effects of the plastic and glass recycling halts in 2002 had.

If a project comes to the City's consideration that proposes the continuation, expansion, or requests a new space for composting, please do the correct calculations in terms of environmental impact and temporal discounting and it will be hard to conceive that the proposals of groups dedicated to local composting projects and food production will not be some of the most relevant for the City to support. Go further and cooperate, reopen more food scraps drop-off locations. And when community grass-roots movements come your way trying to expand the power of the drop-off locations by organizing community collection of refuse: PLEASE be open and helpful. I would love for everyone to have the brown bin curbside pick-up, just as I was fortunate to have. But I know it might be difficult in the next year but support the drop-off sites and grass root communities all over the city. This is not just essential; it is our right to have a healthy environment. It should be the City's priority to have all its inhabitants housed and fed. Composting creates meaningful jobs, improves the environment, increases soil fertility – an easy solution to several problems.

We count on you once more to help us make NY more resilient and united.

Thank you for your time!

Mariana Cardoso, Greenpoint resident

<https://council.nyc.gov/land-use/>

My family are avid, active composters. We live in Stuyvesant Town and have been composting for almost a decade. I was thrilled when composting came into the Stuy Town Peter Cooper community through our weekend Green Market. When composting then came into our buildings I jumped for joy. When covid shut both the composting weekly in Stuyvesant Town and anything I could access through Grow NYC or DSNY, I really struggled.

I am grateful that limited composting has returned to the Union Square and Ave A farmers' markets and to the East River Park. Our household garbage volume went way down once we started regularly composting. Now, composting is an essential part of our lives.

Please keep them open. We use all three.

Sincerely,  
--Marina Metalios  
451 E 14 NYC 10009

**12.17.20 –NYC Parks Dept Oversight Meeting testimony –Marisa DeDominicis**  
**Support Composting on NYC Parkland - Big Reuse and LOWER EAST SIDE ECOLOGY CENTER**

Good Day. Thank you Council Member Choo for calling this critical NYC Parks Dept. oversight hearing.

My name is Marisa DeDominicis. I am the co-founder and Executive Director of Earth Matter NY. We are a nonprofit organization dedicated to the art and science of composting, located on Governors Island.

I am here today to shout out Earth Matter’s support for our sister organizations, the Lower East Side Ecology Center, and Big Reuse, to be able to continue their crucial work of composting neighbor food scraps, located on NYC Parkland.

Elected officials, will you act on the voice of your constituents, the voice of the thousands of people who have chosen to change their behaviors by composting their food scraps? This is one of the most basic ways people can directly contribute to sustaining NYC.

Will you listen to the cry of our Mother Earth, who is in need of healing?

New York City landfills and incinerates 99% of our organic resources, in “someone elses’ backyards”.

Composting is an answer to many of the environmental problems everyone in this room is tasked to solve.

City Council members, Mayor Bill, and political candidates who seek to lead our City, are you willing to advocate for compost legislation on NYC Parkland? Will you support expanding composting on other NYC lands as well, as a key way back from environmental degradation practices that have caused sickness of our Land? Composting is a step in the right direction for managing our resources, and a way to nurture and heal our Land.

Thank you for this opportunity.

Humbly yours, Mother Earth’s compost handmaiden.

Marisa

Tuesday, December 15, 2020

**Committee on Parks and Recreation  
Committee on Sanitation and Solid Waste Management**

**Dear Members of both committees,**

New Yorkers are tough and ingenious.  
We know what we want and how we want it.

I have been donating my food scraps for 7 years.  
When I first started I followed Gil Lopez's initiative with that of another Sunnyside community member who has since then moved out.  
Gil remained and continues to help our communities from the Big Reuse site at Queensbridge Compost Site. With his example he made me aware, and so many others, in the communities of Long Island City, Sunnyside, Woodside, and Astoria (in Western Queens).  
In the years since all of us slowly began joining in, we have realized the value of composting at so many levels: community empowerment; a means of locally source crops; soil enrichment, and we hope, jobs.

With the **un**interrupted operation of Queensbridge Compost Site much needed jobs will be saved, and our community members engagement and hard built cohesion will too.

In the spirit of justice and community self-reliability, I trust you members of both committees will vote to maintain the composting processing activities at Queensbridge Compost Site intact.

In trust,

Maritza Ordonez

Sites such as these provide a place for people who may not have access to composting otherwise to bring their food scraps. Composting helps NYC move towards being a greener, healthier city by keeping food scraps out of the waste stream and turning them into soil. Since its inception the Compost Program has only grown in popularity and people have gotten into the habit of separating their garbage - to stop that momentum now would be a huge step back.

## Dear New York City Council Members,

My name is Mary Hammann and I am a resident of Harlem.

When I learned that the NYC Parks Department refused to renew contracts for Big Reuse and the Lower Eastside Ecology Center, I was dismayed at the shortsighted approach that is being taken.

As a mother living at sea level with my fellow New Yorkers, I am imploring you to extend the contracts for Big Reuse and the Lower Eastside Ecology Center. With the City's composting initiative gone and global warming continuing at an alarming rate, these large-scale composting teams reduce our city's greenhouse gas footprint. These teams divert 1.7 million pounds of organic waste every year and create rich soil to be used by our city. They also provide needed educational programming for our communities.

It is FOLLY not to renew their contracts. I am asking you to commit to local composting for future generations and for the future of our wonderful city.

With deep concern for our collective future,

Mary Hammann  
mmhviola@gmail.com  
1485 Fifth Ave  
NYC 10035

19 December 2020

Dear Mayor de Blasio and Commissioner Silver,

I am writing to voice my opposition to the evictions of the compost yards of the Lower East Side Ecology Center and Big Reuse from New York City Park property.

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. Living near to the LESEC's compost yard, I have been able to drop off my compost right at the yard for many years. I also participated in the DSNY Brown Bin program, before it was indefinitely suspended on 04 May 2020, via my neighboring coop's Brown Bins. My coop's Board of Directors would not allow the program in my coop, even though we shared maintenance personnel with the neighboring coop. The LESEC's compost program accepted most of my organic material since 1998, and with the addition of the DSNY Brown Bin program, I have had no organic waste for the past few years.

Mayor de Blasio formally endorsed the Statement of Principles of the C40 Cities Global Mayors COVID-19 Recovery Task Force in May 2020. One of the ambitions of this coalition is to "build a better, more sustainable, more resilient and fairer society out of the recovery from the COVID-19 crisis." One of the principles states, "Excellent public services, public investment and increased community resilience will form the most effective basis for the recovery;". (<https://www.c40.org/other/covid-task-force>)

The closing of both compost yards - neither has a replacement location and the LESEC has not been guaranteed a return to the East River Park after the ESCR project - does the opposite of the stated goals of the C40 Global Mayors COVID-19 Recovery Task Force. It will also do the following:

- Increase the amount of NYC's waste that goes to landfill, where the organic matter will generate methane which is 86 times as potent as CO2 at trapping heat in our atmosphere. Food and yard waste make up approximately 1/3 of the residential waste stream. Big reuse collected over 1.7 million pounds of organic material in 2019 alone.
- Increase the fees NYC pays to dispose of its waste. Imagine the savings if the City mandated residential composting.
- Reduce the amount of compost provided to community gardens and the NYC Parks Department.
- Eliminate in-city green jobs that focus of collection, outreach and education.
- Work against the City's climate and zero waste goals. (<https://www1.nyc.gov/site/sustainability/initiatives/zero-waste-challenge.page#:~:text=Building%20on%20the%20City's%20ambitious,incinerati on%20by%20June%2015%2C%202016.>)

- Increase the environmental burden on communities outside of New York City, such as Newark's Ironbound neighborhood, that process our waste.

The potential closing of the compost yards of Big Reuse and the Lower East Side Ecology Center exhibits a lack of creativity about the social, economic and environmental issues facing New Yorkers and a disregard for the stated environmental and community goals of New York City by the Parks Department and the City of New York.

I ask the Parks Department to renew the licenses of the Lower East Side Ecology Center and Big Reuse to allow for the continuation of their composting programs.

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

Sincerely,

Mary Jo Burke

On Wed, Dec 16, 2020 at 7:19 PM Mary Kathryn Fisher wrote:

Hello,

I am writing to submit a comment for the hearing this Friday on community composting. I am asking that Mayor DeBlasio and Commissioner Silver renew LES Ecology Center and Big Reuse's community composting sites.

The decision to revoke these would be short-sighted, and I am in particular frustrated with the Mayor's inability to see a connection between his actions and position of power, and his agency in fighting climate change. Alas.

I also write as a member of the compost team from Prospect Heights Community Farm, which has been consistently overwhelmed by community compost donations, **and often have to shut down our weekly public collection after ~30 minutes each week, as we receive more than 500 pounds of food scraps from our neighbors in that short amount of time.** This is a volunteer program completely free to the City, mind you. There is a clear need and desire from the community for more composting opportunities, and I hope the "mayor" will start to act like one and keep these sites alive.

I am a resident of Prospect Heights, Brooklyn.

Thank you,  
Mary Kathryn Fisher

12/18/2020

**In relation to the Hearing by the Committee on Sanitation and Solid Waste Management (Jointly with the Committee on Parks and Recreation), held Friday December 18<sup>th</sup>, 2020 at 11:00am ET.**

Dear City Council,

I am writing to testify about the social, economic, and environmental importance of NYC's community composting sites.

It is VITAL to the health and wellbeing of everyone in New York City that the Parks Department and Sanitation Department reinstate full funding and permitting for all compost programs that were operational prior to recent shutdowns. Compost collection sites and processing centers across the city provide a crucial landfill alternative for our food waste, and will help the city prevent millions of tons of greenhouse gasses from accelerating climate change and the acute threat it poses to New York.

New Yorkers who are seeking to reduce their environmental impact are able to do so, thanks to compost collection sites and community processors. The process of dropping off one's compost also strengthens community connections, bringing neighbors together and giving the public free access to education about sustainability in their city. Personally, I really enjoyed meeting new people and knowing that my food scraps were making a difference every time I dropped off my compost at the Bowling Green compost collection in Manhattan or at the Franklin/Eastern Parkway and Grand Army Plaza farmer's market drop offs in Brooklyn.

The processing of food waste into compost provides sustainable jobs for community members, and also offers young New Yorkers an opportunity to learn about the environment and sustainability while visiting and volunteering at these sites. This processing capacity is also KEY to NYC's ability to achieve the sustainability goals set forth for 2030. The amazing work done by folks at the Red Hook farm are a perfect example of this.

The by-product of the localized composting process also benefits New Yorkers, as rich, nutrient dense soil is consistently made available to help trees and other plants in the city thrive. If you've ever been to Governor's Island, you've seen the power of compost from Earth Matter at work in the gorgeous flora of the island.

Investing in compost is an investment in the long term health of the city and its people. I urge you to fully fund all NYC community compost elements as soon as possible.

Sincerely,

Mary Rose Fissinger

310.876.9188

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

To whom it may concern,

I have made my career working in the environmental sector of New York City. I have worked for NYC Parks in Forestry and Outreach divisions and several non-profits with a direct environmental focus. I have seen the importance of sustainability projects, programming and initiatives for our city. I believe we need to value our environment and work in its best interest.

Programs such as community composting offer so much from its beginning to end. City agencies often harp on waste reduction, something compost offers. But it is much more than that, we bring nutrients back into our city's soil and make it a healthier place for us all to live in. Community Composting offers a social aspect as well, bringing communities together to accomplish something good for their neighborhood. We should support a more sustainable city for so many reasons. Overall, we need to take action and change our mindsets because the earth will react to our negligence.

Queensbridge is just such a simple and easy win for our City. When the COVID-19 budget cuts slashed sustainability initiatives I was not surprised. These programs are often the first to go, deemed unnecessary. But now in this moment, do not let something that is functioning efficiently and serving communities across the city shut down. Volunteers have stepped up and the public has voiced their opinion that they want the option to compost their food scraps. They want the city to support these programs and initiatives so that our city is healthier and sustainable.

Please fight for our city to have a sustainable future and value our unique urban environment.

Sincerely,  
Mary Rose Robbins

## Composting as Community-Based Regeneration

According to the U.S. EPA, more than 20% of municipal solid waste generated each year is food waste.<sup>1</sup> Composting, the process by which food scraps and other organic materials are decomposed into soil, is the magic reversal for one fifth of our waste stream. It's our direct, community-based solution to churn trash into the treasure of a fertile future.

One of the vital programs cut at the onset of the covid-19 pandemic was the city's curbside composting pick-up, and subsequently, many of the GrowNYC compost drop-off sites at farmers' markets across the city.

As with many of the others in attendance today, I used to rely on the Brooklyn residential composting pick-up bins to drop off my compost every week. My parents do the same from their Manhattan apartment, and my mom excitedly saw her trash halved in this way. Sometimes, I would drop my scraps at the Grand Army Plaza green market on Saturdays. Neither of these have been available to me or my neighbors for the better part of a year.

Thankfully, community-based organizations like Big Reuse Brooklyn and the Lower East Side Ecology Center have stepped in to fill this need. These two together account for more than one third of the food waste processed by the city's composting project, on land permitted to both by the City's Parks Department. The City plans to turn Big Reuse's Queensbridge site into a parking lot, and to force LES Ecology Center to leave East River Park in favor of the ESCR Project, which evidently doesn't consider composting a part of its vision.

At this moment of cultural reckoning and environmental justice, it is imperative that the Committee on Land Use direct the Parks Department firm their commitment to the regenerative process of composting, through the help of NYC's dedicated community-based organizations. Please renew Big Reuse's License Agreement, and please integrate the LES Ecology Center's composting work into the vision of ESCR.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Marya Friedman

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<sup>1</sup> U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, "Food: Material-Specific Data," <<https://www.epa.gov/facts-and-figures-about-materials-waste-and-recycling/food-material-specific-data>>, 2020.

To Whom it May Concern,

I realize I may be a few hours late in submitting this testimony in support of renewing composting licenses for BIG Reuse at their Queensbridge Site and for the LES Ecology Center, but as the working father of a toddler this was the first moment I could find. Hopefully it is read and logged along with hundreds of others.

If it is not, I would still like to make my voice heard in support of municipal composting as a vital part of this city's future. Despite the pandemic, the city's plans for high density development continue. I myself live in Carroll Gardens around the corner from what is about to become a massive 6-acre affordable housing development on Smith Street. One of the debates around this development centered on the amount of public greenspace provided. I would propose --in addition to renewing the aforementioned licenses for these two vital organizations --that ANY mixed-use or residential development either affordable or market-rate being considered in the city be mandated to host a compost facility of their own in order to drastically reduce the amount of greenhouse gas-producing waste that is rotting in our landfills.

It should be the requirement of any forthcoming development to maintain and manage a facility large enough to host the compostable waste from the maximum occupancy of the entire development. And this would not take much space for each development on their own.

In the meantime, it is only thanks to organizations such as BIG Reuse and the LES Ecology center that there is any hope of resuscitating compost on a city-wide scale, and they desperately need to keep their sites open, just as we as a city and as a society desperately need to set an example and continue to compost in this city as a matter of routine. Please renew these licenses!

Thank you,  
Matt Suter

I have lived in Astoria for 12 years, and for many of those years I have collected compost in my freezer, and brought it to a GrowNYC Farmer's Market compost drop-off site once every week. When Covid-19 ended this possibility, some inspiring neighborhood folks stepped up to fill that gap with the help of Big Reuse.

It has amazed me over and over again just how big an impact composting has on our household trash output. Pounds and pounds of food waste per month are composted from just my 2-person household, and as a result we only throw away one small kitchen trash bag every 2-3 weeks.

I walk my compost to those bins in any and all weather, no matter my schedule, because it feels so good to take a small, accessible action to decrease my carbon footprint and that of my city. This is an essential service to so many of us. I ask you sincerely to keep Big Reuse on NYC Parks land. THIS is how we make NYC green!! Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,  
Megan Atchley  
Astoria, Queens

Testimony to Save Big Reuse & Lower East Side Ecology Center's Community Compost Sites  
Committees on Parks and Recreation and Sanitation, Joint Oversight Hearing  
Friday, December 18, 2020 at 11am

**Megan Nordgren, D3 Green Schools Group**

**I support the nonprofits Big Reuse and the Lower East Side Ecology Center. They provide vital environmental work for the city. Their license agreement for community compost sites must be renewed so they can remain in the Parks. Community composting belongs in Parks.**

Composting is a critical means of reducing our city's carbon emissions, as well as an excellent way to inform our community about food waste.

The LES Ecology Center site should be built into the East Side Coastal Resiliency Project and moved to temporary space in the interim. LES Ecology Center's license agreement should be renewed and include return to their historical site in the East River Park.

Big Reuse should be allowed to continue composting at their current site and have their license renewed.

These small compost sites are the backbone of the Sanitation Department's newly restored food scrap recycling program - a nimble and already highly popular sustainability program that dozens of City Council members and tens of thousands of committed New Yorkers pushed to fund in this year's budget.

Mayor de Blasio and Commissioner Silver's eviction of the sites not only undermines the City Council funded compost programs, but also the City's greenhouse gas emissions, Zero Waste, and environmental justice goals.

It will result in even more recyclable organic waste being hauled to landfills and incinerators, passing through transfer stations and utilizing waste infrastructure overwhelmingly located in low-income communities and communities of color polluted by particulate matter linked to severe cases of COVID-19. These community compost sites compost the organic waste and use the compost to green New York City, repair our depleted soils and fight climate change.

Over 4,000 letters have been submitted to Parks in support of the sites in addition to letters of support including over 50 community groups. The sites are supported by their local Council Members and Borough Presidents. We urge Mayor de Blasio, Commissioner Silver and our elected officials to listen to the overwhelming public support for these programs and renew the license agreements for our community composting sites. **We should be moving forward in the fight against the climate crisis--not backward.**

When I moved to New York City, I never imagined how easy it would be to shop from local farmers and compost regularly. I was so happy to know I'd be a tiny part of making a difference to protect our planet and promote justice among people. This may sound lofty, but it really isn't. It is seemingly small things like dropping my compost at a local site that helps to avoid further filling of our landfills, further burning of toxic fuels, generating pollution and worsening respiratory health in primarily low income areas (the consequences I see as a physician in NYC). Since the pandemic began, my composting has stopped. I try to create no food waste but without composting, it is impossible. I've been delighted that some drop-off sites have re-opened but for me, they are logistically challenging to get to, especially in the middle of a pandemic. Please, save any composting that you can. We have to do this – for our city, state, and world.

Megan Ritter

To whom it may concern:

I am writing to express my support to keep the Big Reuse and LES Ecology Center on NYC Parks property. Both of these organizations provide an invaluable resource to the city. Composting helps to combat climate change, which poses a threat to New York City and the world. It also reduces the amount of waste being sent to landfill and reduces the city's environmental footprint. These organizations provide imperative resources and educational opportunities that are crucial in the city's plans to combat climate change.

Megan Robertson  
Brooklyn, NY

Please keep the composting site! Composting makes sense and we should encourage it for our City!

To the members of the Committee on Parks and Recreation, members of the Committee on Sanitation and Solid Waste Management,

I respectfully request that you ask the Parks Department to renew the leases for both BIG ReUse and LES Ecology Center sites for composting.

There's no need for me to repeat the facts and benefits of composting, we all know them. It is a crucial way for us to lower the city's emissions and get to Zero Waste. At this point, our goals for 2030 are getting farther and farther from reach.

There must be other solutions besides ending their leases and I ask that you all work together to find a way to make it work for all parties.

Thank you for your time, and I appreciate everyone taking the time and effort to work on this issue.

Best,

Melissa Chow

Dear NYC Council Committees on Sanitation & Solid Waste Management and Parks & Recreation,

I would like to thank you for all your hard work and inspired leadership during this Covid-19 crisis, and for all you do in service of NYC. I am writing on behalf of the West 80s Neighborhood Association - a local, all-volunteer non-profit. We support expanding composting in NYC, not reducing it, and keeping the LES Ecology Center and Big Reuse on their longtime Parks Department sites. Additionally, we support the CORE Act (the compost and community recycling centers legislation drafted by Council Members Powers and Reynosa), and urge the NY City Council to pass that bill.

When the Mayor suspended the brown bin food waste recycling program and eliminated its funding from the current budget through 2021 (due to the pandemic and economic crisis), my neighborhood association received numerous complaints. Residents who compost are very committed to reducing waste to landfills, and have been engaging in this important environmental activity for years.

I include myself in that group committed to composting. For years, I have been sorting my food scraps, plant and garden clippings, soiled paper and bringing that organic waste product to community compost bins in the neighborhood (temples and churches that participate), as well as the GrowNYC farmers markets. Many of my friends and neighbors are in buildings that had happily participated in the residential brown bin program. With the suspension of the brown bin programs, residents are now dropping off their food scraps at community drop off centers, such as Big Reuse and The LES Ecology Center. By diverting food scraps, lawn and plant cuttings, soiled paper from the regular garbage, we are reducing the amount of waste that is sent to landfills or incinerators - where it creates greenhouse gases contributing to climate change.

This reduction of garbage to landfills and incineration is a very important environmental initiative as burying and burning our waste contribute to the climate crisis by increasing methane gas and particulate matter into the atmosphere. Scientists and the United Nations have warned that we have 10 years to reduce greenhouse gases in the atmosphere to prevent a climate catastrophe. NYC must continue to be a climate leader even in the midst of a pandemic.

As a social justice and community health benefit, the more garbage trucks we can divert from our waste transfer stations (which historically have been located in neighborhoods of color and lower incomes), health and quality of life in those neighborhoods will be improved, and the air will be cleaner resulting in reduction of asthma rates. Given that Covid-19 disproportionately has been negatively affecting people of color and those with underlying health conditions such as asthma, it would be a major step backwards in those communities to increase garbage truck traffic there as a result of increased garbage loads because there is no longer food waste diversion.

Additionally, the food waste that is turned into compost serves as an important example of the circular economy when that compost goes to community groups working on

improving neighborhood parks, community gardens, and street trees. This city green infrastructure helps to reduce the heat island effect, and thus reduces our energy consumption in the warmer months. New Yorkers benefit from healthy street trees and green spaces, which require compost added into soil.

Green jobs and educational programs are also a result of this circular system. Additionally, sending food scraps and soiled paper products to compost centers reduces the rodent population (rats being an issue that this neighborhood association has unfortunately necessarily confronted numerous times), as food waste isn't left on sidewalks in thin, plastic bags that the rats and mice can easily bite through and feed on overnight.

We should not allow years of learned behavior, helpful habits, and entrenched environmental infrastructure to be jeopardized by the evictions of Big Reuse and LES Ecology Center. It makes no sense to shutter them - all for turning those Parks spaces into parking lots! It is too risky that the environmental momentum of composting will be lost and that we will go backwards if these beloved centers are closed.

NYC should be setting the example that cities need to be forward-thinking and creating more environmentally-friendly policies, and not going backwards.

I thank you for your consideration.

Best,

Melissa Elstein, Secretary & Co-founder  
West 80s Neighborhood Association  
P.O. Box 732  
NY, NY 10024  
[www.west80s.org](http://www.west80s.org) [www.loveyourstreetreeday.com](http://www.loveyourstreetreeday.com)

Sent from my iPad

Sent from my iPad

Hi, my name is Mellison Arguson. I currently live in East Harlem, New York. I have been composting my food scraps for two years now.

I first learned about the issue of food waste when I interned at the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC), an environmental nonprofit right here in NYC. They ran a campaign called Save the Food that caught my attention with a shocking statistic: 40% of all food in America goes to waste.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, when millions of people have lost their jobs and are lining up at the World Central Kitchen for free meals right down the block from my apartment, this statistic should not exist. But the reality is — too much food is ending up in landfills instead of people's stomachs, which has immense impacts on the planet.

I currently compost with GrowNYC. I wake up every Friday morning at 7:30 am to walk across Central Park to get to the 97 Street Greenmarket where I drop off my compost pile at the Grow NYC tent at 8 am. I do this all before I have to be online for work at 9 am.

Let me break down the benefits of composting for both my personal life, my community, and the planet. I'll start with the personal:

- One: Since I stay home most of the time due to the pandemic, I'm always looking for ways to be active. The compost site that is closer to me is currently closed due to COVID, but I didn't let that stop me from finding a way to compost. Walking across to Central Park to get to the GrowNYC compost site helps me be active and get my 10,000 steps in every Friday.
- Two: Because I place my food scraps in the freezer instead of my garbage can, I only have to take out the trash once every two weeks. Plus, I've dealt with a lot less flies and do not have to worry about mice trying to sneak into my garbage can.
- Three: Since GrowNYC accepts vegetable and fruit scraps among other items like grains, coffee grounds, etc. — no meat or fish — I have adopted a vegetarian diet so that I can divert as much food waste as possible. Since I drastically cut down on meat, I can say that my diet has been the healthiest it's ever been.

Now for the compost's benefits for the planet. The list can go on, but I'll stick to three points:

- One: You can either let your food scraps turn into nutrient-rich soil that can help grow more healthy foods — or you can let it turn into methane gas that will harm the planet. You decide.
- Two: NYC's composting programs help preserve city-green jobs that focus on collection, outreach, and education. During the COVID-19 pandemic when so many people are currently unemployed, composting jobs matter more than ever.
- Three: The United Nations set out 17 Sustainable Development Goals that we must achieve by 2030 to ensure a healthy and livable planet. One of the goals is to take climate action — and we can do this by achieving zero waste by 2030. Because of the pandemic, I fear that we are falling behind on reaching this goal. We must continue our composting efforts in NYC because they are critical to keeping the world on track to achieve zero waste.

Commissioner Silver and Mayor de Blasio:

I am a member of Smiling Hogshead Ranch, a volunteer run community farm collective in LIC, Queens that accepts our neighbors' food scraps. I am troubled that licenses for community compost sites operated by Big Reuse (in Queens) and the Lower East Side Ecology Center (in Manhattan) have not been renewed by the Parks department. Removal of these sites (and the Brown Bin program) has and will again dramatically increase the amount of food scraps our community brings to our site. This overburdens our volunteers (me) with work that the city should be doing.

The Big Reuse and the LES Ecology Center sites are vital to progress on our City's zero waste, emissions reduction, and environmental justice goals. They support dozens of local green jobs, engage thousands of volunteers and food scrap donors each year, and donate composted leaves, wood chips, and food waste back to our parks as rich organic fertilizer.

There is no good reason to evict longstanding community organizations from small parcels of City land. If our City agencies cannot see the inherent value in composting without rules or laws in place, then we believe parks should be mandated to compost.

Now more than ever, our green spaces must be places where we can learn about and practice sustainability.

I urge you to immediately renew the longstanding license for these sites AND to mandate composting citywide.

Mia Roy

Hello esteemed Council members,

It has come to my attention that there is a hearing today regarding composting programs in NYC parks. I am writing to voice my support for these programs being housed in public space - they are both an important resource for the community and a necessary diffusion of organic waste from our sanitation system.

Many NYC residents utilize composting programs in order to offset their carbon footprint. It is an important piece of their personal efforts to battle larger ecological problems, which dovetail with citywide, state and national goals to reduce climate impact. Further, home gardeners use the compost created to renew and fertilize their green spaces; while I'm unfamiliar personally with the entire life cycle of compost in our sanitation and parks systems, compost is a resource that can be used to enrich public gardens as well as monetized and sold back to the public as a modest revenue stream for the city. You all have a better grasp of the statistics than I do-- but I would not discount the positive impact that diverting waste from regular trash collection has on the overall cost of NYC sanitation.

For these reasons, education and access to composting for NYC residents should be expanded in our public spaces, not cut.

Thank you for your consideration of this testimony.

Best,  
Michael DiPietro  
Resident of Long Island City, Queens

--

401-854-8820

[dipietro.arts@gmail.com](mailto:dipietro.arts@gmail.com)

[michael-dipietro.com](http://michael-dipietro.com)

To whom it may concern on the New York City Council on the subject of the Friday, Dec. 18 meeting of the committee on sanitation and solid waste management –

I want to testify that I believe that Big Reuse and the Lower East Side Ecology Center should not be evicted.

Given the city's shortsighted, counterproductive, and dubious "temporary suspension" of municipal composting, it is imperative that alternatives exist. Composting is an easy way to minimize our impact on the climate, and now that so many of us, including myself, are in the habit, we should be able to keep doing so easily, especially now that the city has given up on this noble, imperative cause. These two centers are where the local composting organizations I drop my organic waste off with, namely the North Brooklyn Compost Project, bring the waste that they collect. If they are removed, I worry that these projects will cease to exist, and I, and many others, will be forced to resume putting our compostable waste in the city's regular trash where it will go in landfills and create harmful greenhouse gasses.

To my understanding also, I think the plan, if these facilities are evicted, is to replace them with a parking lot, which is terrible! I get that the city is cash strapped – why don't we just institute a paid, municipal street parking permit system that would raise far more money rather than transforming these virtuous, useful facilities into pavement?

Regards,

Dr. Michael Smith  
269 Leonard St. Apt. 2  
Brooklyn NY 11211

I have been saving my compost in my freezer throughout the week for years now as a NYC resident. In the winter I have the ability to store compost outside on my terrace as well, when there's no more room in my freezer. This equates to what usually is about 15 pounds of compost that my household alone is composting each and every week with the help of places like the LES Ecology Center and Big Reuse. Being that these two facilities help divert 1.4 million tons of organic waste \*each year,\* clearly I am not unique in composting in this way. The parks department exists because of the people residing in NYC who utilize the parks. To turn our composting facilities into parking lots to make it more accommodating for parks employees to park their cars is irresponsible and ignorant. Is this seriously the only viable solution that you have come up with? Governor Cuomo signed into **LAW** the CLCPA in 2019; demolishing composting sites and forcing 1.4 million tons of organic waste into the landfill each and every year is not in line with the goals of the CLCPA. It is quite honestly a disgrace that we all have to be writing this testimony and that this decision isn't seen as clearly despicable by those in charge. Getting rid of these composting sites for a parking lot appears to be a decision that was made with very little thought or regard for the community at large. I urge you to reconsider this decision because it is impractical and immoral.

Good afternoon,

I am writing to testify in support of sustaining and expanding composting services in New York City. I am a certified master composter via LESEC, resident of the Lower East Side, as well as Executive Chef of a community based organization in Manhattan that was part of the pilot of DSNY's commercial composting program at schools and institutions.

As nearly all the speakers at today's hearing have pointed out, composting is an essential service, both for the city's goals of carbon emissions reduction as well as the city's residents: community scale composting engages and empowers individuals in ways far beyond "standard" open use park space. While it's good to hear the stated commitment of both DSNY and Parks to compost practices, I am disheartened by the wrongly prioritized actions of Parks in particular in moving both LESEC and Big Reuse off of their sites without at a minimum allowing them to stay until alternative sites are secured. Ideally both organizations would be able to stay where they are and grow the important work that they have established.

Additionally, while this is not the focus of this hearing, I want to urge the city council to continue to advocate for reestablishment and expansion of DSNY's "brown bin" program. As commissioner Anderson acknowledged, the only effective solution to approach the city's Zero Waste goals involves a mix of community and larger scale composting.

Thank you for your time.

Michael Mangieri

Dear Sir or Madam,

I am writing to testify on behalf of all NYC residents who believe that composting in our city is an incredibly important part of moving our city forward through the 21<sup>st</sup> century. As a trained biomedical scientist with a PhD in the field, I am very cognizant of climate change and the impact of human activities on our world.

Composting allows every NYC citizen to take an active role in helping to curb food waste, promote home and public gardening and to decrease our carbon footprint on the planet. I compost for all these reasons and more – including the simple fact that it is a way for me to make a difference. And perhaps, to influence at least one other person to do the same. I know that I already have done so.

Until earlier this year, our city supported a composting program that allow weekly drop-offs in my Astoria neighborhood. Losing this, with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic was disappointing. But the grassroots efforts that have sprung up have become a wonderful part of our neighborhood. As someone who volunteers with AstoriaPug, I truly look forward to it each week.

Now is not the time to evict BigReuse from their current location, in favor of a parking lot. Whatever valid reasons there may be for a parking lot, there are many more responsible reasons to continue supporting composting efforts. Moreover, there is no shortage of other locations for a parking lot. Surely, a location can be found that would allow BigReuse to continue operating without interruption, and to meet the needs of city residents.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I implore you to do the wise and sensible thing, for our city and all of its residents.

Sincerely,

Michael Szmyga, PhD

December 18, 2020

Good morning Councilmembers and thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of Big Reuse and the Lower East Side Ecology Center.

Like most New Yorkers, I think NYC is the best city in the world. I'm proud of NYC's ambitious sustainability and emissions reduction goals, and composting is a tangible way that I can be part of meeting those goals. When I see my food scraps (which I store in a bin in my refrigerator), I don't see trash, I see a commitment to making my community stronger.

I look forward to my weekly walk to compost because I know that each step is a fight against climate change and environmental injustice. And I also love saying hello to my neighbors who come out to compost week after week (socially distanced hellos for now). Throughout the pandemic, when everything has become more challenging, I have seen how the community has come together to continue composting because we know our community, our city, and our planet is worth it and we're not willing to give up.

My compost is processed by Big Reuse, and it is meaningful to me to walk through Astoria Park knowing that my food scraps are actually helping to maintain parkland.

I understand that there are tradeoffs involved, but the impacts are clear. Failure to renew Big Reuse and LES Ecology Center's permits hurts our environment and negatively impacts the social resilience of our neighborhoods. Instead of treating us like partners in city systems, failure to renew would send a clear message that systems are things that are imposed on NYC residents.

To me, composting represents the best of the City- neighbors going the extra mile to try to make things better not just for themselves, but for each other. I'm asking that the City help us continue to do the same by supporting Big Reuse and LES Ecology Center in continuing the work that is so important to so many New Yorkers.

Respectfully,

Michaela Labriole  
Queens, NY

It is so important that we compost in this city! Composting should be held to the same standard as recycling and people should be encouraged and assisted by the city to compost! The city wide, brown bin compost initiative was such a great step in the right direction and for that to be taken away was detrimental to NYC's environmental commitments and goals. Now, not only have the brown bins been discontinued (for nobody knows how long!) but the city is now trying to pave over one of our biggest, most important, most used composting sites?! NYC collects over 3 million tons of trash and recycling every year from residents alone. **Over 30% of that waste is compostable** while 10% could be donated or reused. Not to mention, it costs us over 300 million dollars to ship waste out of state- to other landfills!

It's time we take some major steps forward (not backwards!) in the prevention and recovery of food "waste". Wasted food is wasted energy and we need to be participating in a more circular system.

The Lower East Side Ecology Center should not be evicted. We should be building more sites like it. It's ridiculous that this is even up for debate!

Thank you.

I am troubled that licenses for community compost sites operated by Big Reuse (in Queens) and the Lower East Side Ecology Center (in Manhattan) have not been renewed by the Parks department.

These nonprofit sites are vital to progress on our City's zero waste, emissions reduction, and environmental justice goals. They support dozens of local green jobs, engage thousands of volunteers and food scrap donors each year, and donate composted leaves, wood chips, and food waste back to our parks as rich organic fertilizer.

When these sites are shuttered, people still want to compost, and often go to smaller non-profit, volunteer run sites, which are easily overwhelmed and don't have the space or resources to manage additional influx.

After spending so much time educating the city population about the importance of compost collection, and keeping organics out of lan

There is no good reason to evict long standing community organizations from small parcels of City land.

Now more than ever, our green spaces must be places where we can learn about and practice sustainability.

I urge you to immediately renew the longstanding license for these sites.

## Michelle Hulan

94 North Henry Street, Apt 2  
Brooklyn, NY 11222  
michellehulan@gmail.com

December 16, 2020

Dear New York City Council Members:

My name is Michelle Hulan and I am a resident of Brooklyn. Recently, I learned that the NYC Parks department has refused to renew contracts for Big Reuse and Lower East Side Ecology Center.

As a mother, neighbor, and resident of my community, I am imploring you to extend their contracts. These large-scale composting teams reduce our city's greenhouse gas footprint, increase biological activity in soil, divert over 1.7 million pounds of organic waste every year, create nutrient rich soil to benefit local gardeners and city agencies, and provide educational programming for our communities. Like so many others, I rely on this service. Composting is a small way for me to contribute to reducing methane output.

Big Reuse and Lower East Side Ecology Center offer a vital service, and I am asking you to commit to local, generative, and sustainable composting for future generations and for the future of this city.

Thank you,

Michelle Hulan

Composting is an essential service for many of us here in Western Queens. It should be expanded in public spaces and especially city parks. The commuter compost program made it possible for those of us who do not have curbside compost pickup to give our organic waste back to the earth instead of chucking it in a landfill. I think the waste my household produces has been reduced by more than three quarters. My building, a large apartment complex, has refused to establish curbside pickup. I now must walk to a community compost site much farther away in order to dump my scraps. In addition to renewing the licenses for the Queensbridge and LES Ecology compost sites, the city must restore commuter compost, and also expand the curbside program to make it mandatory for all apartment buildings.

Thanks.

MC

Michelle Chen

It is a necessity for the people of NYC to not lose additional access to composting options, when they are already so limited to begin with. With COVID, more individuals are eating at home and have food waste that they may not dispose of in the most sustainable ways and these composting sites are critical to giving locals the ability to repurpose their food waste.

Community groups like this rely on the compost site to process the food scraps we collect. Through our partnership with Big Reuse, we are able to collect more food scraps for composting that would overwhelm our community gardens.

Michelle Schubert

To the elected City Council Members,

I've been a NYC resident for 5 years and I've established my home here. Community Composting is a huge part of my life because I've been raised to be accountable and responsible for the waste I produce. And there are thousands of other people that care about this same issue. The beautiful thing about composting is that it's not political and it shouldn't be. No matter your political views, anyone can understand why composting makes sense for the city and participate. It's a simple individual action that anyone can take to counter climate change. But if we lose the facilities where our food scraps are processed, the cycle stops at the bin and everything could be redirected to landfills.

Community Composting is a powerful initiative for a self-resilient city and residents. As the city is facing current and future climate change impacts that will be devastating if we return to "normal", dismantling two of the major Community Composting sites in NYC isn't an option. We've already lost the Red Hook Community Composting site and we can't afford to lost more processing capacity for the food scraps that residents mindfully separate from their trash so it doesn't end up in landfill. Anyone who participates in bringing and processing food scraps is doing something that is beneficial to the city and to out-of-state communities that are burdened by landfills filled with our trash. Compared to other forms of solid waste management, community composting is an inexpensive and hyper local solution that represents a perfect closed loop in circular economy terms. During the summer and because of COVID, funding for Community Compost was cut and residents from all walks of life have joined forces to create and operate the food scrap drop-off sites they needed because they are dedicated to a more sustainable and resilient future for our city. NYC Parks and the City have been ignoring these efforts and the relentless commitment of hundreds of community composters throughout the past 30 years. What are NYC Parks and the City afraid of? Why are public agencies exerting misplaced power when they should serve the residents? I simply don't get it.

It's high time to support the local economy in a way that is racially and environmentally just. With the proper support, Community Composting could provide hundreds of green jobs city-wide and foster a true sense of place within communities where people feel empowered to care for their immediate environment, which in turn will have a positive impact on other communities that suffer due to the mismanagement of our residential solid waste.

To conclude, I urge you to do everything in your power to keep the two compost processing sites, respectively operated by Big Reuse in Long Island City and LESEC East River Park, open! Community Composting shouldn't be tied to politics because its lasting and positive impacts will go beyond any mandate.

Thank you for your consideration,

Miryam Shemwell

Committee on Sanitation & Solid Waste Management (Jointly with the Committee on Parks  
& Recreation)

Friday December 18th, 2020

11:00am

Testimony of Molly Sue Collins, citizen of Astoria

New York City Council,

My name is Molly Sue Collins and I have lived and worked in Astoria for close to 2 years. Through those two years I've met so many amazing people committed to making this neighborhood the best in New York City. Individuals and groups that constantly come together to ensure that those within our community are safe, happy, and healthy.

Big Reuse and Astoria Pug are vastly no exception. The group is dedicated toward keeping, not just Astoria, but the planet a better tomorrow for the loved ones we leave behind. Having the ability to safely compost in a metropolitan area is a rarity. And by virtue of being in a big city we get few controls and opportunities to lessen our cities already massive carbon footprint. Composting in a simple and efficient way to take positive steps towards a more sustainable future.

Upon hearing that the site Big Reuse and Astoria Pug used to compost would soon be gone, I felt it was my civic duty to plead on its behalf. And moreover, when your local government disrespects their own community by diminishing a cause does so much good, I feel compelled to speak up.

Please reconsider your action. If a year where so many things feel uncontrollably bad, we have the opportunity to do good.

-MC

Thank you for reading this testimony.

My name is Molly Culver. I live in Brooklyn, and I run a small business, Molly Oliver Flowers, that is based in Brooklyn, and that works to source local flowers from local farms for people's weddings. On average, I provide floral design for ~40 couples a year; translated into 40 events— totaling roughly 60,000 stems, for 4,000 people at these parties annually. I also teach about soil health through my business, based on years working as a farmer, urban farm manager, and educator through various non profit educational organizations and institutions in New York City.

I understand that the city is planning to evict 2 critically important composting sites that are both vital pieces of this city's young but growing sustainability fabric: The Big Reuse and Lower East Side Ecology Center. The Mayor needs to halt this eviction process and renew the Big Reuse's lease. The Mayor also needs to find a new temporary home for the LESEC during the East Side Coastal Resiliency Construction so that they can continue to do the important work of sustainable waste management.

I have worked in non profit settings for 15 years as well, teaching about farming and gardening - essentially teaching sustainability. I get emotional about soil + compost, as do most kids these days. Having a planet that is regenerative— building systems that are sustainable for the ways we work, eat, celebrate and live is of critical importance to our planet's future and for future generations.

It is hard to underestimate the importance of composting in the grand scheme of growing sustainability for our species. Soil grows our food and flowers. Soils everywhere need the benefit of nutrient rich compost. Dear Council, please keep young people constantly in your minds as you take leadership on these issues. Please think of their futures, of the possibilities for green jobs, of the need to honor this planet that is crying out in pain. We must support organizations doing the work to lessen CO2 released into the atmosphere (through waste sent to landfills).

What I understand is that the The Parks Department is reclaiming land under the 59th Street Bridge that Big Reuse currently occupies so that Parks can move their shipping containers and Parks employee parking there, and free up a current operations location as community open space. Of course at face value, Parks making more space accessible to community at a time of great need for open space is a positive thing. However, I believe that Parks has not assessed other nearby vacant Park lands that could be used instead of evicting a now world-class, highly productive composting site. Composting, and building + nurturing soil should be a pillar of any sustainability program in any city, anywhere. Case in point: NYC residents create ~12,000 tons of waste every DAY. Most of this waste is trucked to landfills in Ohio, Virginia + PA or incinerated in NJ. BUT, 22% of this waste is COMPOSTABLE + wonderful organizations like these are working their asses off to build workable solutions for the city. Community open space + composting should not be mutually exclusive.

There is something wrong and rotten at play when a Parks Department — a department that should be DEVOTED to stewarding our urban soils to the best of their ability — actively works to uproot and displace the very types of organizations that are working SO hard to build a more sustainable waste management process. For a direly long time, organizations like Big Reuse and Lower East Side Ecology Center have been treated as fringe. Instead, these organizations should be fully funded, and supported so that NYC can attempt and continue to lead on matters of sustainability so absolutely central to the city's long term health. Compost belongs on Parkland— and I know from many personal anecdotes from many hardworking Parks employees that I have taught about soil — that they are frustrated with the lack of availability of compost to apply and to take care of NYC's trees and shrubs and gardens.

The Mayor must extend the lease of Big Reuse and find the LESEC a new temporary location. To not do so would be going directly against the mayor's stated goals for zero waste, carbon emission reduction and environmental justice.

I am just one of hundreds of florists in NYC. I launched my business in 2012, and have built my business on values of sustainability, because I know that climate change is a dire threat, and that we all need to take responsibility for that threat. I have lived in NYC for 21 years, through 9/11, Hurricane Sandy, and everything this year. Nothing is more obvious to me now than our interconnectedness on this planet, seeing how this virus and our individual and civic responses to it have been matters of life and death.

This year of all years should have taught us not just about our interconnectedness but also about the necessity of urban green space. We couldn't have survived this year of social distancing and quarantining and staying indoors without our public parks. Compost is something that nurtures soil and helped ensure our Park trees and flowers and shrubs are healthy and happy. These two should never ever be at odds. The city must come in and play a role of making room for the necessity of both. Please, let's discourage scarcity mindset and power struggles for resources. The next generation is far too important. We must take these very last opportunities, as the planet is sending us signs more glaringly every year, to sow seeds now for future generations and people and plant health.

Thank you,  
Molly

Dear City Counselors,

I'm very upset to hear that licenses for community compost sites in Red Hook, Queens, and Manhattan (Red Hook Farm, Big Reuse, and LES Ecology Center, respectively) have not been renewed by the Parks Department.

If you are serious about our City's zero waste and environmental justice goals, then it is imperative that these sites remain. As you know, 1/3 of our city's waste is compostable. When sent to a landfill instead, this waste emits methane, a gas that is 84x more potent in warming our climate than carbon dioxide. In a city with rising seas, this is a death sentence to our way of life.

As in my professional role at an urban botanic garden, I run a green jobs training program that brings students to the Red Hook site. I cannot emphasize enough how life-changing it is for these students to see this absolute gem of a site. As the largest facility of its kind that is run entirely free of fossil fuels, people visit from all over the world to see how they can replicate our model. NYC has been a beacon for the world, not to mention a beacon for young people within our city limits. To abandon this site would be to abandon the singularity of our brilliant city.

Lastly, I entreat you to consider the economic benefits of maintaining these sites. They support dozens of local green jobs, in addition to serving as training grounds for even more green jobs. The compost created by these sites is free soil amendment, that helps our parks and tree beds absorb water (2x as much as with compost-free soils!) that would otherwise overwhelm our combined sewage system. Compost is also the only known soil amendment that binds heavy metals, preventing them from being taken up by plants; in a city plagued by lead issues, this is essential.

To not renew these sites would be a tragedy that would signal the end of environmental justice, green jobs, and economic sanity in this city.

Please do not displace these valuable composting sites with parking lots. Preserve them for humanity's future.

Thank you,  
Molly Kerker  
405 Rutland Rd  
Brooklyn, NY 11203

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

December 14, 2020

To: The Committee on Land Use,

At this time we know (more than ever) we understand how important public health is within the community. Reducing our landfill waste contributes directly to public health by reducing carbon emissions it takes to haul and process compost materials and food scraps.

According to the [2015 NYTimes article](#), “San Francisco claims to have reduced landfill usage by 80 percent, and Seoul, South Korea, a city of 10 million, claims that it saves \$600,000 daily by charging residents and businesses fees for discarded food scraps.” Mayor De Blasio’s office announced a “Zero Waste” initiative to reduce our landfill use by 90% in 2030. Five years later, we know the benefits and potential for sustainability.

Many compost programs are also volunteer fueled in run by micro-communities in each borough. Here in Kings County Brooklyn, my husband volunteers at our local Maple Street Community Garden where there is a composting and food share program. We also deliver our food scraps to Nurture BK at Prospect Park, which is entirely volunteer and donation run. These volunteer run programs are at the core of community building and lighten the load of compost collection by the city. The community is asking that the city and NYC Parks continue to support both Big Reuse and Lower East Side Ecology Center composting on parkland and throughout the city.

Canceling this initiative does not benefit the city or its residents. It only makes it more difficult to reach the “Zero Waste” goal. It increases carbon emissions and reduces air quality. It also undermines volunteer community initiatives. We need these programs because we need more (not less) resources dedicated to public health.

Thank you for your time,

*Nadine Shelton*

Prospect Lefferts Gardens resident

As a public health professional and healthy food and parks advocate, I want to point out how necessary composting is as part of keeping our natural environment healthy and loved. When the composting program closed, I suddenly had two extra bags of trash per week—this was now unnecessarily destined for landfill because it was previously my composting trash. Composting makes a huge difference in our trash deposits and also encourages people to eat fresh healthy food. Please reinstate the city's composting pick up program. Thank you.

Nancy Bruning

I wish to present my testimony in the Oversight Hearing of Dec. 18th held to question Parks decision to evict two non-profit community-based composting organization from sites they have transformed into thriving compost processing and education operations.

As an active community composter who has headed up the community composting program at Q Gardens in Flatbush since 2015, I can speak to the ever-growing desire of New Yorkers to take action against climate change and our current inequitable waste disposal system by bringing their food scraps to be processed locally. In June 2020, Q Gardens was one of the few options in central Brooklyn for food scrap drop, and we saw how people from all over the borough came from neighborhoods as far flung as Bay Ridge and Gravesend to compost with us. Even as other drop-off sites in our area and other Brooklyn neighborhoods began to accept scraps again from the public, during the summer and fall we welcomed up to 111 visitors every weekend and our scrap collection grew to 800 pounds a week--a volume extremely hard to manage in a small community garden run completely by volunteers with only nine bins. We were only able to keep operating at all because Big Reuse partnered with us, taking half our collection weekly and providing us with browns regularly. Without Big Reuse, our community composting operation, which serves a broad public --neighbors from all walks of life and backgrounds--, would have to be scaled down and more New Yorkers would find no outlet for their commitment to creating a healthier environment.

Removing Big Reuse and the Lower East Side Ecology Center would be to create a completely unnecessary problem, to tear down willy-nilly the work these organizations have done in building up local composting and building community in a way that prepares all New Yorkers to focus on the real problems that face us: climate change and rising inequality.

The Parks authorities did not present a single cogent reason during the 12/18 hearing that shed any light on why they are making this decision. Not one. Like so many other New Yorkers, I demand that Mayor De Blasio and Commissioner Silver reverse this frivolous decision now. so city agencies, community-based initiatives, and all New Yorkers can focus on the zero waste, climate reduction goals set by the Mayor in 2013.

Sincerely,  
Natalia Sucre

To the New York City Council,

I'm writing to express my disappointment in NYC Parks' decision not to renew Big Reuse's license agreement for their current site in Queensbridge, and the failure to ensure a place for the Lower East Side Ecology Center in reconstruction plans for East River Park, and to urge the Council and Mayor De Blasio to find a solution that allows both of these critical sites to continue operating.

I don't work with any of these organizations directly, but I am a Brooklyn resident (and voter!) who cares deeply about climate and environmental justice, building a safer and more sustainable future for our city, and composting as a key way to address food waste and climate change. Before the COVID-19 pandemic drove the city to shut down the incredibly popular GrowNYC compost drop-off program, my local drop-off site (outside the Franklin Ave station, Tuesday mornings) was reportedly the biggest, by weight, across the borough. So I feel confident saying that I'm not the only one in Brooklyn, Crown Heights, or even on my block who is invested in ensuring the longevity of these programs and views them as a vital service for our community.

LESEC and Big Reuse's compost programs are sustainability anchors and leaders in their communities -- not just their immediate neighborhoods, but the broader communities they serve in our city. Since our local site closed this spring, I've had the opportunity to volunteer a few times at the community farm site in Red Hook, which also had its own compost operation, pre-COVID. Getting my hands dirty (literally) at the farm and meeting the many youth leaders involved in running that site and developing its programming has underscored how lucky that part of Brooklyn is to have such an amazing resource -- and how we should be doing everything in our power to ensure that all of our communities can access the same types of services and locations. Yet instead of expanding these capabilities, or even doing the bare minimum of protecting the few sites we have left, the city is set to slash them yet again.

Composting belongs in NYC's parks and public spaces (including outside our subway stations!). It is in and of itself a public service that supports the agency's and the city's sustainability goals, provides yet another way for parks to serve local communities, and facilitates sustainable local systems.

The pandemic has made crystal clear how much New York City leadership needs to invest in sustainable initiatives oriented toward climate justice -- and just how dramatically far we are from meeting that goal. Instead of taking advantage of this moment to reset priorities and ensure a brighter, greener future for our city, our leadership seems unwilling to do the bare minimum to put us on that path. Many other cities around the globe are well ahead of us when it comes to sustainability and cutting down on food waste, so we have no excuse for not following those models. Closing these sites, after already shutting down nearly all citywide composting, would only put us further behind and undermine the city's goals to achieve zero waste, net zero emissions and environmental justice in any reasonable time frame.

Our communities have confronted devastating loss, instability and economic upheaval this year. Through it all, community groups and ordinary citizens across the city have found ways to keep neighborhood composting sites and collection active -- with little to no support from the city. Ensuring the continued existence of these important sites is literally the least our leaders can do.

The mayor's office should renew Big Reuse's license agreement to continue operating at its centrally located, convenient and well-established Queensbridge site. The mayor also needs to find a temporary space for the Lower East Side Ecology Center to continue operating its vital compost program during the East Side Coastal Resiliency construction and ensure that a functioning compost yard is incorporated into reconstruction plans for the East River Park.

Thank you,

Natalie Southwick

[natalie.southwick@gmail.com](mailto:natalie.southwick@gmail.com)

**Natan Theise** <ntheise@student.touro.edu>

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**(no subject)**

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**Natan Theise** <ntheise@student.touro.edu>  
Draft

Sat, Dec 19, 2020 at 11:05 PM

It is beyond me that cancelling all these composting sites is even a thought. The fact that all these grassroots efforts grew despite the continued consequences of covid must mean something. It shows that composting is a service this city wants to stick around. It's truly a form of sustainable waste management. I look forward to emptying out my freezer of vegetable scraps every week and I don't want to lose that part of my week.



**Newtown Creek Alliance Testimony  
on Community Composting Oversight in New York City  
Before the New York City Council Committee on Sanitation and Solid Waste  
Management jointly with the Committee for Parks and Recreation**

**Friday, December 18, 2020**

Good afternoon and thank you for the opportunity to share testimony in support of community composting in NYC. My name is Lisa Bloodgood and I am the Director of Advocacy and Education for Newtown Creek Alliance, a community-based nonprofit, founded in 2002, whose mission is to restore, reveal, and revitalize Newtown Creek, one of the most polluted waterways in the country and the geographic border between North Brooklyn and Western Queens.

For nearly a century it was common practice for both the City of New York and the industries that operated in and around the waterway to dump waste products into the water, land and air polluting our valuable natural resources. Our neighborhoods are still struggling to overcome these disastrous practices. Sadly, our communities are well known to be overwrought by environmental injustices that have left human and ecological health fighting to recover. We have long been overburdened by the legacies of an unregulated industrial past and the continuous marginalization of these areas brought on by the siting of much of the city's waste infrastructure.

For many decades now, the communities surrounding Newtown Creek have been home to the largest number of waste transfer stations in the City, the largest waste water treatment facility, we have innumerable Brownfields, and other contaminated lands, and is home to one of the City's 3 Federally designated Superfund sites, as well as many other State Superfund. In short, the soil that the communities surrounding the Creek are built upon is often considered too polluted to come into contact with.

520 Kingsland Ave., 3rd fl. | Brooklyn NY, 11222

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



This brings me to compost and the value and promise this resource holds for our community. Collecting food scraps, processing them locally into compost that can be used as a soil amendment, or cover, using the locally generated resource as a mitigating tool to assist our neighbors in protecting themselves and their families against coming into contact with some of the aforementioned contamination. It is well documented that the addition of compost to contaminated soil, as well as the act of composting itself, can assist in the reduction or immobilization of soil-based pollutants. Additionally, when used as a soil amendment compost brings other benefits including increasing nutrients and organic matter, structural improvement, and water retention capacity, which all assist in increasing the health of poor and overdeveloped soils, which we are awash in.

It is for these reasons that our organization has sought to bring small-scale community composting to sites that could best serve the communities they are in. We believe strongly that composting at all scales, and in all communities is key to transitioning NYC into a sustainable and resilient city. Even while we grapple with the severe budget crunch brought on by the pandemic, there is no justification to stop composting at the community level and we need every appropriate and available location to be enlisted in this activity, including Parks and DSNY managed public property. The processes, products, and environmental benefits are highly valuable and are desperately needed now more than ever.

To evict community composting operations, Big Reuse and LES Ecology Center is a mistake. We ask you to work together to preserve these existing sites and actively work identify additional locations for the expansion of community composting across all 5 boroughs. We have specifically identified 2 locations along Newtown Creek that would be appropriate locations for expanded community composting. The first is the decommissioned Greenpoint Marine Transfer property in Greenpoint,



Brooklyn and the State DOT property under the Kosiuzco Bridge in Long Island City. Both of which have an enormous amount of underutilized open space.

Thank you for your time and consideration and I look forward to joining future conversations with you all in siting new community scale composting in other areas around Newtown Creek.

520 Kingsland Ave., 3rd fl. | Brooklyn NY, 11222

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

Dear City Council and the Department of Parks & Recreation,

When I first moved to New York in 2011, I landed in the East Village like so many new New Yorkers do. I quickly found my home there. I found new and old New Yorkers excited to be a part of a kinetic neighborhood. I also found the L.E.S Ecology Center and their community compost program.

Instead of being sent to landfills or incinerated often near low-income neighborhoods, local community compost sites helps to reduce greenhouse gases, reduces air quality issues, creates nutrient rich soil to grow healthier food, and makes it easier for more people to get involved in local ecology.

The work being done at the Big Reuse and the L.E.S Ecology Center's compost sites will help build back a stronger and more fair city for all New Yorkers.

Beyond New York City, we need to recognize how we can lead global change in positively impacting our shared global environment. New York City has always been a messy experiment. Millions of driven, creative people come together in these five boroughs to be a part of something greater than themselves. It's not always easy but New Yorkers know that what they're doing here creates the best. They know that the grit of New Yorkers polishes the world as a whole. We push harder and further to make change.

Two community composting sites may seem insignificant in the crisis our planet is in but that's why these compost sites are so important. We need the city council and the Department of Parks & Recreation to not only recognize what these sites help with but also that we as a city are willing to push harder and further to make the change we need here and across the globe. We need to choose to do the small things that add up to something bigger. We need to show the world that New Yorkers have the grit to take on the change our planet so deeply needs.

Parks Commissioner Mitchell Silver and Mayor Bill de Blasio: please renew the license agreements for these community composting sites instead of adding to our landfills. Please choose to help rebuild a stronger New York when we need it most. Please choose to help New York City, with our focus and our determination, work towards leading change in our global climate crisis.

Thank you,  
Nick Wynja

To Whom it May Concern,

Composting is essential in our fight against Climate Change. New York City should be at the forefront of the zero waste movement and act as a leader to other cities and municipalities. As a city that claims to be “the best in the world,” it’s embarrassing how behind we are in terms of zero waste efforts and reducing greenhouse gas emissions. When it comes to actively combating the climate crisis, composting is one of, if not the most effective way to make an impact and keep food waste out of landfills. There is no reason why our city should not be prioritizing composting sites and treating them as the essential community pillars they are.

I am in support of Big Reuse and the LES Ecology Center and for them to continue their compost operations in NYC. We have a lot of work to do as a city and not providing space for these two crucial organizations would be a huge mistake.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,  
Nicole Grossberg  
Zero Waste Advocate

I have been using a local, volunteer-based composting drop off for a majority of the time that I've lived in Astoria. Each week, I take the bag food scraps out of my freezer to walk to a parking lot with a row of bins several blocks away. I wish compost pickup existed in NYC, but alas, I'm happy to walk my food waste to a drop off center every week if that is the best option. The reason I do this is because I know that our waste is part of a bigger problem.

We are worldwide finding that food is becoming less nutritious, as soil of industrial farms is completely depleted of nutrition. Composting is an essential part of the natural process in which food waste becomes the fertilizer for creating nutritious food. We are also dealing with the urgent issue of climate change. When we put all of our food waste into the general trash, we are allowing the food waste to turn into methane, which is around 30 times worse for climate change than carbon dioxide. Every day and in every moment, we are deciding how to handle this global challenge of climate change. Will we take action, and make sustainability a priority? And how will these decisions affect our future generations? Compared to other US cities, NYC is doing less than the minimum on how it handles compostable waste. The composting sites in NYC are part of a larger problem and I truly hope the people who have the power to choose to keep composting will choose to listen to the people you are meant to govern.

December 17, 2020

To the New York City Council:

It's an overused phrase, yes, but for a reason: *now, more than ever*, we need to save our city's compost.

We are seeing an unprecedented need for safe disposal of food waste generated at home. Since so many neighborhoods are already denied city compost services, which have been threatened by the citywide budget cuts and decreased farmers' markets and other dropoff sites, the Big Reuse and LES Ecology Center have begun to be our only hope.

As a resident of Crown Heights, I bike every week to Know Waste Lands to drop off food scraps with BK Rot. As one of the only composting sites near me, BK Rot was unable to accept the enormous influx of food scrap drop-offs from the many surrounding neighborhoods while adhering to safe COVID-prevention practices. Through their partnership with the Big Reuse, they've been able to not only accept the volume of food waste that is being produced in our homes, but also employ youth in the area who work in the garden, who would otherwise be out of work.

If I'm able to generate far fewer bags of landfill waste every single week because of composting, imagine how many other households are doing the same! Imagine how much usable, compostable food waste this is preventing from ending up in landfills! Imagine how safe compost processing is creating usable soil and generating greenery for our city!

As detailed by Big Reuse staff, Save Our Compost, and the many partner gardens around Brooklyn, there is currently unused Parks land under the Queensbridge that could be employed for Parks vehicle parking. There is no reason for you to take away this resource that benefits so many of us and keeps our landfill waste and methane levels from ballooning out of proportion, especially in the midst of the pandemic keeping us in our homes.

This is an issue of environmental justice. Do you really want to literally pave paradise and put up a parking lot? Or do you want to keep our city moving toward a more sustainable future?

Save the Big Reuse and LESEC and you save in so many ways down the line.

Sincerely,

Nora Tjossem  
Brooklyn, NY 11213

December 16, 2020

Dear City Council members of the Sanitation and Solid Waste Management and Parks and Recreation Committees,

I am writing to you today, as a private citizen of NYC for over 15 years, in request that you help keep the operations for composting for BIG Reuse and the Lower East Side Ecology Center (LESEC) open for the foreseeable future. With the drastic budget cuts this year, it would seem there are too few other immediate solutions to large-scale composting throughout the City. It also seems unreasonable and arbitrary to ask the operators of these sites to pick up and move locations, so please renew their leases and/or any other agreements so that the composters are able to keep their operations fully intact. I do not feel knowledgeable enough on the legal history of why composting operations are not permitted in certain areas of City parks, however, I strongly feel no reason that these particular uses are incompatible; they are in fact very complementary. Moreover, the site for BIG Reuse is under the Queensborough Bridge, has utility infrastructure, and is not suitable for other Parks uses. LESEC also has many established, large-scale operations on their site. Their composting program is an educational tool and a volunteer opportunity, not some bothersome eyesore taking up valuable real estate in the East River Park. It's adding to it. As a Master Composter, I have a deep fondness every time I visit the park, remembering how amazing the class and opportunity was. But more importantly, they are providing an immense and irreplaceable service in sustainability for our city, and for the Earth. Composting should not take as much of a back seat as it does in conversations of urban design, land use, and park utility.

I am a member of one of the community gardens that has stepped up and taken in more food scraps from the surrounding residential population, as a compost site that accepts drop-offs. At Smiling Hoghead Ranch in LIC, Queens, we have been beyond swamped with contributions; our members, who are all volunteers, can barely keep up with the amount we've receiving, and many could testify that our bins fill up quickly and are often overflowing. We work as quickly as we can to process it. We even accepted a donation of a brand new, additional 3 -bin Aerating Static Pile system this year – but it is not enough. We are a small urban farm, not a composting operation, and we do not have the capacity to fill the void that may be exacerbated without LESEC and BIG Reuse being able to continue to operate, without further interruption. Please vote to continue and support these operations – NYC residents will thank you.

Signed,



A.M., a proud community composter

Hi.

I'll keep this short. I'm asking you to please renew Big Reuse's lease and find temporary space for LES Ecology Center.

My name is Olivia Hamilton. I'm a new Bed-Stuy resident who moved here in August of this year. It's been really heartbreaking to watch the composting system that I was so excited to be a part of be gutted in front of our eyes. We need composting to be more accessible, not less.

I'm sure others will cite the Department of Sanitation's 2017 statistic before me, but it bears repeating: over one third of New York City's waste is organic material suitable for composting – that same material is being overwhelmingly sent to landfill to emit methane 84 times more powerful than carbon dioxide, when it could be used to beautify our parks, create jobs, and continue to foster a passionate community.

Please understand that failing to provide adequate land for programs like this will be more expensive in the long run, both financially and for our planet.

Mayor de Blasio wanted to send zero waste to landfill by 2030; we can't afford to lose major composting sites when our budget has already been slashed and resources stripped as a result of the pandemic.

There is no time to waste. The time is now.

Thank you.

Olivia Hamilton

Compostable organics amount to one third of New York City's household trash and disposing of it sustainably is critical to achieving the City's ambitious climate and zero waste goals.

Yet, since funding for curbside compost collection and community composting drop off services was drastically cut in New York City's budget, two community composting organizations -- the Lower East Side Ecology Center and Big Reuse -- face possible eviction by the New York City Parks Department.

Please save the services provided by the Lower East Side Ecology Center and Big Reuse's operations in City parklands.

When food waste is not composted, it is often sent to incinerators located primarily in low-income communities and communities of color and burned with trash and fossil fuels. This releases particulates and toxic chemicals into local communities and in some cases, they even drift back into New York City.

Composting is just too important for our environment, our health, and our economy -- please take action to protect the future of the Lower East Side Ecology Center and Big Reuse's composting services in New York City parks.

It is also an incredible way to teach the importance of reusing waste to our children.

Best,  
Otis Kriegel

Hello Members of the Committee,

My name is Paige Williams and I am an eleven-year resident of Queens and a three year participant in the city's compost project. I have volunteered at Big Reuse's Queensbridge site, met and worked with their wonderful staff, and have been encouraged throughout my participation in the project to become more active and aware of personal and city-wide sustainability efforts.

I know from personal experience just how impactful the work of the Big Reuse can be to an individual. It has raised my concern and support of composting efforts in the city. It has made me aware of the waste and food inequities in our communities. And it has made me a firm believer that we can and need to put robust support behind climate change mitigation efforts like composting.

To lose this and other community composting sites would be not just a disregard of the growing support of city residents, which is bad enough, but a resounding dismissal of the actual environmental crisis our city is in. With an action as backwards as this, how is any resident to have faith in our city leadership and decision-making? When solution-oriented, community-supported programs are ended, what choice do people have but to believe that their elected officials do not care about them, their desires, or their future? Not only will city leadership lose a critical tool in combating climate change by evicting Big Reuse and the LESEC from their sites, but they will also lose public trust as well. After a year like this one, there is already so little of that left, I am surprised that you would dare to erode it further.

As a firm believer in the climate positive and community-building work of Big Reuse, I implore the committee to intervene and keep this organization operating on its current site.

Thank you for your time,

Paige Williams  
Sunnyside, Queens

## Testimony in Support of Composting by Parks Employee

Hello, I am a Parks employee of several years and I am well-acquainted with the Big Reuse site under the Queensboro Bridge. And like many Parkies, I stand with composting and support Big Reuse. I think it's important to note that over 350 community gardens are on Parks Department property and Parks has no problem with hundreds of those gardens supporting composting, yet why is this an issue at Big Reuse? Clearly composting itself is not an issue. Hundreds of those community gardens are only accessible during limited hours and only during April through October, so is this really about public access? Because through its volunteer program and outreach, Big Reuse certainly made it accessible. For a number of Parks staff that are not simply obsessed with the promotion track, but who value public service to this city first, most, and always, that policy is simply being set by our general counsel, Alessandro Olivieri. Parks senior management on down is simply falling in line, as they do, rather than considering impacts to the city and the value of services to residents. Again, they are placing their own careers and career progression and obedience to higher policy decisions, no matter how poorly founded or formed, over actual civil service. It's completely emblematic of the poor management that drives out Parkies interested in reform and improving city services, and any analysis based on public good falls to the wayside when set against concerns of liability. And with regards to Alessandro Olivieri's priorities and principles, it's telling that he's been silent on this issue, but felt the need to be quoted in the NYTimes defending neutral references and their ability to shield city employees guilty of sexual harassment and worse. That's deserving of a quote to the press, but not composting? Truly mind-boggling and beyond insulting in this day and age, but that's who's actually running policy at NYC Parks.

[They Were Accused of Sexual Harassment, but the City Hid It \(Published 2019\)](#)



**(Published 2...**

For city workers ousted over sexual harassment charges, “neutral reference agreements” help them hide bad behavi...

Community Composting is essential for the future of our city. Sacrificing this future to increase parking is short sighted and benefits no one. As a Brooklyn resident, I have seen nearly all of my composting options slashed in the past year. The city continues to use our tax dollars to serve wealthy and private interests instead of investing in communities and solutions to benefit the many. Further cuts to community composting would be a further indication that this city only prioritizes the wealthy car owners of this city and not the people who make it great.

Penina Kessler

## COMPOST IS IMPORTANT

**C**an we please add more compost drop-off & processing sites?

**O**f course, composting is important.

**M**y food scraps help protect the planet.

**P**lease bring back curbside food scrap pick-ups.

**O**ur next step should be adding permanent food scrap processing sites.

**S**top taking away our compost.

**T**ime is ticking, NYC needs to boost its composting efforts NOW.

I'm not a poet, but I am someone who cares deeply about the environment. If NYC wants to hit its Zero Waste goals, protecting and growing NYC's compost program is essential.

Peter Garafalo,  
Melrose, Bronx, NY

My name is Pollyanna Macchiano and I am a resident of Brooklyn, New York. I have had the pleasure of volunteering with the Red Hook Community Farm before it got shut down this year, and am disappointed in this development. Composting is one of the easiest and most effective ways we can do our part to save our planet.

I am writing to defend the LES Ecology Center and Big Reuse Compost Project from being displaced, because they are one of the last lifelines our city has to get to its Zero Waste goal by 2030. I'm lucky enough to live close to the Green Space Community Garden in my neighborhood that is actively taking food scraps from the public every week; otherwise, I have no other options. This local garden often runs out of space for food scraps since more people are coming, so the inconvenience of needing to get there by a certain time is frustrating, particularly because we had a compost drop off at Grand Army Plaza before the pandemic.

I'd like to see the Parks and Sanitation departments re-open compost sites and provide more monetary assistance to these community gardens who are volunteering their time to do what the NYC Parks and Sanitation departments are supposed to do: to make composting easy and convenient for all citizens, and to recommit to the sustainability of NYC.

To Whom It May Concern,

Composting is an amazing asset to recycle organic waste we generate on a daily basis. Food and garden waste combined make up more than 28% of what we discard. When organic compostable waste goes to a landfill, it gets buried under massive amounts of other trash, cutting off a regular supply of oxygen for the decomposers. This trapped organic waste ends up undergoing anaerobic decomposition, a process of being broken down by organisms that can live without free-flowing oxygen. During anaerobic decomposition, biogas is created as a by-product. This biogas is roughly 50 percent methane and 50 percent carbon dioxide, both of which are potent greenhouse gases, with methane being 28 to 36 times more effective than CO<sub>2</sub> at trapping heat in the atmosphere over a century. As a community, we should take every opportunity to reduce the amount of methane and carbon dioxide we release into the atmosphere; we should embrace every action that could protect the planet from further climate change, now and into the future.

Our building composting canister was stolen early in the year and the compost collection site at Grand Army Plaza during the Saturday Farmers Market was key to our building being able to continue to compost and contribute to this vital community service.

This global pandemic is a result of our neglect of the planet. By composting, we are respecting and protecting the planet and our communities, in a very real and manageable way. Every little action adds up.

The Parks Department should reinstate hosting composting sites.

Best,

Rachel B. Abrams

--

Rachel B. Abrams

395 Washington Avenue #12

Brooklyn, New York 11238

718.622.4088

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**From:** Rachel Kahn  
**Sent:** Thursday, December 17, 2020 12:19 AM  
**To:** NYC Council Hearings  
**Subject:** Saving Community Compost Programs

Hello,

I am asking for the continuation of the leases of the LES Ecology Center and Big Reuse. As NYC has noted it is committed to becoming an eco-friendly city that will set an example for the nation and the world, it makes no sense that two programs that could help lead the City to its goals should close. The closing these sites would undermine City's goals in zero waste, carbon emissions and environmental justice. Please allow the sites to continue and not throw the future away.

Thank you and sincerely,  
Rachel Kahn

Dear Mayor De Blasio,

Compostable organics amount to one third of New York City's household trash and disposing of it sustainably is critical to achieving the City's ambitious climate and zero waste goals.

Yet, since funding for curbside compost collection and community composting drop off services was drastically cut in New York City's budget, two community composting organizations -- the Lower East Side Ecology Center and Big Reuse -- face possible eviction by the New York City Parks Department.

I ask that you reach out to the Parks Department and direct the Commissioner to find a way to accommodate the Lower East Side Ecology Center and Big Reuse's operations in City parklands.

When food waste is not composted, it is often sent to incinerators located primarily in low-income communities and communities of color and burned with trash and fossil fuels. This releases particulates and toxic chemicals into local communities and in some cases, they even drift back into New York City.

Composting is just too important for our environment, our health, and our economy -- please take action to protect the future of the Lower East Side Ecology Center and Big Reuse's composting services in New York City parks.

Sincerely,  
Rachel Prowler  
Astoria, NY

Compost sites should be able to remain in parkland.

Looking thru the lens of this particular moment in time, NYC's community members need this "win". With so much being out of our hands during COVID-19, energy and engagement around maintaining some of our composting infrastructure has been a bright spot for many New Yorkers. From building community support around maintaining some funding for community composting in the spring, to the creation of groups like Astoria Pug which has significantly expanded access to compost drop-off sites, this work has brought people together in a time where doing so feels impossible. It has also continued to keep literal tons of food scraps from being shipped to distant landfills (another ultimately costly expenditure for the City's budget).

This disunion between NYC Parks and the City's zero waste and climate goals, as well as DSNY-supported initiatives, is disheartening for New Yorkers to bear witness to. Parks should be a place where New Yorkers are introduced to and inspired by climate solutions. I know there to be some sustainability initiatives within the NYC Parks Department. However- even pre-COVID- they seemed generally underfunded and unsupported by an agency could lead the way toward NYC reaching its climate and sustainability goals. I know that Parks can be a place to spur energy and ideas around topics such as stewardship and sustainability, and it pains me that this opportunity so-often seems to be wasted in NYC Parks as an agency.

In order for NYC to achieve its climate and sustainability goals, it is imperative that City agencies allow for the maintenance of the composting infrastructure we have. And beyond infrastructure, it is imperative that community members still feel supported in this sustainability effort, so that- when composting is once again more widely available to New Yorkers- we can pick up where we left off as a City, rather than needing to start from scratch.

Thank you.

December 20, 2020

Dear Mayor de Blasio And Commissioner Silver,

I am writing to strongly urge you to suspend proposed evictions for the leases of Big Re-use and LES Ecology Centers, from the sites they have each occupied for many years. I am asking you to renew their leases. As you come to the end of your terms as Mayor and Parks Commissioner, your positive actions would support the legacy of your promises to the city: to enact the re-birth of NYC by implementing a vision for the future of our communities' health and well being.

Composting at Big Reuse and LES Ecology Center plays a strong role in the kind of resiliency projects that we need as our city faces climate change. Too much of our food and yard waste goes to landfills, which produce methane gases, more often than not, located in poorer communities. Composting, by aerating food wastes raises air quality. The food waste they convert into black-gold, diverts materials from landfills, lowering waste management costs. The millions of pounds of soil that Big Re-use and LES Ecology Center produce is returned to city landholdings, contributing to our public parks and reducing water pollution. Their work contributes to the city's greening programs, benefiting urban farmers and gardeners. In addition, each organization reaches out to their communities through educational work with youth. They serve as models to make our civic culture more aware and responsible.

It is short sighted and misguided for the city should to evict them as if they are an unwanted tenants! It makes no sense to evict Big Re-use; or to leave the LES ecology center out on a limb, with no plan for a new site after the city completes its waterfront project. Instead, each organization should be more fully incorporated, expanded and integrated into the Parks, city planning, and the communities they serve.

Keeping them on is a win-win proposition, in terms of the city's health, in terms of its future, and in terms of its budget management. If you want people to look back and say that you did the right thing for our city, you will decide to re-instate the Big Re-Use lease, and to make plans to return the LES Ecology Center to a productive site for their operations.

Sincerely,

Rachel Youens  
Brooklyn, NY

Rebeca Sabnam, Senior at The Brooklyn Latin School, Lower East Side Resident:

My name is Rebeca Sabnam. I am a Lower East Side Resident, NYC DOE highschooler, and Youth Advocate for Cafeteria Culture, and I strongly urge the city Council to continuing funding composting in NYC. I'm testifying because evicting composting is only a step back in the wrong direction. Because evicting composting means denying frontline communities the environmental justice they deserve. As a Bangladeshi youth, I already know the horrible realities that Bangladeshi people face back home as a result of the climate Crisis. And now essential composting sites run by my neighborhood, practically in my own backyard, are now on the verge of being shut down, and I refuse to see that happen. Evicting composting means increased greenhouse gas and pollution from all compostable waste (Food scraps and organics make up one third of our trash) that are just being dumped into landfills. And who is going to be affected the most? Low income, black , and brown communities. In the middle of a pandemic, where people are already vulnerable to health issues, evicting composting is a dangerous thing to do. It's not only just a waste of the public funds invested to make these sites (and a waste of the City residential and school organics collection, and other DSNY services designed to reduce sending waste to landfills), but it tells these frontline communities that the city does not care about them. If the city cares about Black, brown, and low income communities, if the city cares about its youth, City Council MUST continue funding composting and resume it in ALL schools city wide (especially public housing and BIPOC communities that were excluded). Now is your chance to show us you are on our side.

I was shocked to see the LES Ecology Center report that two compost sites, one in Queens and one in Manhattan, are being slated for closure in 2021.

This is a sad state of affairs. The compost which has been collected privately after the city stopped their program earlier this year helps keep methane out of the atmosphere. Methane is a far worse gas than CO<sub>2</sub> and contributes badly to the greenhouse effect heating the planet and destroying climate equilibrium.

No matter what circumstances are involved in evicting this non-profit it is essential to the survival of coastal cities to mitigate climate change and the compost programs must be given sufficient facilities to proceed whether in the park or elsewhere. Devoted compost scrap givers such as myself and many friends rely on this non-profit, as the City program is unreliable due to budgetary constraints.

Thank you for your attention to this issue.

Rebeca V. Taub  
345 8TH Ave.  
NYC, NY 10001

12/17/2020

Community led composting is so important to me. We are working so hard as a community to do our part to reduce food waste and turn it into a force for something good. I do not have the ability to compost in my home and having access to a community resource makes this simple act possible.

Composting reduces the amount of materials that unnecessarily get sent to landfills. It also improves soil quality, and this is one of the huge areas of opportunity for us to have a positive impact on the climate and planet. Tremendous amounts of research are coming out of the Rodale Institute in addition to other research centers. If we start taking better care of our soil, we can sequester green house gases and reduce the pollution in our air.

Everyone needs to do their part and having access to such a simple act as a compost center is a way for a community to come together and contribute in such a positive way. Please do not take this away from us. It is too important for our health and the planet. Thank you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Rebecca', with a long, sweeping horizontal line extending to the right.

Rebecca Dengrove

Astoria, NY 11103

## Save Big Reuse and LES Ecology Center

Composting belongs in our community. Composting belongs in my family life.

I go to the Union Square drop-off site at least twice a week. My small freezer can only hold my family's food scraps for a day or two before I need to head to the compost bins. Since my children were born I have committed to this lifestyle of dropping off our food scraps and prioritize it daily. I have continued to do so safely during the pandemic. My children watch me pack up our garbage and walk it over to the drop-off bins (even this week on the brink of the snowstorm, the last thing I had to do before the snow arrived, was drop off compost). They know the volunteers who work there and they understand that our trash has the power to help the earth.

My children do not know a world where organic materials go to the landfill. It is confusing to them why someone would not make use of their food scraps. They understand the value in what we did not use. They are 6 and 3 years old. They know that our food scraps can give back, to our community gardens and to the earth. Without a proper curbside composting program, we would be forced to return to throwing food scraps in the trash. This is not where they belong and it would be devastating to our family to do so. Let's all work to keep organic waste out of the landfill.

Composting allows our family to be of service to our community. My children thrive on this sense of community and duty to others and to our planet. It is an actionable item you would be taking away from them and our entire family. They will not understand the lease agreements or the space management issues. They will only know the disappointment and that will be your legacy. Please don't take this away from our community - from our family.

Your initial support of these programs and commitment to zero waste were what have allowed us to engage in programs like this. Let's keep it going! Composting supports the city's goals. **You can be the leaders who stand behind your environmental plans.** You have the power to allow these programs to remain in place and find a way to make it work. It only does good.

Let's make things work by renewing the Big Reuse's license agreement to continue operating at the current site, find a temporary space for LESEC to continue to compost during the construction and ensure it has a place in the new plans for East River park. Please be flexible and change your current plans, change the deals made and leases signed months ago. Things can evolve from then. There is no legal reason to make these changes to the current sites.

These sites are critical for all community composting. They only do good! **Allow these existing and successful programs to continue.** You have the power to renew the license agreements for community composting sites. Please save the Big Reuse and LES Ecology Center. We are counting on you!

Sincerely,  
Rebecca Loweth

12/20/2020

City Council Members:

It is well-documented (if not always well-recognized throughout our country) that climate change poses the largest and most terrifying existential threat to our world and way of life, followed, perhaps, by the peril of nuclear warfare. While we as private citizens generally cannot have an impact on the latter issue, we do have the ability from within our communities to effect change regarding the former. The Red Hook compost site is an example of a critical effort to do so. Through education initiatives regarding the benefits of and technical methodologies involved in composting, broad inclusion and acceptance of every person, and innovative programming, the site has demonstrated that it is an essential entity within the Red Hook—and wider Brooklyn and New York City—communities.

I have personally witnessed the dedication of this extraordinary group of people, who welcome volunteers and visitors with a shovel and open arms (or, rather, a signature compost elbow bump initiated by the beloved David Buckel to address the challenges of properly greeting someone with hands covered in materials at various stages of the decomposing process). This is a vital component of the Red Hook compost site: Within the network of city-funded composting programs, there is a need for organizations that embrace the values of diversity and inclusion. These principles are central to the mission in Red Hook and critical to the equitable growth of the surrounding area, both environmentally and culturally.

To conclude, I would like to express my profound belief that community compost sites are essential to the fabric and well-being of this city as we continue to work toward a cleaner, more inclusive society. To lose the Red Hook compost site permanently would be hugely detrimental to the Borough of Brooklyn and its citizens. I implore the Council to take this account into consideration and save the Red Hook compost site.

Regards,

Rebecca Supple  
Brooklyn Resident

December 18, 2020

To the members of Committee on Sanitation and Solid Waste Management, Committee on Parks and Recreation, Commissioner Mitchell Silver, and Mayor de Blasio,

My name is Renee Pappous, and I am an Astoria resident in District 22. I am testifying as a community composter, a volunteer for the microhauler Astoria Pug, and concerned citizen of New York City.

My first roommates in Astoria were responsible for sorting and preparing our building's trash for collection. Watching my roommates spend hours wading through the building's refuse was frustrating and troubling. The task was unpleasant, to say the least, and it highlighted to me all the hours and resources we spend just to send our discarded items to rot outside the city.

I was determined to find a way to alleviate this burden on my roommates. Luckily, I soon learned about Big Reuse and their drop off sites in Astoria. The sites were convenient and accessible. Moreover, the literature on their website taught me how and why composting is a necessary alternative to sending scraps to landfills. I learned that composting promotes a circular economy, safeguards frontline communities that neighbor transfer stations and landfills, creates green jobs, and mitigates climate change. How could I not do drop off scraps every week when the stakes are so high, and Big Reuse made it so easy for an average citizen like me to contribute?

For these reasons and many others, I was devastated when Mayor de Blasio slashed the community composting budget. I am even more devastated to learn the Commissioner of the Parks Department does not support Big Reuse's efforts, especially knowing that the Parks Department benefits from Big Reuse's finished compost. Please let us work together to find a way to allow Big Reuse to operate on its Queensbridge site. Our current and future neighbors depend on it.

Thank you,

Renee Pappous

Astoria, NY

Good afternoon, my name is Renee Crowley, Deputy Director at the LES Ecology Center. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to share a testimony in support of community composting.

To get straight to the point:

- Community compost programs belong on NYC parkland.
- The City needs to renew Big Reuse's license agreement to continue operating at its Queensbridge Site.
- The City needs to find a temporary space for LESEC to continue its compost program during the East Side Coastal Resiliency construction AND to ensure that the compost yard is incorporated into the reconstruction plans for East River Park.

While the compost programs operated by Big Reuse and LES Ecology Center are critical components to the City's compost network, their work and goals go beyond just that. Their programs are also driven by missions in equity and providing greater access to parkland (all goals of the Parks Department too!).

These programs use the process of composting as a way to open up the doors of underutilized park spaces to engage communities in their local ecology and natural resources. Through weekly volunteer opportunities NYers are welcomed to these sites to participate in compost recreation. Volunteers have told us that these activities provide a great physical work out, they get to meet their neighbors and they feel a stronger connection to their parkland. What more could you ask for in a public program on parkland!

These compost programs also show people how parkland can be creatively utilized for sustainability initiatives. As NYC strives to be more green and environmentally friendly, these sites are motivating anchors in their local communities and demonstrate what sustainability looks like. These are community-based programs and should not be removed from the communities that rely on these programs and services.

Sustainability programs like this should not be hidden away and removed from communities where people live and recreate. They should not be tucked away in industrial corners of the city. They should be located in highly visible locations such as parks where people can learn about the sustainability of compost.

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

I ask that the City commit to hosting these programs on parkland and renew a long term license agreement for Big Reuse and to incorporate the compost yard into the ESCR project and the long term vision for East River Park.

Thank you,  
Renee Crowley

Composting is a necessity, especially since NYC has declared we are in an environmental crisis. "In declaring a climate emergency, a government admits that climate change (or global warming) exists and that the measures taken up to this point are not enough to limit the changes brought by it." So why threaten to disrupt one of the largest composting networks in the world and leave everyone wondering how to manage millions of pounds of waste by themselves? Every community deserves somewhere to learn how to manage food waste. Not everyone has the space, experience, and ability to

compost alone. Community composting is essential and volunteers should be praised for the effort they go through to reduce their harm on mother nature. Mandate compost now!

Thanks to the LES, my wife and I have been composting for a number of years now.

Before we composted, we put out garbage two or even three times a week. Now we put out garbage once a week, if that much.

Rodents can no longer find much food in our garbage.

Our waste no longer produces methane in a landfill or carbon dioxide when burned. Instead it becomes invaluable topsoil that stores carbon in the soil.

We and so many in our community treasure the opportunity to carry our compost to the Union Square Market, gladly putting in the effort for our common environment. There are always so many people there at any time who are doing the right thing for our city and our planet. Our voluntary participation in this civic responsibility with our neighbors is the essence of community and provides us all hope in these difficult times.

It is incomprehensible that the city's Parks Department would be so lacking in environmental awareness as to undermine this vital activity.

Giving away our public parks to private concerns like Shakeshack while denying the community such a productive resource is craven.

Clearly the mayor and the parks commissioner are making a grave mistake that will define their legacy.

There is still time to stop this madness.

Please.

Richard Feist

As a community composter, I am terribly disappointed to hear that Parks has not renewed the licenses for longstanding community compost sites operated by Big Reuse (in Queens) and the Lower East Side Ecology Center (in Manhattan) have not been renewed by the Parks department.

Both of these sites have become important community assets and provide valuable ecological and quality of life benefits. Volunteers and food scrap donors get the benefits of exercise, education, and community involvement, while the product can go back to our parks and green spaces as rich organic fertilizer. The city gets the benefit of reduced solid waste to landfills (and the accompanying reductions in garbage truck traffic) and lowered carbon emissions.

There is no good reason to evict longstanding community organizations from small parcels of City land and no alternative use for these properties has been discussed that would outweigh the advantages of the current tenants.

Now more than ever, our green spaces must be places where we can learn about and practice sustainability.

I urge you to immediately renew the longstanding license for these sites.

Robert Coover

12/16/20

Testimony of Robin Barton, private citizen, advocate for Community Composting

**I am writing to implore that the Parks Department renew the license agreements for:**

- BIG REUSE'S QUEENSBRIDGE COMMUNITY COMPOSTING SITE
- LES ECOLOGY CENTER'S COMPOSTING IN EAST RIVER PARK.

These are 2 exemplary pillars of community composters in NYC and should be rewarded, rather than being evicted, for their enormous accomplishments, for the communities and for climate change, and more.

The food scrap drop-off sites are visited by a continual stream of people that are dedicated to diverting their food waste from landfills - that are many gas-guzzling miles away, overflowing, create methane, and many more injustices to people and the earth.

All of us are so grateful that we have the opportunity to drop off our food scraps conveniently, or have picked up in some neighborhoods. The fact that this occurs in the largest, most vibrant city, makes it all the more amazing and gives everyone hope that climate change can be conquered.....with the grit and tenacity of the likes of Big Reuse and LESEC.

It will be devastating if these sites are not given a renewal of their license agreements. It will send a powerful message to all that NYC does not support Zero Waste and fighting climate change.

I know there will be other testimonies that explain about the many important benefits of compost and diverting food waste, so I will not go into it here.

Thank you

Robin Barton, 16 West 16<sup>th</sup> Street, NYC 10011 646-745-4012

I am mortified that New York City will not re sign the lease to secure the space so that Big Reuse and LES ecology center can continue their empowering community work of creating compost sites for city people helping to create soil from compost! New York City declared a Climate emergency a few years back and I demand action! When I lived in the city I used to freeze and donate my compost to important sites because I understand the value of vegetables scraps and the necessity to recycle. Without education and allowing the city people to just dump their garbage is creating a disturbing trend amongst New Yorkers. Composting is so important and a natural ecological step. Please allow them to continue use of the site! They cleaned up that site! You can use the space over for your carpark! You should be proud of big reuse and Les ecology center doing your work for you. I will personally keep fighting this and hope you renew their lease to operate under the Queensborough Bridge.  
Fellow composter and environmentalist/New Yorker

Robyn Lawley

It is appalling that New York City Parks commissioner **Mitchell Silver** did not show up to the oversight hearing to discuss the future of the two biggest composting facilities in New York City, which happen to be on Parks land. While the five-hour hearing was going on, Silver posted on his Instagram account a photograph of Central Park covered in snow. That is a stubborn, defiant, and outright offensive stance. Silver is an unfit commissioner who for months has blatantly avoided to discuss the fate of the Lower East Side Ecology Center and Big Reuse. For months he has been flanked by poorly drafted and ominous statements released by either **Crystal Howard**, NYC Parks director of media relations, or by **Sam Biederman**, NYC Parks senior adviser and assistant commissioner.

At the hearing, Biederman illogically pointed out that he supports community composting, just as long as it is not on Parks land. When he was not getting grilled by City Council members, he was too busy addressing/deleting all the #saveourcompost comments that were simultaneously going up on his personal Instagram account. So to recap, NYC Parks leadership is more concerned about likes and comments on Instagram than on addressing the need to have composting facilities in New York City.

What we need is for mayor **Bill de Blasio** to #mandatecompostNOW. He has the power to do that. Factually, he should do that and, in the process, save the two aforementioned composting facilities if he still believes in his legacy goal of zero waste to landfills by 2030. That begs a crucial set of questions: Where does de Blasio really stand in all of this? Why has he not addressed this? More importantly, how will he get involved?

My name is Rosamond Gianutsos and I am a longtime resident of Sunnyside, Queens. I wish to voice strong support for the use of NYC Park land for composting. At the present time this means renewing the leases of Big Reuse and the Lower East Side Ecology Center so they can continue composting operations here in Queens and at the LES Ecology Center in Manhattan. This matter is urgent because the city has suspended organics collections throughout the city. Moreover, it allows the Parks land to sustain itself.

Further, I urge the Parks Department to allow composting operations on Parks land which is not in use, such as the Michael Davidson property at 50<sup>th</sup> St and 39<sup>th</sup> Avenue in my neighborhood. We are in the midst of a pandemic which demands a nimble and flexible response. That property has just had its scoping hearing. We are told that it will be close to two years before it is shovel ready. Meanwhile it sits vacant. Our local group Woodside / Sunnyside Composters would like to collect organics there for composting and creating a pantry garden – food for our local food pantries. If we can relax rules in response to the pandemic and have Open Streets and Open Restaurants, why can't we have Open Parks?

To whom it may concern,

I am writing in support of saving composting programs in NYC, particularly the LES Ecology Center, the Big Reuse, and GrowNYC's composting programs.

I am a proud GrowNYC compost volunteer. I rely on the LES Ecology Center and GrowNYC's composting programs to thoughtfully dispose of my food waste in an environmentally responsible manner. These programs should not only be saved, but expanded.

Composting keeps food waste out of landfills and is instrumental to cutting down on greenhouse gasses that will impact all New Yorkers in the form of climate change contribution. It is imperative that these programs be saved and made more accessible for all New Yorkers.

Best,  
Ruth Bolster  
Hamilton Heights, Manhattan

Sent from my iPhone

From: Ruth Siekevitz  
Sent: Saturday, December 12, 2020 11:26 PM  
To: NYC Council Hearings  
Subject: Save composting

The Lower East Side Ecology Center is an organization that I've depended on.  
They are doing important things and represent our future.

Sent from my iPhone

December 18, 2020

To Whom It May Concern,

Composting should be easy and accessible.

Every Saturday, I walk to 31st street to drop off my compost in Astoria. This prevents me from dumping pounds of compostables into the trash every week. This is a necessary service. We are creating soil that is filled with nutrients and can be used around the city for a variety of purposes. We are preventing tons of useful waste from going into a landfill.

I vote for council members and representative that fight for our environment. Please make composting as easy and accessible as possible in NYC. We make recycling mandatory and easy for everyone. We can do it for composting too.

Sincerely,

Sabrina Nugent  
snugent9@gmail.com

Dear New York City Council,

NYC needs to keep the current composting sites and expand compost into every park in NYC to work towards a greener city, especially in the face of climate change.

Composting is the least we can do to curb our carbon emissions and begin to respect the land we live on.

Manhattan (previously called Mannahatta) used to have fifty five ecosystems. FIFTY FIVE! Manhattan is around 1% the size of Yellowstone, which is comprised of sixty six ecosystems. New York used to be lush, forested, and filled with wildlife prior to colonization.<sup>1</sup> Although I love New York and the complexities of the landscape it is now, it's sad to see how much of the ecosystem was covered and polluted to create this metropolis. Composting is an excellent way to tend and care for what's left of Mannahatta.

Compost programs run by LESEC and Big Reuse are vital to working towards NYC's environmental goals. Closing this sites would undermine the city's goals in zero waste, carbon emissions, and environmental justice. These sites should not be compared to the Spring Creek Lawsuit about a compost site on parkland. There is no legal standing on this comparison. In addition, Mayor DeBlasio needs to renew Big Reuse's license agreement to continue operating at its Queensbridge Site. He also needs to find a temporary space for LESEC to continue its compost program during the East Side

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/05/13/arts/design/manhattan-virtual-tour-virus.html>

Coastal Resiliency construction and to ensure that the compost yard is incorporated into the reconstruction plans for East River Park. These organizations are vital to their respective communities and need to be treated by NYC as such. Please, for the sake of the future, keep composting at NYC parks and continue to expand compost programs.

Sincerely,

Sacha Piscuskas

555 Main Street  
NY, NY, 10044

December 12, 2020

Hon. Members of New York City Council

My name is Salomon Cameo resident of Roosevelt Island for more than 30 years. I am writing today hoping that you can help stop the eviction of the Big Reuse from the Long Island City site decided by the Park Commissioner Silver to build a parking lot.

The Big Reuse has hosted the NYC Compost Project funded by NYC Sanitation. In Roosevelt Island they have made possible since 2015 to collect close to forty thousand pounds of food scraps for composting instead of going to the landfill. The product of which also benefits the trees and parks in our city.

Parks and Recreation has decided that the space used for this essential project will be used to park their vehicles. This decision is contrary to the urgent changes we have to make to start diminishing the enormous destruction we have done to our planet.

Thank you in advance for considering my request.

Sincerely,

Salomon Cameo

[scameo@hotmail.com](mailto:scameo@hotmail.com)

Good Day,

I am a scared frustrated yet hopeful resident of Brooklyn. Composting is critical for a sustainable planet. when I am asked what I do I often reply, "I compost." I am lucky to have a backyard where I can compost but I can't compost all of my food and garden waste so when the city suspended curbside pick-up I was heartbroken.

Most people don't understand that food and garden waste does not turn into compost in landfills and incinerators. Food and garden waste is a huge polluter when put in landfills or incinerated but it is a valuable resource when properly composted. Community composting sites are perfect places to educate the public about this environmental issue.

I researched and eventually found a food and garden waste drop-off. It was hard to carry all my waste to this site though this heroic weekly collection was helpful. Since some of the food and garden drop-off sites have reopened I have been volunteering at Big Reuse.

I have since seen that the work that Big Reuse does is outstanding. Also the interest and dedication of the community is incredible. People walk and cycle to the drop-off site in the rain as well as cars full of donations from their blocks. All of this support is evidence of the need for the services of Big Reuse and the LESEC.

NYC should have a serious zero waste goal. All existing composting should continue ,however that needs to be arranged and with no breaks in service. All composting programs should be restored and expanded as well as new composting projects. More composting!!!!!!

Sincerely,  
Sandye Renz

172 12th St.

Brooklyn, NY 11215

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

Good evening,

I am writing to offer my enthusiastic support of Big Reuse's western Queens compost site. They provide a valuable service, divert material from the waste stream, and convert it into a resource that can be used locally rather than shipped out to a landfill. Therefore, I urge you to please let Big Reuse continue operating.

Sincerely,  
Sarah Hardy

Hi,

My name is Sarah Brunstad and I'm a resident of Flatbush in Brooklyn. I'm writing to urge you not to evict Big Reuse and Lower East Side Ecology Center from their compost processing sites on Parks' land.

These evictions will needlessly set back community composting in NYC and waste years of investment, community building, and environmental stewardship. Last year, Big Reuse processed 888,000 tons of organic materials that would have otherwise gone to landfill and worked with over 1,000 volunteers. They also provided free compost to Parks.

NYC must lower its emissions, and cutting community composting programs demonstrates an unwillingness to face the very real, lived reality of climate change.

On top of that, it's frankly foolish and cruel to cut programs that provide jobs at this time. NYC and America as a whole needs to be *adding* jobs, not removing them. Programs like this are invaluable in so many ways.

Thank you,  
Sarah

Sarah Hill  
280 Stuyvesant Ave, #3  
Brooklyn, NY 11221

December 18, 2020

Dear Members of the Committee on Land Use,

I've been a life-long composter. I grew up composting. Before organics collection began in some neighborhoods in NYC, we brought our compost to a drop-off point (sometimes carrying smelly scraps for ten blocks and then 30 minutes on the train—that's how dedicated we are). When organics collection began in my neighborhood the same month as my birthday, I thought of it as the best gift ever!

I also teach kindergarten in a NYC public school, and have spent the last three school years teaching my students how to compost, along with information about all the benefits it provides. Now all that is throw out the window?

No other major US city shut down their organics collection. Only NYC. How embarrassing.

And now the city is trying to take away the few spaces that actually support composting. BIG Reuse and LES Ecology Center have been resources for my family for years. Please don't take away their composting sites for parking. There are plenty of sites for parking all over this city. Reinstate composting now!!!! Please. Our students and our city depend on it.

Sincerely,

Sarah Hill

12/18/20

To Whom it May Concern,

Hello.

I am writing to express my strong support for a New York City community composting program.

I find it surprising that this even needs to be said, but the benefits from composting are tremendous.

Composting:

- Reduces the amount we add to landfills (by about 1/3)
- Cuts truck traffic going to waste sites
- Reduces amount incinerated, thereby reducing the toxic chemicals released when trash is burned
- Reduces methane released when organic material decomposes in landfills

Additionally, NYC knows that composting is the right thing to do! Composting is part of the Zero-Waste goals, and part of Parks' sustainability goals.

Please keep community composting!

Sincerely,

Sarah Sheffield

147A Maspeth Ave.

Brooklyn NY 11211

# UPPER GREEN SIDE

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1136 First Avenue, Suite 7, New York, New York 10065 - 212-759-6895

December 17, 2020

**Re: The Big Reuse Roosevelt Island Compost Processing Site**

**Esteemed Committee Members:**

**How can it be that in a time when the world and our city are gripped in a health crisis, our great city has slashed funding for public sanitation services of all kinds?**

**And now, in the purported name of expanding available city park land, that Parks has moved to eject one of the few – and maybe just two – remaining NYC-situated compost processing sites from a tiny parcel of Park's property with the intention of replacing it with a parking lot?!**

**Need we remind Committee Members that Parks itself brings leaves and other of its organic waste to this Big Reuse location??**

**Or recall the grim financial lesson given Mayor Bloomberg when he cut back recycling collection, only to be confronted with the cost of transporting NYC waste to distant landfills and ever-increasing landfill tipping fees?**

**Meanwhile, since the inception of organics collection in our City, it's been our very own compost that's enriched the soil not only of NYC parklands, but community gardens, Green Streets, Bicycle Island Gardens and local gardening projects of innumerable kinds. So, let's add the expense of compost purchase and transport – for those projects/programs that can afford it – from the Home Depot/Lowe's of the world.**

**For all Commissioner Silver vaunts his dedication to compost, let him and the department he administers prove it...**

**Let Big Reuse continue to produce and distribute its superb compost to gardens and gardeners through New York City...**

**Let Big Reuse remain in place at its Roosevelt Island location!!**

**Most sincerely,**

**Sarah Woodside Gallagher**

Prospect Heights, 18 December 2020

To: Committee on Sanitation and Solid Waste Management & Committee on Parks and Recreation  
Re: Community Compost hearing

In our fight against climate change we need more composting and less cars—what sort of message does it send to close down a community composting initiative in order to build more parking space? This makes absolutely no sense, and in fact seems like a very cynical and cruel decision at worst, and clueless and tone-deaf at best. It is truly shocking to see the Parks department—of all City departments—take this indefensible stance. It is incomprehensible to me that Parks is not embracing these community composting initiatives that are clearly critical to and completely aligned with Parks' mission. I would think Parks is onboard with NYC becoming a sustainable and green city, not turning it (even further) into one big parking lot?!

I have been saving my food scraps in my freezer since the beginning of the pandemic, as my local drop-off site at the GrowNYC greenmarket at Grand Army plaza in Brooklyn closed. Since this close down in March, and following budget cuts to critical City services, no nearby drop-off sites have reopened in my area of Brooklyn. Some community initiatives have jumped into this void, but, understandably, not at all at the level and scope that was previously available. Instead, I have taken to biking my frozen food scraps over to the LES Ecology Center drop-off site at the Union Sq greenmarket in Manhattan. Yes, that is a half hour bike ride each way, and this is obviously not a practical solution for most of my Prospect Heights/Brooklyn neighbors, but just illustrates to what length some of us go to keep composting. It also shows how critical LES Ecology and Big Reuse are for NYC residents across the board. It is very important to me to do my part, by diverting food waste, being conscious about the waste I generate, and reducing my carbon footprint. Given that community organizations and committed individuals like myself go to such great length to do our part, it is extra jarring and appalling to see the complete lack of commitment and dedication on the end of the City.

Composting is an excellent way to reduce the amount of trash that ends up in landfills (and note that these very landfills disproportionately affect low-income communities), make people aware of what they consume and the waste they produce, and, critically, these community initiatives serve important educational purposes. Composting is critical in our fight against climate change. What we need is an expansion of the composting programs, more drop-off sites, and reinstatement and further roll-out of the residential curbside compost collection program, including to less affluent neighborhoods that until now have not been covered, as this is also an environmental justice issue. What we certainly do not need is killing off of community initiatives—these organizations are doing the job the City should have been doing all along. The City should cherish that.

Please rescind this decision, save the LES Ecology Center and Big Reuse sites, and instead direct more resources towards expanding NYC composting programs. Bring back food scrap collection to all boroughs, and expand residential pick-up to neighborhoods that so far have not been included.

Sincerely,  
Dr. Saskia Haegens

Dec. 21, 2020

To The New York City Council:

It boggles my mind that NYC cannot make composting a priority in the fight to reduce unnecessary landfill waste and harmful greenhouse gases. But what is infuriating is that instead of investing in a compost program that had just barely seen the light of day, the Parks Department is now actively trying to hinder organizations who are only trying to take up the slack that the City has so egregiously left behind.

It makes absolutely no sense whatsoever to evict Big Reuse from the Queensbridge Community Composting Site and LES Ecology Center's Composting Program from the East River Park. And for what?? More parking?? With all due respect, are they insane?

Please let me remind you about the Parks Department's own statements from its website:

"Our vision is to create and sustain thriving parks and public spaces for New Yorkers. Our mission is to plan resilient and sustainable parks, public spaces, and recreational amenities, build a park system for present and future generations, and care for parks and public spaces."

Since it seems unclear, please let me state for the record that obstructing and hobbling groups that prioritize environmental projects is the exact opposite of what should be happening at this moment in what is an ongoing climate catastrophe.

Thank you for your time,

Scott Eisenberg  
33-07 29th St. Apt 2  
Astoria, NY 11106

December 17, 2020

I am writing to advocate for saving Big Reuse and the Lower East Side Ecology Center's community composting sites in NYC. As a residential composter myself, it has been challenging to continue composting since the pandemic started. Many public drop-off sites closed down, residential composting collection stopped, and I had to rely on small micro haulers to perform home pick ups, and I'm so glad they are in service. As some public compost drop-off sites slowly started to reopen, I have relied on the Lower East Side Ecology Center's compost sites on a weekly basis to do my part for the city of NYC and for the environment.

Composting is the future of NYC's waste management system. So much of our food waste can be prevented from going to the landfill if public sites were to remain open. Composting will 1) Reduce the Waste Stream, 2) Cut Methane Emissions From Landfills, 3) Improve Soil Health and Lessens Erosion, 4) Conserve Water, and 5) Reduces Personal Food Waste. NYC has so much potential to be a model city to follow the footsteps of cities like San Francisco, Portland, and Seattle in its citywide composting efforts.

Composting is an environmental justice issue too. When food waste is not composted, it is often sent to incinerators located primarily in low-income communities and communities of color and burned with trash and fossil fuels. This releases particulates and toxic chemicals into local communities.

Finally, sustainably disposing of organics is critical to achieving New York City's ambitious climate and zero waste goals. Dumping food waste into landfills or incinerators instead of composting them adds to air pollution, accelerates the climate crisis, and will mean that the people who provide these critical composting services will lose their jobs.

Thank you for your consideration.

Selina Ang

I have been a resident of NYC since 2015 and have taken advantage of curbside composting whenever I can. I know that the compost processing sites at Big Reuse are an important and irreplaceable part of our city's health and future. It would be incredibly detrimental to many communities to stop this waste processing. Low-income communities are the most likely to suffer the extremely negative effects of improper waste management. So when these facilities are replaced with parking lots, it is obvious who will be most effected. Please reconsider forcing these facilities to vacate. NYC declared a climate emergency in 2019. Composting is an essential service. Make the right choice.

Seth Timothy Larson

Dear Council,

I am writing in regard to the hearing on December 19 at 11am by the Committee on Parks and Recreation and the Committee on Sanitation to review Parks' decision to evict Big Reuse and Lower East Side Ecology Center from their compost processing sites on Parks' land.

These evictions will needlessly set back community composting in NYC and waste years of investment, community building, and environmental stewardship. Last year, Big Reuse processed 888,000 tons of organic materials that would have otherwise gone to landfill and worked with over 1,000 volunteers. They provided free compost to Parks, which itself does not run their own composting operations (another issue!).

As a member of [Q Gardens](#) based in Flatbush, Brooklyn, we have been partnering with Big Reuse to help us expand our food scrap drop off hours and get browns for our own compost processing. Their loss is our loss.

Please support renewing Big Reuse's lease and reverse any evictions.

Sincerely,  
Sharlene Chiu

## Composting Sites Carry Hope For New York City

I have lived in Long Island City for over forty-five years and I am an apartment dweller with a fondness for the natural beauty of the area. I am also a former member of the Justice For All Coalition Steering Committee and a current member of the Central Astoria Local Development Coalition. Although now retired, I have spent decades as an educator, administrator and community activist paying close attention to land use decisions and the demands of the environment. I say demands because when nature speaks, it behooves us to listen. In the 70's we were clued in about the dangers of superfluous packaging that turned into litter and the plastic soda rings that strangled water fowl and marine life. In the 80's I was briefed about how the landfills were reaching capacity, and in the current decade I see how garbage is overflowing in our communities with no end in sight despite a "Zero Waste" policy in the New York city Department of Sanitation. The motto of "**Safety, Service and Sustainability**" echo an another empty promise. For the past several months, we have lamented the collective failures of a slow response to the pandemic. Decisions about composting sites may likewise make us feel regret if we do not seize the opportunity to retain an emphasis on available sites in the community to allow for the safe disposal of suitable organic waste.

When the pandemic hit almost a year ago, I was greatly distressed that my regular composting sites were shut down. At that time, although I understood the urgent crisis mode that we were in and the effort to manage valuable resources by limiting or suspending certain services, I felt compelled to write to Environmental Committee Chair Councilman Costa Constantinides and Mayor de Blasio to reverse that decision. Even before the pandemic, we had already lost the Big Reuse site in Astoria to Gowanus in Brooklyn despite my protest and that of others.

We are embarking on a new year and are anticipating a new era that signals a return to the environmental concerns that are vital to our survival, health and safety. Proper sanitation is imperative to arrive at all of those goals in the coming year. We have to prioritize our commitment to sustainable systems at the community level or risk repeating the same pattern of neglect that had us stumbling into a poorly planned and executed pandemic response. Food scraps may not seem important to you right now, but if we can be proactive in how we recycle this form of waste, such a strategic move will guarantee major environmental benefits and cost savings in terms of needing to address overflowing landfills and the cost of sending it elsewhere compared to making a deliberate choice to pull out the food scraps to lessen the total amount of refuse. Composting helps to generate new, nutrient rich soil while *not* having composting sites and a major public service campaign to invite more people to participate is governmental negligence. I believe that those of you in the City Council have a public trust and obligation to see the long-term implications of not taking action to restore and expand the composting program ensuring responsible stewardship and environmental

responsibility. If you had an illness and you knew that doing one thing could help to restore your health, not doing it means that you are not taking responsibility. I urge representatives on the City Council to tend their respective 'gardens' with the kind of commitment that acknowledges how this *one thing*: **composting sites** are an important step in securing a sustainable future in communities that are rapidly being consumed by overdevelopment and concrete jungles with accompanying environmental impacts that include population density. I look forward to your decisions and I will remain active and vocal not only with my neighbors, but when I go to the polls to select my choices for city government representatives.

Sharon M Cadiz

Hello:

After abandoning the food scrap pick up program it is essential that the city maintain the two remaining compost collection sites. Composting is the only clear personal action individuals can take to keep CO<sub>2</sub> out of the atmosphere. Please keep the Lower East side compost Center and Big Reuse in the Bronx in service.

thank you,

Sharon Waskow  
Co-director

It's Easy Being Green  
[itseasybeinggreen.uws@gmail.com](mailto:itseasybeinggreen.uws@gmail.com)  
Twitter: @IEBGreenUWS

A TriBloomingtondale Climate Change Initiative  
Neighborhood Education and Action Group

“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has.” - Margaret Mead

**From: Shira M  
Smiling Hogshead Ranch member/volunteer**

**I support the nonprofits Big Reuse and the Lower East Side Ecology Center. They provide vital environmental work for the city. Their license agreement for community compost sites must be renewed so they can remain in the Parks. Community composting belongs in Parks.**

The LES Ecology Center is a well-established community resource and education center. It only makes sense to build its site into the East Side Coastal Resiliency Project, moving it to temporary space in the interim. LES Ecology Center's license agreement should be renewed and include return to their historical site in the East River Park.

Big Reuse, which also provides a huge service and resource to the surrounding community, should be allowed to continue composting at their current site and have their license renewed.

These small compost sites are the backbone of the Sanitation Department's newly restored food scrap recycling program - a nimble and already highly popular sustainability program that dozens of City Council members and tens of thousands of committed New Yorkers pushed to fund in this year's budget.

Smiling Hogshead Ranch, a volunteer-run community garden, opened its food scrap collection, usually reserved for members only, to the wider community since the spring, when the city halted its collections. Food scrap collections have now increased to the point where our volunteer-run program and facilities are stretched to the maximum, while we try to provide, for free, the services the city already had in place, using our tax dollars.

Mayor de Blasio and Commissioner Silver's eviction of the Big Reuse and LESEC not only undermines the City Council funded compost programs, but also the City's greenhouse gas emissions, Zero Waste, and environmental justice goals.

It will result in even more recyclable organic waste being hauled to landfills and incinerators, passing through transfer stations and utilizing waste infrastructure overwhelmingly located in low-income communities and communities of color polluted by particulate matter linked to severe cases of COVID-19. These community compost sites compost the organic waste and use the compost to green New York City, repair our depleted soils and fight climate change.

Over 4,000 letters have been submitted to Parks in support of the sites in addition to letters of support including over 50 community groups. The sites are supported by their local Council Members and Borough Presidents. We urge Mayor de Blasio, Commissioner Silver and our elected officials to listen to the overwhelming public support for these programs and renew the license agreements for our community composting sites. **We should be moving forward in the fight against the climate crisis--not backward.**



Testimony to Save Big Reuse & Lower East Side Ecology Center's Community Compost Sites  
Committees on Parks and Recreation and Sanitation, Joint Oversight Hearing  
Friday, December 18, 2020 at 11am

**I support the nonprofits Big Reuse and the Lower East Side Ecology Center. They provide vital environmental work for the city. Their license agreement for community compost sites must be renewed so they can remain in the Parks. Community composting belongs in Parks.**

The LES Ecology Center site should be built into the East Side Coastal Resiliency Project and moved to temporary space in the interim. LES Ecology Center's license agreement should be renewed and include return to their historical site in the East River Park.

Big Reuse should be allowed to continue composting at their current site and have their license renewed.

These small compost sites are the backbone of the Sanitation Department's newly restored food scrap recycling program - a nimble and already highly popular sustainability program that dozens of City Council members and tens of thousands of committed New Yorkers pushed to fund in this year's budget.

Mayor de Blasio and Commissioner Silver's eviction of the sites not only undermines the City Council funded compost programs, but also the City's greenhouse gas emissions, Zero Waste, and environmental justice goals.

It will result in even more recyclable organic waste being hauled to landfills and incinerators, passing through transfer stations and utilizing waste infrastructure overwhelmingly located in low-income communities and communities of color polluted by particulate matter linked to severe cases of COVID-19. These community compost sites compost the organic waste and use the compost to green New York City, repair our depleted soils and fight climate change.

Over 4,000 letters have been submitted to Parks in support of the sites in addition to letters of support including over 50 community groups. The sites are supported by their local Council Members and Borough Presidents. We urge Mayor de Blasio, Commissioner Silver and our elected officials to listen to the overwhelming public support for these programs and renew the license agreements for our community composting sites. **We should be moving forward in the fight against the climate crisis--not backward.**

**Siddharth Ganti-Agrawal**

Good afternoon, name is *Silvia Cohn* and I am a NYC Compost Project Certified Master Composter. In this testimony, we ask that the City does not decimate its Climate Justice and Zero Waste plans and goals by eliminating opportunities for composting. *I have continued my service as a volunteer at community gardens and farms throughout the city and understand the what is needed in order to maintain this composting infrastructure.*

I implore Parks Department not to push out LES Ecology Center and Big Reuse. These sites are essential mid-large scale composting sites that are equipped to handle much more compared to community gardens. They also provide jobs as well as recreation opportunities.

NYC Parks department must continue to support and expand composting infrastructure within NYC. Please renew the license for both of these sites.

In line with the Parks departments mission, soil regeneration is essential to land stewardship.

Save our compost.

Thank you.

Silvia Cohn

(Harlem resident and Master Composter certified in 2018)

Dear New York City council members,

Every one of you is a leader for our state and its people. You are the leaders that we are counting on to protect the environment for futures of our children.

My name is Stacey Shpaner, I am a life-long resident of NYC. My address is 1744 east 17th street, Brooklyn NY 11229. Today, I am writing to you to urge you to support community composting programs. Although we are facing a global pandemic right now, we are also facing a climate crisis.

More specifically, I urge to support **Res 1510-2020**

“Resolution calling on the New York City Department of Sanitation and the Department of Parks and Recreation to continue to engage and collaborate with local communities to encourage and allow community composting to be carried out on parkland that is safe for residents.”

[https://legistar.council.nyc.gov/ViewReport.ashx?M=R&N=Master&GID=61&ID=4734465&GUID=C88C2313-CC6E-4B43-919F-2B917A2F82FD&Extra=WithText&Title=Legislation+Details+\(With+Text\)](https://legistar.council.nyc.gov/ViewReport.ashx?M=R&N=Master&GID=61&ID=4734465&GUID=C88C2313-CC6E-4B43-919F-2B917A2F82FD&Extra=WithText&Title=Legislation+Details+(With+Text))

I have included quotes and citations from three peer-reviewed scientific journal articles.

Scholars from the American Association for the Advancement of Science have published:

“The human impact on life on Earth has increased sharply since the 1970s, driven by the demands of a growing population with rising average per capita income. Nature is currently supplying more materials than ever before, but this has come at the high cost of unprecedented global declines in the extent and integrity of ecosystems, distinctness of local ecological communities, abundance and number of wild species, and the number of local domesticated varieties. Such changes reduce vital benefits that people receive from nature and threaten the quality of life of future generations. Both the benefits of an expanding economy and the costs of reducing nature’s benefits are unequally distributed. The fabric of life on which we all depend—nature and its contributions to people—is unravelling rapidly. Despite the severity of the threats and lack of enough progress in tackling them to date, opportunities exist to change future trajectories through transformative action. Such action must begin immediately, however, and address the root economic, social, and technological causes of nature’s deterioration.”

Citation:

Díaz, S., Settele, J., Brondízio, E. S., Ngo, H. T., Agard, J., Arneeth, A., ... & Garibaldi, L. A. (2019). Pervasive human-driven decline of life on Earth points to the need for transformative change. *Science*, 366(6471).

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1126/science.aax3100>

PubMed: 31831642

Published By: American Association for the Advancement of Science

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The Journal of Cleaner Production is an international, transdisciplinary journal focusing on Cleaner Production, Environmental, and Sustainability research and practice.

This is an excerpt from a published, peer reviewed article.

World cities generate approximately 1.3 billion metric tons of solid waste annually, which is almost double the amounts that were generated a decade ago (Hoornweg and Bhada Tata, 2012). Among the total solid waste generated globally, organic waste is the largest proportion with 46% (Hoornweg and Bhada-Tata, 2012). The organic waste includes food scraps, yard waste and agricultural waste.

Composting is a biological decomposition of organic waste under either aerobic or anaerobic conditions. Similarly, vermicomposting is also a biological decomposition process of organic waste but with an addition of earthworms to speed up the biodegradation process. The composts and vermicomposts produced from organic waste can be reused as nutrient-rich organic fertilizers or for land application (Wu et al., 2014). These two processes are also highly favored to manage solid waste owing to the high percentage of organic waste in the waste composition.

In fact, biological decomposition processes can be considered as a sustainable waste management strategy, which is in line with the zero waste concept. Cost-benefit analysis of composting and landfilling reveals that the former is a more attractive option based on its lower environmental and social costs (UNEP, 2011). Reusing waste could also reduce management costs due to savings from reducing the amount of organic waste that was sent to landfill (Cabanillas et al., 2013). The efficient treatment and recycling of value-added products such as compost to agricultural land can usually be shown to have lower global warming potential as compared to other disposal processes (Samolada and Zabaniotou, 2014). Life cycle assessment studies also concluded that composting is having lesser environmental impacts as compared to other organic waste disposals, such as landfilling and incineration (Saer et al., 2013).

Citation:

Lim SL, Lee LH, Wu TY, Sustainability of using composting and vermicomposting technologies for organic solid waste biotransformation: Recent overview, greenhouse gases emissions and economic analysis, Journal of Cleaner Production (2015) <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jclepro.2015.08.083>

This study evaluates the energy use, exergy demand and the main hot spots of two municipal solid waste (MSW) management scenarios including landfilling (100% landfilling) and composting-landfilling (48% composting, 50.5% landfilling, 1.5% recycling), available in Rasht, Iran.

Composting-landfilling scenario showed avoided environmental emissions in the forms of abiotic depletion, terrestrial ecotoxicity and freshwater aquatic ecotoxicity associated with the production of compost.

Moreover, global warming potential, human toxicity, marine aquatic ecotoxicity, photochemical oxidation and acidification of landfilling scenario were found to be higher than those of composting-landfilling scenario by 495%, 239%, 49%, 679% and 669%, respectively.

Transportation accounted for the highest contribution to overall environmental emissions in both of the investigated scenarios, demonstrating the importance of decreasing environmental burdens during this step. Overall, compared to landfilling scenario, the lower environmental burdens associated with composting-landfilling scenario make it more environmentally attractive.

Behrooznia, L., Sharifi, M., Alimardani, R., & Mousavi-Avval, S. H. (2018). Sustainability analysis of landfilling and composting-landfilling for municipal solid waste management in the north of Iran. *Journal of cleaner production*, 203, 1028-1038. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jclepro.2018.08.307>

Like many others in our community, I want to do my part to treat our earth with kindness. Composting our food scraps instead of just letting them go into the trash can, is an important part of that kindness.

12/19/2020

Hello,

I ask that you please renew Big Reuse's license and build the Lower East Side Ecology Center into the East Side Coastal Resiliency Project, while moving their composting site to a temporary location in the meantime. I have lived in NYC for some years now and one of the things I most treasure about living in the city is how it facilitates leading an environmentally friendly and sustainable lifestyle. I learned about the composting program in NYC after moving to my current apartment in 2017. I immediately fell in love with the program and have been composting ever since. I am so grateful to live in a city where this is possible.

I had known about compost for many years since learning about it in college as an Ecology and Natural Resources major. And while my career is not in the environmental sciences, I try to live an environmental and sustainable lifestyle to the best of my abilities. Composting is an integral part of this as it helps to turn food waste into a useful resource that can enhance the soil quality for our city's parks while reducing the amount of waste going into our landfills. Aside from this, compost allows us to reduce our carbon footprint by preventing methane gas from food waste to enter our atmosphere, hence contributing to the environmental crisis we find ourselves in.

If the city wishes to move in the direction of being environmentally responsible and leading in this movement, it would prioritize compost for waste reduction and to achieve net zero emissions in the coming years. Our actions at this moment and in the next couple of years are integral in creating a livable future for the next generations and the city itself. The importance of something like composting needs to be emphasized by New York City if they want to demonstrate any regard for this.

One thing I noticed is that my community responds to what is available to them. Since composting came back in the summer after the budget adjustments, I have seen more and more of my neighbors becoming involved with composting. This is something that we must foster and a service that can only grow if we allow it to. There is so much potential to expand composting in NYC, yet you are planning to do the opposite. You should be ashamed to even consider disabling a program that does nothing but positively influence our community.

While walking my dog the other day, I noticed that many young trees planted nearby had NYC compost added to them. It was a rare sight to see the results of something that I contributed to implemented in my neighborhood. It was a small thing that brought me joy during this arduous year. Please do not take it away from me and other New Yorkers who feel the same.

Sincerely,

Stefanie Maridueña  
150 E 7th St, Apt B7  
NY, NY 10009

My name is Stephanie Hanson, and I am a composter and community garden member in Clinton Hill, Brooklyn.

Several years ago, as a member of my apartment complex's co-op board, I advocated for our complex to participate in the city's brown bins organics collection program. Since we started participating a few years ago, it has been hugely popular in our complex of 12 buildings. When it was canceled due to budget cuts earlier this year, residents started asking whether we could start our own composting program or participate in one somewhere else in the community. Composting has been one of the most frequently raised issues among residents this year.

Unfortunately, the local community garden that I participate in does not have the capacity to accept compost from a 12-building apartment complex, nor do other community gardens in our neighborhood.

In the absence of the Sanitation Department's organics program, programs like Big Reuse and the Lower East Side Ecology Center are essential.

We know that sustainable disposal of organic matter is critical to achieving New York's ambitious climate and zero waste goals. We started changing the behavior of New Yorkers with the brown bins program, and we now risk losing years of progress by eliminating additional composting services.

I strongly encourage you to extend Big Reuse's lease on its current space for at least 2 years and to commit to find a new space for the LES Ecology Center to run its composting operations within 60 days.

## Save Community Composting

Please save the Lower East Side Ecology Center and the Big Reuse to help reinstate the community composting presence in their respective parks. These composting projects are a much better use of park space than the parking lots set to replace them.

Composting is a much better use of space than parking lots. Without it, the trash would be going straight into landfills and growing without breaking down properly, releasing harmful emissions and methane gas. Compost locations overall save space, since we are diverting trash and creating recyclable materials that can be used in parks. It's a no-brainer to save this space – destroying it is counter to the De Blasio Administration's global warming reduction goals. Composting brings rich nutrients back to farms, gardens, and the parks. All of that combines with the fact that parking lots are just increasing a place for cars – and there's already plenty of space under the bridge.

Finally, as a community composter myself, I diligently come back time and time again to bring my food scraps to a drop-off location and know that my neighbors need a composting resource as much as I do. I later work on the compost piles myself to educate myself on the full cycle of breaking down trash and bringing it back to the farms and gardens, returning the rich nutrients to then feed the community. I believe that it's an amazing educational opportunity, and it creates this incredible sense of pride for those involved. I personally use community compost in parks to feel closer to my community.

To take it one step further, the city needs to stop thinking about composting as an afterthought and think about it as a much bigger operation that should be much more strongly considered in the waste management system.

Sincerely,  
Stephanie Tzeng

Testimony to Save Big Reuse & Lower East Side Ecology Center's Community Compost Sites  
Committees on Parks and Recreation and Sanitation, Joint Oversight Hearing  
Friday, December 18, 2020 at 11am

**Name: Susan Boyle**

**Organization affiliation (if any): Crow Hill Community Association, Crown Heights  
Brooklyn**

**As a City we are looking for leadership that will take the bull by the horn and LEAD us to a better and tomorrow. Let's focus on our goals of a Zero waste and maintain what momentum we have. I support the nonprofits Big Reuse and the Lower East Side Ecology Center. They provide vital environmental work for the city. Their license agreement for community compost sites must be renewed so they can remain in the Parks. Community composting belongs in Parks.**

The LES Ecology Center site should be built into the East Side Coastal Resiliency Project and moved to temporary space in the interim. LES Ecology Center's license agreement should be renewed and include return to their historical site in the East River Park.

Big Reuse should be allowed to continue composting at their current site and have their license renewed.

These small compost sites are the backbone of the Sanitation Department's newly restored food scrap recycling program - a nimble and already highly popular sustainability program that dozens of City Council members and tens of thousands of committed New Yorkers pushed to fund in this year's budget.

Mayor de Blasio and Commissioner Silver's eviction of the sites not only undermines the City Council funded compost programs, but also the City's greenhouse gas emissions, Zero Waste, and environmental justice goals.

It will result in even more recyclable organic waste being hauled to landfills and incinerators, passing through transfer stations and utilizing waste infrastructure overwhelmingly located in low-income communities and communities of color polluted by particulate matter linked to severe cases of COVID-19. These community compost sites compost the organic waste and use the compost to green New York City, repair our depleted soils and fight climate change.

Over 4,000 letters have been submitted to Parks in support of the sites in addition to letters of support including over 50 community groups. The sites are supported by their local Council Members and Borough Presidents. We urge Mayor de Blasio, Commissioner Silver and our elected officials to listen to the overwhelming public support for these programs and renew the license agreements for our community composting sites. **We should be moving forward in the fight against the climate crisis--not backward.**

Susan Grodnick  
145 West 95<sup>th</sup> Street  
New York, NY 10025  
susan@grodnick.com

December 17, 2020

I began composting years ago just to cut down on my garbage. We had a large bin but it wasn't easy to maneuver. When the city started composting I was thrilled. Since we don't live in a multi-family building, we weren't eligible for pickups at first so I brought my compost to the farmers' markets and also to our synagogue that had large brown bins outside. Eventually the city allowed small buildings to join the program so I was one of the first. Several neighbors asked about it and followed suit. We were hoping to have a bigger impact when Covid shut us down. I was delighted when the farmers' markets started collecting again. I am willing to walk a mile (literally) to drop my compost and be assured those scraps don't end up in landfills producing methane.

Composting is the wave of the future and it makes economic sense. Please do not reduce composting. Expand, expand, expand.

Thank you.

Susan Grodnick

Staten Island's Grow to Give community, a consortium of community gardens and food pantries, would like to say that composting at the Big Reuse and the Lower East Side Ecology Center's community composting sites—at all the community sites—is key to healthy soils in our parks and gardens. Composting is an important way to reduce organic waste throughout the City.

If DSNY eliminates the two sites, even temporarily, I suspect that they will ultimately have to reinstate them later at a cost that could have been avoided.

Backing away from the composting project means backing away from the City's support for the Paris Accords!

Cancellation of composting at Grand Army Plaza in Brooklyn

To whom it may concern,

The cancellation of composting at Grand Army Center in Brooklyn has been very distressing for me. Unable to convince my co-op to provide composting bins, I've had no other way to dispose of compost in an environmentally-friendly way. The amount of compost I've had to throw into the garbage has been painful as I appreciate the immediate need to reduce waste that goes into landfill. I urge you to help restart this truly essential service for the sake of future generations.

Sincerely,  
Sylvia Lowenthal  
235 Lincoln Place, 3F  
Brooklyn NY 11217  
slowen@verizon.net

Dear City Council Members,

I write to implore you to save local composting sites across NYC. We cannot allow poor policy decisions that deprioritize environmental stewardship to prevail, such as those affecting Big Reuse and LESEC compost sites. Faced with this challenge, it is your role to step up to correct the behavior of agencies when said behavior does not reflect the public's best interest. You will be judged on your actions toward this matter today, and for generations to come. Do not abdicate your responsibility.

Respectfully,

Tal Zaken

807 Riverside Drive  
New York, NY 10032

Hello,

I'm writing as a resident of Park Slope, Brooklyn to urge you to save our compost and not evict Big Reuse from NYC park land.

New York has already cut back on compost collection bins and sites. As someone who used to compost regularly, I've been throwing food scraps into the trash since covid hit, because of these cuts. There are no dropoff sites near me anymore.

This amount of food going into the trash will create methane and contribute to global warming.

Evicting Big Reuse will cause irreparable harm to our planet, especially to the most vulnerable front line communities in our city and state.

It is a travesty that sustainability has taken a back seat during this pandemic. There is no time to waste when it comes to climate change, and if we want to be leaders in sustainability, we have to put our money where our mouth is.

I urge you to take our planet's future and the well-being of our community into account. Save Our Compost, keep Big Reuse on public lands!

Yours,

Tamar Yanay

387 14th St

Brooklyn, NY

I have been saving my compost in my freezer throughout the week for years now as a NYC resident. In the winter I have the ability to store compost outside on my terrace as well, when there's no more room in my freezer. This equates to what usually is about 15 pounds of compost that my household alone is composting each and every week with the help of places like the LES Ecology Center and Big Reuse. Being that these two facilities help divert 1.4 million tons of organic waste \*each year,\* clearly I am not unique in composting in this way. The parks department exists because of the people residing in NYC who utilize the parks. To turn our composting facilities into parking lots to make it more accommodating for parks employees to park their cars is irresponsible and ignorant. Is this seriously the only viable solution that you have come up with? Governor Cuomo signed into **LAW** the CLCPA in 2019; demolishing composting sites and forcing 1.4 million tons of organic waste into the landfill each and every year is not in line with the goals of the CLCPA. It is quite honestly a disgrace that we all have to be writing this testimony and that this decision isn't seen as clearly despicable by those in charge. Getting rid of these composting sites for a parking lot appears to be a decision that was made with very little thought or regard for the community at large. I urge you to reconsider this decision because it is impractical and immoral.

Composting is Essential!

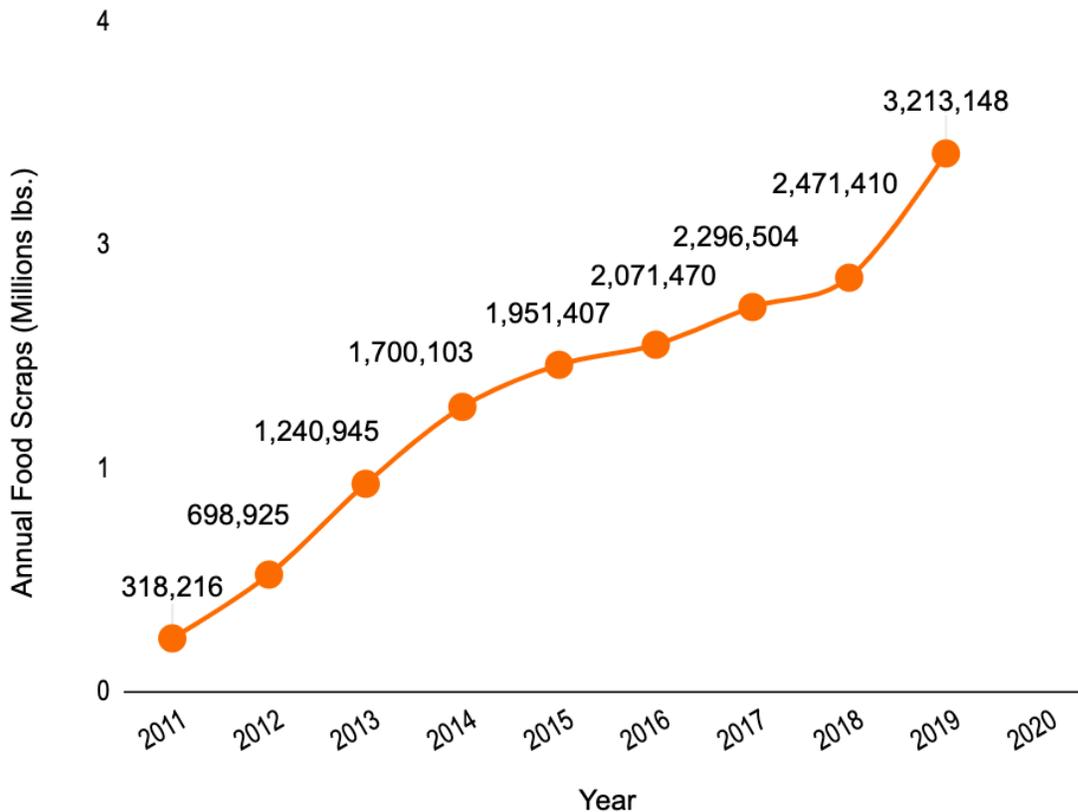
Composting food scraps reduces waste sent to land fills, and produces nutrient rich compost that is used to regenerate degraded soils! Food scraps account for an estimated one third of all garbage!

Since NYC suspended its curbside food scraps program, we have been depending on sites like QBB composting site to compost our food scraps. We need these community compost sites!

Composting has been growing very consistently every year for the past 10 years, we need these sites to continue the momentum!

## GrowNYC Compost Program History

Total Annual Food Scraps Collected, 2011-2019



To whom it may concern,

I have been a resident in New York State for thirteen years and have benefited from utilizing NYC's composting program. The city's comm km posting program diverts millions of pounds of compost from landfills each year. Sadly, since covid-19 the city chose to cut its budget and get rid of their composting program. The world is a mess but it's our responsibility to look after one another and our planet. Cutting the composting program should have been the last thing to strip the funding from. Nurture bk and Big reuse have stepped in to fill the gap that the city created by getting rid of the city's composting. We have all come together as a community during a very difficult time to do the right thing and continue to compost to protect our planet. Please reconsider being on the right side of history and don't evict big reuse or any other composting organization.

Thank you in advance.

Sincerely,

Temmi Merlis

LMSW

12/19/2020

As a very concerned New Yorker from Queens, I urge you to please not evict both LESEC and Big Reuse from their community compost sites. Please consider the great impact and reach these compost sites have spanning across all boroughs and thousands of people. We want to compost and we can't if these sites are evicted. These sites are responsible for diverting thousands of pounds organic waste from landfills. This saves resources for dsny while encouraging community involvement. The curbside program has already been terminated, which has been devastating for numerous households. This is the only option left and you are taking that away from us. This will leave us with no option and more garbage.

Not only is this a huge benefit for the environment as a whole and the city, but also these critical compost sites provide the NYC Parks Department and local communities valuable quality compost for all their parks, street trees, backyards, and houseplants alike. You are depriving dedicated New Yorkers who want to beautify and clean their city from being able to do so, and instead supporting a parking lot that can be placed next to the Big Reuse site.

If you've ever visited the site, you will see that it is not a large space. Big Reuse staff use the space very efficiently and keep it clean. Prioritizing a parking lot goes against Parks' own vision and mission "to create and sustain thriving parks and public spaces for New Yorkers and to plan resilient sustainable parks, public spaces, and recreational amenities, build a park system for present and future generations, and care for parks and public spaces." These two compost sites embody ALL of these goals. A parking lot that only serves its employees does not.

Please do not evict either site. The many workers at these sites and community members depend on them. It will also hurt employees economically and marginalized communities disproportionately during a pandemic. This is NOT the time to evict these compost sites. The city is supposed to increase equity and improve the health of the city. Do not turn your back on these values and the people who need the most help. You have a choice. Please think about the many benefits of these two amazing compost sites and the cons of shutting them down.

Thank you,

Tenzin Tashi

December 16, 2020

To the New York City Council Committee on Land Use,

I'm writing in support of the community compost projects that are at risk of losing their ability to provide our city with the waste management, community building, job creation, and education opportunities they have worked hard to provide.

Mayor De Blasio ran on a campaign of Zero Waste, with the goal of zeroing the organic waste sent to landfill by 2030. Even before the pandemic, the city was nowhere near on the path to achieving that goal. Now, with the budget cuts causing an abrupt shut-down of nearly all compost services, we are losing momentum to ever reach this goal. And now even worse—by threatening to shut down two long-standing community compost partner sites, we are moving backwards.

I'm writing to share my concern for the plans to remove BIG reuse from its site on parks department land. I believe our city's ability to move forward with its Zero Waste goals and see meeting these goals as a critical step in reducing our GHG footprint, and turning a wasteful system into a circular and regenerative one.

I'm urging the City Council to incorporate the Lower East Side Ecology Center compost site into the East Side Coastal Resiliency Project and to allow BIG Reuse to continue their compost operation at their current site with their license renewed.

Please don't disappoint the residents of NYC who dream of a more sustainable city and actually **ACHIEVING** our zero waste goals.

Thank you,  
Dana Bourne

Theo Stewart-Stand  
230 Park Place  
Brooklyn, NY 11238

Tuesday December 15, 2020

To NYC council members,

I wish to enter this letter as testimony for the Friday Dec 18, 2020 meeting for the Committee on Sanitation and Solid Waste Management.

Big Reuse and the Lower East Side Ecology Center are fixtures to the NYC community in addition to Grow NYC which lost a significant amount of its funding which I worked and volunteered for over a year

They are championing Climate Change Remediation. They together composted 3 million pounds of compost which considering the methane savings in the equivalent to removing 350,000 cars from the city on an annual basis. Throwing away organic waste contributes to methane production which is a much more toxic gas than CO<sub>2</sub>; in fact it is 30 times as potent.

NYC should create a task force to continue to expand the Compost programs throughout the city so we can as a city meet our goal of a zero waste for NYC by 2030.

This allocation of the use of the once derelict space under the 59<sup>th</sup> street bridge to a productive compost site converting it to a Parks' parking lot is ridiculous and offensive use of this space.

Commissioner Silver and Mayor Di Blasio please rethink your proposals.

Thank you,

Theo Stewart-Stand

re: Resolution calling on the New York City Department of Sanitation and the Department of Parks and Recreation to continue to engage and collaborate with local communities to encourage and allow community composting to be carried out on parkland that is safe for residents.

I used to drop my food waste in the compost bins in Socrates Sculpture park every week. I was so grateful to have a convenient compost drop-off location a few blocks from my home and diligently saved compostable food waste in the refrigerator all week. It makes me sick to throw out food scraps that could be used for valuable compost. I do hope the city will make the sensible choice to resume the program. It would be a real shame not to when citizens are willing to do their part to reduce the waste.

Theodora Hein

Hello,

My name is Thomas Joscelyn. I currently live in Astoria, and have lived in other neighborhoods throughout the city for several years. In that entire time I've been consistently composting at local food scrap drop-off points. It's been an easy, helpful way to give back to the community and our Earth while keeping my home own clean and odor-free.

Recently, when GrowNYC was made to cease their drop-off points due to the pandemic, my wife and I worked on some other solutions to get rid of our food waste in a sustainable way. None of those solutions were as easy, however, as when we discovered Astoria Pug. In the months since we've been connected with them and Big Reuse, we've become weekly volunteers and have helped out in numerous ways with bringing awareness to the benefits of composting with our community.

Not only does composting help our environment in myriad ways, it also brings people together to share their passion of a healthy, green world in which people can safely live, work, and play. The connections we've made have opened my eyes to the efforts that so many people are making to mitigate climate change.

Forcing Big Reuse to close down at its current space and demanding they move to find a new location with little assistance is an insult to the community and city at large, which benefit greatly from its services. Any and all grassroots organizations like Astoria Pug will have to start from scratch making new connections with other composting organizations, which will hamper their efforts of diverting thousands of pounds of food scraps from landfill each week.

The idea that NYC Parks is "for composting," yet is dislocating a composting facility (which they regularly utilize) to make room for a parking lot is baffling to me. Especially when there are plenty of other vacant lots nearby which could be turned into parking lots of their own. I've been to the Big Reuse site under the bridge and have seen several other parking lots nearby housing city-owned vehicles; those could easily be reorganized and made into more efficient lots. Composting is a community effort, and Big Reuse will continue to benefit the community, much more than will a parking lot for operational vehicles.

Please, save the composting facilities and find another suitable spot to make a parking lot.

Thank you,

Thomas Joscelyn  
Astoria, NY 11106

December 17, 2020

TO: NYC Council, Committee on Parks & Recreation  
NYC Council, Committee on Sanitation & SW Management

Re: Retain and Support Community Composting Programs, Particularly LESEC in East River Park & Big Reuse under the 59<sup>th</sup> St. Bridge.

Dear City Council Members:

The resolution says it succinctly – Sanitation and Parks should continue to collaborate with the referenced groups (long established leaders of composting and environmental sustainability in NYC) and, further, allow these composting programs to utilize parklands, where they provide valuable environmental education, waste management, and environmental justice solutions to our communities.

On a personal level, my convenient composting option (curbside collection) was eliminated since the COVID related Sanitation cutbacks began. Nobody knows if it will return, let alone be expanded across the City. Community based composting is an important alternative at very little cost.

I also have supported the LESEC's program in various small ways since the 1990s. This is a great organization with its feet on the ground and its vision generations into the future. They reclaimed an abandoned section of East River Park and converted it into a vibrant environmental education center that also for very little cost composted Parks' organics and food waste. The on-site nature of this operation is a fantastic feature of the Park, open to all as a learning place and an environmental service. Evicting them with no provision for a return after the floodwalls are built is shameful.

It seems that one argument is there are better things to put on parkland than composting, but what provides this combination of environmental services and education, and actually has broad community support? There are many things occupying parkland that could be relocated to improve parks environment and gain some square-footage. An example from my backyard is the Parks Department's own often-massive vehicle and service facilities, which at least in Prospect Park occupy a lot of space. Surely these service vehicles and employee spaces could be reorganized and reduced, if not potentially relocated off-site, rather than housing large trucks, etc. on parkland. Additionally, the parks have been used heavily during the pandemic as people try to maintain some activity and health. As such, they are getting worn out with a lot of wear and tear to the landscape, grass, new paths worn into the landscape, etc. Compost can be an essential element for restoring the woodlands and fields that have been heavily used. Why not "grow your own" right there in the parks?

Additionally, everybody knows that food waste is a shamefully large part of the municipal solid waste stream – around 30%. Community composting is a viable low cost alternative to reclaiming a portion of these organic materials back into the soil and supporting green spaces of all kinds in the city (gardens, parks, tree pits, etc.).

Finally, isn't it just a lack of vision and fairness to kick these organizations to the curb after all the contributions they've made? They and their like need to have a place as the City continues to move toward its Zero-Waste goals.

Thanks for your attention.

Timothy Forker  
551 4<sup>th</sup> St., #2L  
Brooklyn, NY 11215

My name is Timothy Norton I am testifying about the rezoning of the BigReuse composting site to a parking lot in Queens, NY. I think that this decision is even in contention is shameful. I began composting seven years ago at Red Hook Farm. I was fortunate to be under the tutelage of David Buckel. I was able to gain a significant understanding of composting through Mr. Buckel and volunteered at the Red hook farm until I moved to Astoria earlier this year. David Buckel took his own life by self-immolation to raise awareness for climate change. Having known this man personally, this struck a deep chord within me. It is no mystery that climate change is an issue. Composting is a small step on a local scale to better the planet. Not only does it have immediate impact on the local environment, but it is a community driven program. Evicting BigReuse would be a dagger into the heart of the community. Mitchell Silver is lauded for his commitment to bettering communities. Evicting BigReuse would seem to be antithetic to every principle he stands on. Furthermore, the lack of any alternative presented, as well as the lack of clarity and communication from Parks Department Commissioner Mitchell Silver is shameful. Aside from a generic and hollow email response, he has been ignoring his constituents on this issue. What does that serve? What does that inform the citizens of New York City? I am a teacher and a tax payer, I am a member of the community. My dealings are not a radical nor irate. I am trying to engage someone who holds a public post. Why is Mitchell Silver ignoring the very people he was hired to serve? In the generic response email from Mitchell Silver, he claimed to be an "ardent supporter of composting". Yet, there are no photos of him composting. I was at Red Hook Farms for seven years, and I never once saw him. How is closing a composting site (when there already is a city-wide shortage ) supporting composting in the least? Composting is an important issue. The space slotted for BigReuse needs to be given a permanent extension of its lease. Anything short of that, Mitchell Silver will be aligning himself with the wrong side of history. This will be looked back as an act against environmentalism. I urge you, whoever ends up reading this: Do what you can to protect this composting site.

Composting LES.

Please do not evict the LES Ecology Center and Big Reuse. Composting is a critical tool in our city's fight against. Climate change and for climate justice.

Sincerely,  
TJ Webster

Sent from my iPhone

Dear Council members,

I'm a lifetime New Yorker (born at the former St. Vincent's) and I am writing in support of keeping the city composting sites for the Big Reuse under the queensboro bridge and LES ecology in east river park. Ever since city-wide composting was cancelled most New Yorkers have had to through their food waste in the garbage. Mayor De Blasio committed to a greener New York and helping to reverse climate change, this move was short sighted and will hurt NYC as well as the planet. NY already has to ship our waste to further and further sites to dispose of it. In the wake of this, Big Reuse and LES Ecology have stepped up to fill a gap in our current system.

Once drop off sites reopened, I have been biking my compost to the drop off site at the Union Square greenmarket 2-3 times a week. I am now able to drop my food waste at the drop off site at 23rd and 8th ave. This has dramatically reduced the amount of garbage my family produces and increased our support of the local greenmarket (eating healthier and supporting our local farming community). I get my 3 year old daughter involved to show her the importance of caring about our community and where our waste goes.

I would be happy to discuss my experience or speak more on the subject.

Best,

Tracy Van Dyk

Hello! I am writing to voice support for community compost sites LESEC and Big Reuse remain on Parks land. The mission and vision of NYC parks is to create and sustain thriving parks and public spaces for New Yorkers and plan resilient and sustainable parks.

Despite the limitations from the pandemic and the repercussions of budget cuts, New Yorkers have spoken up to support composting operations. Clearly, squashing organizations that have become a lifeline for the community that has been built around composting will alienate a sizable number of constituents.

Composting has been a personal theme from a young age. I have built and maintained many types of compost systems throughout my life. I have found these personal projects to be rewarding and always educational. As a gardener, I see composting as an underutilized tool in the urban setting. Saving organic material from the waste stream and enriching our communities in the process is a dream come true. The food scrap drop offs linked to Big Reuse make composting accessible on a community level but without a site for operations like in Queens Bridge that would all change.

Composting within the city makes so much sense.

As a direct link to natural cycles, that may remain hidden in the urban environment, participation in a compost program fosters an active awareness of personal choices in such a positive way. Helping others to see composting as an option for curbing their personal negative impact and actually flipping it to a **positive** is a thrilling possibility. I believe composting can be a touchstone that gives a sense of personal investment and commitment that brings neighbors together.

Please protect these composting sites on Parks land and mandate composting as part of Parks mission for the betterment of the community, the City and our Earth.

Uriah Crane

## Lower East Side Ecology

The lower East Side Ecology is under appreciated and undervalued; I have donated over 30 electronic items in just 4 years of learning of the lower Eastside Ecology. There needs to be an expansion notca reduction in reducing or electronic footprint. We need the East River Park and Big Reuse's Queensbridge Community Composting Site Center's. Parks to stay.

Vanessa Pettiford

Testimony for support of community composting in East River Park and Queensbridge Park  
Vanessa Ventola  
December 12, 2020

My name is Vanessa Ventola and I am testifying in support of community composting by BIG Reuse under the Queensboro Bridge and the Lower East Side Ecology Center in East River Park. **These compost sites are essential public green spaces that provide recreational and educational opportunities, reduce waste, build community, and change the minds of New Yorkers about their impact on the environment and each other.**

I have had the honor of working with these organizations and have witnessed firsthand their commitment to their communities, the environment, and Parks. Others will testify more thoroughly to how these two organizations have directly supported Parks. LES Ecology Center has long acted as stewards to East River Park, using their volunteer stewardship program to pick up the slack for maintenance of East River Park. They also use their locally made compost to enrich the soils. BIG Reuse transformed the space under the Queensboro Bridge, including considerable clean up and paving of the area. Both sites offer tours, volunteer days, and other types of public programs, and both make compost available to Parks, community gardens, school gardens, and other public green spaces at no cost.

**Have you had the opportunity to visit these spaces? Have you met the staff, the visitors, received a tour, attended a workshop, or participated in a volunteer day? I encourage everyone involved in making or influencing this important decision to take a few hours to make a trip to each space, and see for yourself, how welcoming, open, and engaging these spaces are.** There will always be logistical complications with partnering between agencies and organizations on City land. The PUBLIC does not care whose land is whose. What the public has made clear is that these are valued operational and educational facilities that we would like to see incorporated in all future iterations of these areas. Regarding Big Reuse – how can Parks Department state that Big Reuse must be relocated to allow for development of publicly accessible green space. Big Reuse IS publicly accessible green space.

I began composting in 2011 during an internship with the Western Queens Compost Initiative operating out of Big Reuse's original location. I also worked for 4 years with the NYC Compost Project hosted by the LES Ecology Center and by Queens Botanical Garden. During my time there, I met with thousands of New Yorkers, each year, and helped to change minds and attitudes environmental stewardship. The compost sites of Big Reuse and LES Ecology Center are the backbones of such programs. They are home to volunteer programs, open house NYC events, tours, educational experiences, and inquiry and curiosity. As we all know, relocation is not simple, and may not be possible. Eviction may be a death sentence for these programs.

Cities around the country look to NYC for inspiration and advice. By hindering community composting we would send a message that we do not take innovative city planning seriously. It also highlights an ineptitude to think critically, work collaboratively, and move towards a more sustainable model of functioning.

Thank you for your time and attention to my testimony. I hope you recognize the great sincerity and love that supporters of these organizations and compost sites have shared in their testimony. The public has spoken and that is what is most important in making these decisions.

Thank you. Vanessa Ventola

**Committee on Sanitation & Solid Waste Management (Jointly with the Committee on Parks  
& Recreation)**

**Friday December 18th, 2020**

**11:00am**

**Testimony of Victoria Kraese, citizen of Astoria**

New York City Council,

My name is Victoria Kraese, and I have been a citizen of Astoria, Queens for nearly three years now. I have grown to deeply love this neighborhood and the community I have found within it. It is buzzing with kind, compassionate, hardworking, and selfless people such as those who run Big Reuse and Astoria Pug on their own accord.

Groups like these have taught me so much about the importance of composting and what good taking the extra steps to compost can do for our community and for our planet. I compost because I feel I am responsible for doing what I can to work towards a greener way of life. This planet has done so much for me, the least I can do is put in the extra effort of bringing my biodegradables to the appropriate site.

Now that we are on the verge of losing said site, I feel it is my duty as a citizen to speak up and defend it. I believe you should be so proud of your constituents who go out of their way to make things like composting work. The city has defunded composting and yet this hasn't stopped our community from putting in the work. Regular citizens are working with what they've got to contribute to our community, and I think one of the distasteful things you could do would be to take away such a crucial part of the operation. The site helps us do so much good, please consider working with us and not against us to continue improving our beautiful community.

Victoria Kraese

December 20, 2020

Dear Mayor de Blasio and Members of the Council:

The average NYC household wastes about 8.4 lbs of food per week. That means nearly 3.9 million tons of food are sent to rot in a landfill adding to the deadly cocktail of greenhouse gases that choke our city. Composting drastically cuts methane emissions from landfills, improves soil health, conserves water, and reduces personal waste overall. While our food scraps send dangerous levels of methane and carbon dioxide into the atmosphere, more and more New Yorkers face growing food insecurity. The imbalance is immoral, but composting is one small step that helps offset that imbalance and allows ordinary New Yorkers to contribute to building a cleaner and healthier City.

When funding was cut for curbside and community compost collection, New Yorkers did what we always do. We came together as neighbors and we created volunteer-based systems. Our neighbors believe in the promise of compost and that promise has driven our work for months. I have personally stood in the rain chopping food scraps with a shovel and gone door to door gathering waste for the pile. The work is not glamorous, it's labor-intensive and time-consuming but it's important, and my community knows that. This work would not be possible without the support of larger community compost sites like those at The Lower East Side Ecology Center and the site operated by BigReuse under the Queensboro Bridge. These sites are essential and a crucial piece of our City's parks and green space. It is unconscionable to see these major players in the fight against climate change face potential eviction by a City that claims to support Green New Deal efforts.

Big Reuse has composted under the Queensboro Bridge for ten years. Not only is the site essential for community compost, but it works symbiotically with the Parks Department by composting Parks leaf and yard waste—the compost generated by Big Reuse helps nourish our public green space. Removing organizations like Big Reuse from Parks land to create a parking lot or paved space is not in alignment with the City's calls for immediate action and emergency mobilization to address climate change. Evicting community compost is the exact opposite of climate mobilization.

The Parks Department controls over 30,000 acres and can easily provide space for community composting efforts. I ask that the Parks Department and the Commissioner find a way to accommodate groups like the Lower East Side Ecology Center and Big Reuse's operations in City parklands. Composting is everyone's responsibility and New York City cannot claim to be a leader in the global fight against climate change without making space for community compost.

Respectfully,



Victoria Morrell  
Astoria, Queens Resident  
CUNY School of Law, Class of 2021

NYC Council Hearing

Committee on Sanitation and Solid Waste Management – Friday 12/18/20 11am

**Testimony in support of Big Reuse, the Lower East Side Ecology Center and Red Hook Compost site**

My name is Vincent Leon. I live in Brooklyn and I have been a volunteer at the Red Hook Compost site for almost two years. I am writing to ask NYC Parks to reconsider their decision not to allow composting on their land. After the budget cuts earlier this year, some composting programs were allowed to restart in the summer and now the Parks decision threatens what is now the last hope of communities across the City to continue composting.

I was born in Paris, France. I lived there for about 30 years. I also lived in other cities in Europe and nowhere did I witness such a strong composting culture as here in New York. The brown bin collection system was simply outstanding. It is now gone, at least temporarily and NYC Parks has the opportunity to save what is left of composting in the City by allowing Big Reuse, the Lower East Side Ecology Center and Red Hook Compost site to maintain their operations.

New Yorkers like to compost, they see how much of the trash they generate every day is food waste and they do not want it to end in the landfill. The compost programs supported by NYC Parks brought together hundreds of volunteers from all backgrounds, all of them excited to do something for the planet and the local communities. There are not enough words to describe the benefits of the composting programs supported by NYC Parks for all and the greater good.

NYC Parks' mission is "to plan resilient and sustainable parks, public spaces, and recreational amenities, build a park system for present and future generations, and care for parks and public spaces". I certainly can see how composting can help planning sustainable parks for present and future generations. I think that evicting the compost programs from NYC Parks land would be contrary to this vision and statement. So I am asking respectfully NYC Parks to stand behind its mission and allow Big Reuse, the Lower East Side Ecology Center and Red Hook Compost site to maintain their compost programs on NYC Parks land.

Vincent Leon

561A Halsey St

BROOKLYN NY 11233

404-229-1787

From: Harlem Zero Waste Initiative  
To: The New York City Council  
Re: Hearing by Sanitation Committee and Parks & Recreation Committee on December 18, 2020

Sunday December 20, 2020

**Testimony in support of the LES Ecology Center & Big Reuse  
remaining on Parks land in order to provide essential composting services**

Hello,

My name is Virginia Little - I am a dedicated composter and 15-year resident of Harlem.

In early 2020, I founded the Harlem Zero Waste Initiative on Instagram in order to facilitate waste reduction initiatives in my neighborhood, including composting.

When the pandemic struck, many dedicated composters such as myself felt disheartened as the city chose to suspend DSNY organics collection, shut down food scraps drop-off points at Greenmarkets, while also slash funding to community composting sites like the LES Ecology Center & Big Reuse.

Composting is a viscerally empowering act of personal responsibility. Many New Yorkers feel it is their responsibility to avoid trucking organic matter to be burned in incinerators or release methane in an out-of-state landfill.

Small, volunteer-led, community gardens (including several in Harlem) stepped up where the city failed, in order to process as much organic matter as they could in order to stay true to this responsibility.

... But, there is only so much processing these small gardens can handle.

This city desperately needs (at a bare minimum) the processing capacity of larger sites like the LES Ecology Center, Big Reuse, Red Hook Community Garden, and Earth Matter on Governors Island.

To evict these beloved community groups from Parks land for such a short-sighted, lazy, and backwards rationale is an embarrassment to New York City's reputation as a progressive metropolis and a complete affront to the city's own purported 0x30 Zero Waste goals.

This mayor, this council, and relevant department commissioners need to clearly and swiftly put an end to the threat of eviction for these composting sites.

It can't be said enough: this issue is an embarrassment and it is eroding the faith of your constituents.

Sincerely,

Virginia Little  
Harlem Zero Waste Initiative  
[harlem.zerowaste@gmail.com](mailto:harlem.zerowaste@gmail.com)  
<https://www.instagram.com/harlem.zerowaste.initiative/>

From: waxenbergd  
Date: Thursday, December 17, 2020  
Subject: Saving NYC Composting Sites  
To: hearing

Dear City Council Members,

I am writing to urge you to preserve our City's collection and composting sites!

I have been dropping off my food scraps and purchasing prepared compost, potting soil, and worm castings at the Union Square Greenmarket every week for 29 years. My son also volunteered for several years as a High School student at the Lower East Side Ecology Center. He was involved in education programming and ground works.

This Center and their various programs has been vital to our community. Once you begin to collect food scraps, you can no longer turn an unseeing eye to the astonishing amount that food preparation adds to our City's waste stream. We were reminded of this during the beginning of the pandemic, when collection sites were closed for safety concerns. So much additional garbage!!

It is such a valuable project to break down and repurpose food waste into compost to replenish our depleted City Parks, gardens, and window boxes without adding further chemicals into our environment. Composting is also an environmental/social justice issue, as incinerators are built in lower income neighborhoods with less political clout

waxenbergd@aol.com

Hello,

I'm writing in support of community composting. I volunteer and drop compost off at Q Gardens in Brooklyn. Half of the scraps we collect at Q Gardens are processed by Big Reuse.

Compost is not only incredibly important in the fight against climate change by reducing the methane output of NYC, but it's also a huge community builder. When neighbors come together to work to solve a problem that affects us all, that is the spirit of New York City.

Please consider all of the good that comes from the Queensbridge Big Reuse site and the LES Ecology Center and all the good that will come from protecting those sites for the future.

Best,  
Whitney

--

Whitney Grace Krause  
She/ Her  
Event & Project Manager  
916.601.4814



Testimony to Save Big Reuse & Lower East Side Ecology Center's Community Compost Sites  
Committees on Parks and Recreation and Sanitation, Joint Oversight Hearing  
Friday, December 18, 2020 at 11am

**Name:** Yasmine Awais, Bronx, NY

**I support the nonprofits Big Reuse and the Lower East Side Ecology Center. They provide vital environmental work for the city. Their license agreement for community compost sites must be renewed so they can remain in the Parks. Community composting belongs in Parks. This is especially important since residential composting has been suspended.**

The LES Ecology Center site should be built into the East Side Coastal Resiliency Project and moved to temporary space in the interim. LES Ecology Center's license agreement should be renewed and include return to their historical site in the East River Park.

Big Reuse should be allowed to continue composting at their current site and have their license renewed.

These small compost sites are the backbone of the Sanitation Department's newly restored food scrap recycling program - a nimble and already highly popular sustainability program that dozens of City Council members and tens of thousands of committed New Yorkers pushed to fund in this year's budget.

Mayor de Blasio and Commissioner Silver's eviction of the sites not only undermines the City Council funded compost programs, but also the City's greenhouse gas emissions, Zero Waste, and environmental justice goals.

It will result in even more recyclable organic waste being hauled to landfills and incinerators, passing through transfer stations and utilizing waste infrastructure overwhelmingly located in low-income communities and communities of color polluted by particulate matter linked to severe cases of COVID-19. These community compost sites compost the organic waste and use the compost to green New York City, repair our depleted soils and fight climate change.

Over 4,000 letters have been submitted to Parks in support of the sites in addition to letters of support including over 50 community groups. The sites are supported by their local Council Members and Borough Presidents. We urge Mayor de Blasio, Commissioner Silver and our elected officials to listen to the overwhelming public support for these programs and renew the license agreements for our community composting sites. **We should be moving forward in the fight against the climate crisis--not backward.**

NYC needs to EXPAND access to composting to create a sustainable future and to meet its commitments to the Paris Agreement. I regularly bring my organic waste to community composting sites in McGolrick Park, McCarren Park and Domino Park.

I am writing in support of the Parks Department renewing their license agreement for the Community Composting Site operated by Big Reuse under the Queensboro Bridge. Please allow Big Reuse to continue operating the community composting site that Big Reuse, DSNY and many volunteers worked many years to create. Do not evict them on December 31, 2020. It's shameful that eviction was even considered.

The Big Reuse community composting site is essential to the City's efforts to provide composting in the face of cancellation of curbside composting. The site is essential to establish food scrap drop-offs in every community district and compost locally to improve soil in parks, community gardens, and street trees. The Big Reuse community composting site composts Parks leaf and yard waste in addition to residential food scraps. The compost is given to Parks, GreenThumb and over 200 community groups. The site is a logical and appropriate use of Parks land since it composts Parks leaf and yard waste and creates compost for Park's mission to care for NYC's public green space. Big Reuse has composted under the Queensboro Bridge for a decade. The community composting site is an internationally recognized model site.

Parks controls over 30,000 acres and could easily provide space for community composting efforts. Parks controls extensive additional space under the Queensboro Bridge that could be used for claimed operational needs instead of the composting site. It could work with other City agencies to find additional space.

When Parks sends organics to landfills, it turns into methane, a powerful greenhouse gas. Composting locally reduces transportation and methane emissions and sequesters carbon dioxide with compost application. Composting locally means we are not polluting other communities - we are greening our community by improving the urban forest, local food production, green spaces for schools and neighborhoods. I ask that Parks support this effort by allowing Big Reuse to remain and renew the license agreement.

Zach Youngerman  
Maujer St  
Brooklyn, NY 11206

## Composting Means Everything to Me

We have faced a lot this year. Staying sane takes all I've got. Not being able to compost really made this difficult for me. When it returned, my sanity returned. I am a New York City public school teacher. Teaching remotely, my best lesson this year was a videotape of me taking a grocery cart full of garbage to be turned into soil. The children planted seeds that thrived in this soil to experience first hand how real healthy food is grown. Composting is irreplaceable. Please do not give up on our children, our future. Thank you for your consideration.

[fugazzy@nyc.rr.com](mailto:fugazzy@nyc.rr.com)