

The City of New York Department of Sanitation



Testimony of Kathryn Garcia, Commissioner for the New York City Department of Sanitation

Oversight Hearing on the Department of Sanitation's Residential Organics Pilot Collection Program before the New York City Council Committee on Sanitation

Monday, April 28, 2014 10:00 A.M. City Hall – Council Chambers

Good morning Chair Reynoso and members of the Committee on Sanitation and Solid Waste Management. I am Kathryn Garcia, Commissioner for the New York City Department of Sanitation. With me today is Ron Gonen, Deputy Commissioner for Sustainability and Recycling for the Department.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify on the status of the Department's pilot organics collection program authorized by Local Law 77 of 2013. Our organics pilot is an important step in studying the feasibility of organics collection in the City, and I am pleased to share with you the status of our program to date. Before I begin, the Department would like to thank Speaker Mark-Viverito, Chair Reynoso, the Department of Education, and the participating residents and school staff for all of their continuing support of our organics programs. I will make a brief opening statement, after which I will be happy to answer your questions.

Opening Remarks

The Department is committed to a long-term goal of diverting 75% of solid waste from landfills by 2030, in addition to the short-term goal of doubling the City's recycling rate to 30% over the next five years. Organic waste, including food scraps, soiled paper and leaf and yard trimmings, comprising roughly 37% of the refuse collected by the Department, represents the largest portion of New York City's waste stream. Our ambitious goals cannot be achieved without a robust organic waste diversion program.

I would like to acknowledge that many New Yorkers have been composting organic waste on their own initiative for many years. There are many residents across the City who live in single family homes and have compost bins in their backyards. The Department also funds successful organics drop-off programs at Greenmarkets and other locations throughout the City. We also fund and manage the NYC Compost Project, which provides compost education and outreach to tens of thousands of New York City residents annually and provides technical assistance to over two hundred (200) community composting sites that are utilized by local communities. The public interest and success of these smaller, community-based programs are important signals to the Department that a citywide curbside organics program would be well received by the public and, over time, could help us achieve our landfill diversion goals.

Before I describe to you the Department's progress in implementing our curbside organics pilot program, allow me a brief moment to touch on the economics of diverting organics from landfills. In 2013, the City spent millions of dollars exporting organic waste to landfill. Our goal is to divert that organic waste away from disposal facilities and send this material to either compost facilities where it can be converted to compost and sold, or to anaerobic digesters where it can be converted to renewable energy.

Pilot Program Overview

One year ago in Spring 2013, the Department of Sanitation launched a voluntary, pilot household organic waste collection service—providing free organics collection bins and educational materials—to 3,500 Staten Island households in Westerleigh. The results of the pilot program in this community were encouraging, thus underscoring our perception of New Yorkers' willingness to adopt this practice. When Local Law 77 was signed into law nearly six months later in September 2013, and based on the early results of the Westerleigh pilot, the Department was already putting into motion the expansion of the voluntary residential pilot program to portions of the Throgs Neck, Country Club, Silver Beach, and Edgewater Park communities in the Bronx, portions of the Windsor Terrace and Greenwood Heights communities in Brooklyn, and the Mariner's Harbor and Graniteville communities on Staten Island. By November 2013, the Department was already providing organics collection service to over 30,000 households servicing approximately 70,000 city residents.

To further meet the thresholds under Local Law 77, the Department is in the process of implementing a phased roll-out of pilot areas to reach 100,000 households serving approximately 240,000 city residents living in single family homes and small residential buildings in four boroughs -- equivalent to the entire city populations of Orlando, Florida or Madison, Wisconsin. By mid-June, additional pilot areas in portions of Glendale, Maspeth and Middle Village in Queens, and portions of Bay Ridge, Sunset Park, Park Slope, and Gowanus in Brooklyn, will be included in the residential pilot program. We will also implement a final small roll-out in Fall 2014.

The Department provides outreach and education to pilot areas including meetings with elected officials, community boards, and local civic and non-profit organizations. Participating homes receive a mailer a couple weeks before the program starts, together with a door hanger reminder. About one week before collection service begins, the Department delivers to each

participating building a brown curbside organics bin and educational information, and separate, smaller kitchen containers for collecting the kitchen scraps generated by each household. Members of the Department's outreach team offer hands-on assistance to building managers, and our website contains helpful information for participating households as well.

Starting in the 2012-2013 school year, the Department partnered with the Department of Education to implement organics collection service to schools. In accordance with Local Law 77, the Department expanded the pilot program during the 2013-14 school year to a combined total of more than 350 schools on Staten Island, the west side of Manhattan, and a portion of Brooklyn. We also have a small number of private and religious schools participating in the program. The Department is working to maximize diversion at participating schools by collecting organic material, and mixed paper/cardboard recycling in a dual bin truck five nights per week, with refuse and metal, glass, plastic and cartons collected on the neighborhood schedule.

The school pilot has fostered a successful and growing partnership between the Department and the Department of Education. Some initial waste audits show the diversion rate more than doubling in many of the participating schools. By providing staff training, and placing clearly marked waste sorting stations for recycling, organics and "landfill" in the cafeteria, the Department and the Department of Education have provided the infrastructure to maximize diversion in school cafeterias and kitchens. After the first year of service, the participating schools increased their diversion percentage by over 100%, from 15% to over 36%. In addition, with the outreach assistance of GrowNYC's Recycling Champions program, students are learning the importance of this practice and taking these lessons home with them. By the end of 2014, we will exceed 400 participating schools and be running the service in portions of all five boroughs.

The Department is also conducting the pilot in high-rise residential buildings with ten or more units. Building managers and owners can enroll to participate, and the Department adds them as capacity on the existing truck routes allows. The Department, with the assistance of GrowNYC, has been working with building managers to get the larger buildings set up properly in order to facilitate their participation, and to provide education and 'hands-on' outreach wherever necessary. The first two high-rise buildings to participate in the program were the Helena apartment building in mid-town Manhattan, and Morningside Gardens, a large apartment complex in Morningside Heights. Nearly one year later we now have forty-three (43) multi-unit buildings currently enrolled in the high-rise residential pilot program in Manhattan and Brooklyn. In addition, the Department has over 100 other residential buildings going through the enrollment and outreach process. We will add these buildings as truck capacity allows, with some high-rise buildings serviced by our school collection trucks, and others by our residential collection trucks.

In addition, seventeen (17) city agency and institutional sites participate in the Department's organics pilot program, including Gracie Mansion in Manhattan, and two Department of Homeless Services shelters in Brooklyn. The Department of Citywide Administrative Services is in the process of implementing the program in a number of its buildings. As truck route capacity allows, the Department plans to add additional institutional sites to the program.

Since the inception of the pilot program through April 15th of this year, we've already collected more than 3,000 tons of organic material from participating households, schools and

agencies. During this same period, the Department has collected another 500 tons from green market drop-off sites serviced by the Department, and almost 3,500 tons of Christmas trees through our annual January collection program.

Benefits of Recycling Organics

I would like to highlight for you some of the positive benefits of the proper and environmentally sound collection of food waste. We believe separating organic material, in addition to fully recycling our designated recyclables, creates valuable environmental and economic opportunities for New York. Organic material that the City would be paying to have exported for disposal outside the City is instead being taken to local and regional composting facilities, thus creating local and regional green jobs. Material processed locally into compost, an organic fertilizer, is distributed to local parks and gardens, and sold to local landscapers. In addition to composting, we are also investigating opportunities for a portion of the organic material we collect to be converted into renewable energy through anaerobic digestion.

Conclusion

Although the organics collection pilot is voluntary and we're making it as easy as possible for residents and schools to participate by providing them with sufficient collection frequency and the tools free of cost, we believe there is still more work to be done to encourage residents to fully participate and to promote the positive changes of diverting organic material from traditional disposal sites so as to benefit our communities, the environment, and the City's long-term sustainability.

In accordance with the Department's sustainability strategy, it is our goal to promote and support a system of sustainable solid waste management that minimizes waste and maximizes recycling. At the center piece of the Department's plan is to increase the amount and types of material that can be accepted in our recycling programs, and to provide the infrastructure and outreach to encourage residents to fully participate. I believe the Department and this Committee can collaborate together to change the way New Yorkers look at waste overall. One of our primary goals should be to encourage the public to move away from viewing waste as a product or item requiring disposal, and instead view it as a valuable commodity or resource that can generate revenue, reduce our disposal costs, create local jobs and generate clean renewable energy. We hope that the environmental benefits of diverting waste from landfills are already clear.

In closing, I'd like to thank Chair Reynoso and the Sanitation Committee for bringing the subject of organics composting to the forefront today for public discussion and debate, and also for providing me this opportunity today to update you on the Department's program, illustrate the positive benefits of organics processing, and respond to any questions on this important initiative. The Department looks forward to working with you to accomplish the goals of this important pilot program, and on other meaningful legislative initiatives to further reduce the City's carbon footprint.

I would now be happy to answer your questions.



BOROUGH PRESIDENT GALE A. BREWER TESTIMONY TO THE NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL'S OVERSIGHT HEARING BEFORE THE COMMITTEE ON SANITATION AND SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT APRIL 28, 2014

Thank you, Chair Reynoso, for the opportunity to testify today on the City's Residential Composting Program under Local Law 77 of 2013.

When I was on the City Council, I was a co-sponsor of Local Law 77. My support for the legislation stemmed not only from my longtime belief in the need for New York City to move toward a more sustainable system of recycling coupled with waste reduction and diversion, but also from my own experience.

In February 2012, I had the privilege to work with parents from eight District 3 public schools on the Upper West Side to pilot the Food Waste Composting Program. The concept was simple: instead of throwing away organic wastes such as unfinished food into the same trash cans as plastic wrappers and Styrofoam trays, why not collect what can be composted into a separate waste receptacle? At the same time, Styrofoam trays were replaced with the biodegradable counterparts made from sugar cane fiber. The pilot was a resounding success—450 pounds of food waste was diverted from landfills per day, and in just four months, more than 2,000 Styrofoam trays were eliminated from the waste stream. This translated to an overall garbage volume reduction of 85% across the eight schools between February and June 2012. In fact, the program was so successful that the Department of Education expanded the program into 20 schools the following school year, and subsequently replicated the same model in schools throughout the City.

I would be remiss if I don't mention the true heroes behind this effort. The parents: Emily Fano, Pamela French, Lisa Maller, Jennifer Prescott, and Laura Sametz; the cafeteria staff; and the school custodians. Without them, there would be no pilot program. These are the people who arranged for composting bins to be placed inside the schools, who sort through garbage-binfuls of food scraps everyday to take out anything that would contaminate the compost, and who worked tirelessly to ensure DSNY picked up the schools' compost wastes five times a week. I strongly believe that for any school and residential composting program to be successful and sustainable, there must be behind-the-scene heroes dedicated to their respective schools and buildings. So to the Pilot Team that I worked with, thank you very much. And to committee members and the DSNY, I hope this example shows the absolute necessity of community engagement in order for composting efforts to operate smoothly throughout the City.

While I am thrilled that the City is on track to expand organic waste collection to over 400 schools by 2015 as prescribed under Local Law 77, I am concerned with the tradeoffs that have been made between daily food waste collection and metal/glass/plastic recycling collection. I understand that in order to reduce the cost of collection, DSNY has reduced metal/glass/plastic collection from three times a week to just once a week. This is true for at least the schools that participated in the 2012 pilot program. At the same time, with the expansion of acceptable plastics that can now be recycled, non-organic recyclable materials have drastically increased. Since storing these materials for a week can cause vermin problems in schools, this reduction in service has made storing recyclables especially difficult for schools that are successful recyclers, thus providing a disincentive to recycle. I am sure that was not your intent. I urge DSNY to re-examine the collection strategy and consider reinstating twice weekly metal/glass/plastic collections.

Local Law 77 of 2013 established the Residential Composting Program, a pilot for collecting organic wastes in select multifamily residential buildings located along the pickup routes of schools participating in the composting program. In Manhattan, two residential complexes joined the pilot as early participants, and both sites are showing signs of success. In addition to offering regular organic waste pickups, DSNY contributes much to this success by providing composting bins at no cost to households within participating buildings.

The Residential Composting Program's first participant, The Helena, is a 597-unit apartment building located at 601 West 57 Street, has diverted about 1,000 pounds of organic wastes per week, or preventing 26 tons of compostable waste from going to landfills each year, according to the Durst Organization, owner and property manager of The Helena Apartments under Durst Fetner Residential LLC.

Another early participant is Morningside Gardens, a six-building, 980-unit cooperative complex located on the Upper West Side. The complex has achieved a 60% voluntary participation rate among residents, with more anticipated to join after another round of outreach and education that is planned for this summer. Early numbers from the first six months of the pilot shows a 35% rate of organic waste diversion, according to GrowNYC, the program's administrator and technical assistance provider. This means the total weight of trash generated by residents saw a 35% decrease after taking out compostable wastes. This is the result of just under 600 units participating. Imagine how much more organic waste will be diverted from landfills if 300 more units join, and by extension, if additional multifamily residential complexes opt into this program.

Composting not only diverts organic waste from being sent to landfills, it also encourages participants' mindfulness of recycling in general. As a result of participating in the Residential Composting Program, Morningside Gardens has seen an increase in residents' recycling of metal, glass, and plastics—about a ton more per week of recyclables have been collected since the start of the pilot, according to GrowNYC.

I would go one step further and encourage DSNY to think about the significant impact we can have by working out a way to bring public housing into the pilot program.

In small measures, this has already reached the realm of the possible. For over 20 years, Morningside Gardens has worked with Grant Houses, a neighboring public housing complex, to make it the *only* NYCHA development in the City that collects recyclables. This is thanks to the ongoing collaboration between Joan Levine, Co-Chair of Morningside Heights Board of Directors and a member of the Manhattan Solid Waste Advisory Board, and Sarah Martin, President of the Grant Houses Residents Association. More recently, Joan and Sarah, as Co-Chairs of the Morningside Heights/West Harlem Sanitation Coalition, are trying to introduce food and yard waste composting at Grant Houses. I believe the Residential Composting Program has the potential to one day include the hundreds of thousands of families in public housing. But this will not happen without resident engagement, and I strongly urge DSNY to place as much weight on providing support for resident engagement as other more technical considerations for the pilot's expansion.

The final example I want to give is a pilot project between DSNY and the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, a great illustration of what innovative interagency collaboration can achieve. In January of this year, DOHMH partnered with DSNY to pilot a one-block composting program among residents living on West 83 Street as an effort to reduce rat activities. By encouraging residents to dispose organic wastes in DSNY-issued compost bins, DOHMH hopes to reduce the amount of food scraps in regular trash bags, cutting off a key food source for rodents. Though still too early to gauge the program's success, the pilot has since expanded into two more sites in the Lower East Side and in Washington Heights, showing that there is interest from both agencies and from community residents to explore additional benefits to composting.

In order to maintain success of the City's composting program as it expands, I urge DSNY and other implementing agencies to be mindful of four important things:

First, I must underscore the important role that education plays in the successes of both the District 3 school pilot program and of the Residential Composting Program under Local Law 77. In working with school staff and parents, partnering with community groups such as the Lower East Side Ecology Center and Upper West Side Recycling, and speaking with residents, the common theme emphasized by all of these stakeholders is the need for comprehensive and easy to understand information to guide participants through the initial learning curve of adapting to a new way of waste management. I commend DSNY for posting a variety of educational materials on its website. However, only the "Compost Made Easy" resource guide is bilingual in English and Spanish. I urge DSNY to make all educational materials on composting available in the six languages under NYC's Language Access Plan.

Second, as I pointed out earlier, numerous schools have had the frequency of their metal/glass/plastic recycling pickups decreased in order to accommodate the additional daily pickups of organic waste. I see the expansion of the composting pilot program as an opportunity to restore these schools' metal/glass/plastic collections to their previous level. I encourage DSNY to begin dedicating trucks to only collecting organic wastes without reducing their capacity to collect other recyclables, as the number of locations in

need of organic waste pickup will have increased enough with the expansion of the Residential Composting Program to warrant their own collection routes.

Third, I look forward to this June, when DSNY will report its first findings on the total amount of organic waste diverted during the previous six-month period from households and schools that participated in such pilot programs during the entirety of such six-month period. Pursuant to my Open Data Law, DSNY should make publicly available any data collected in relation to Local Law 77. As the program continues to expand, it is important to know who is participating, the percentage of organic wastes diverted as well as their total tonnage, the costs of organic waste collection, and where and how the collected organic wastes are either being composted or processed in another manner. All of this information should be easily accessible from DSNY's website.

Finally, I urge DSNY to continue to explore local siting options to increase NYC's capacity to process organic wastes. The City can only realize the full benefits of composting if there is sufficient local infrastructure to accommodate current and future processing needs. The environmental benefit of diversion is diminished if a large portion of organic wastes continues to be hauled to upstate or out of state for processing. Furthermore, in anticipation of added organic wastes from commercial entities when Local Law 146 of 2013, known as the Commercial Organics Law, comes into effect in July 2015, it is imperative for the City to start establishing a pipeline of future food-waste and/or other organic waste processing sites now. I am requesting the City Council to pass a resolution to form a siting task force among the City's five Solid Waste Advisory Boards (SWAB) so that appropriate organic waste processing sites may be identified by January 2015.

The SWAB is an ideal and capable body to establish a task force for the identification of organic waste processing sites since it has much of the information required for determining suitable locations. SWAB also possesses the expertise to propose suggestions on overall improvements to the Residential Composting Program ranging from education, infrastructure and equipment, frequency of pickups, calculating true benefits, enforcement, and monitoring the impact of private commercial haulers.



STATEMENT OF THE NATURAL RESOURCES DEFENSE COUNCIL

BEFORE THE

N.Y. CITY COUNCIL COMMITTEE ON SANITATION AND SOLID WASTE REGARDING IMPLEMENTATION ORGANIC WASTE COLLECTION

APRIL 28, 2014

Good morning, Chairman Reynoso and members of the Committee. My name is Eric A. Goldstein, and I am an attorney at the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC). NRDC is a national, non-profit legal and scientific organization that has been active on a wide range of environmental, public health and natural resource issues for more than four decades. During this period, NRDC has had a team of lawyers and other specialists focusing on environmental and quality-of-life issues, including solid waste, right here in New York City. We are pleased to be here today to testify regarding Local Law 17 of 2013, which seeks to advance residential composting in New York City.

Local Law 77 expanded New York City's voluntary residential curbside organic waste collection pilot program, which had been launched by the Sanitation Department, continuing it until at least June 2014 and specifying that it should extend into at least four different boroughs and should service at least 100,000 households by that date. In addition, the legislation specified that the Department should expand its ongoing public school organic waste collection program to at least 400 schools in all five boroughs by January 2015.

When NRDC testified in support of this legislation at several hearings before this Committee last year, we stated our belief that this legislation was the most important environmental bill of 2013, and we stand by that conclusion. According to the Sanitation Department's 2005 Waste Characterization Study, food waste and yard waste together account for over 26 per cent of the city's residential waste stream. Currently, the overwhelming bulk of these organic wastes are shipped to distant landfills or incinerators, where they emit large volumes of global warming gases and other air pollutants. In addition, the current landfilling and incineration of the city's organic wastes are expensive, accounting for 100 million dollars a year in disposal costs to city taxpayers, according to the Sanitation Department. The city could save money, reduce carbon emissions and other air contaminants and produce useful compost and biogas if we were to collect organics and dispose of it in more environmentally friendly ways.

Many other jurisdictions have been ahead of New York City in finding smarter ways to dispose of their food and yard wastes. According to the respected trade magazine BioCycle,

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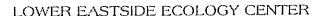


more than 170 communities around the county are already collecting residential food waste for composting and/or anaerobic digestion handling. San Francisco, Portland, Seattle, Toronto and other cities and towns are providing curbside collection of residential food and yard waste. They are finding that this alternative is working to reduce their landfilling costs, to reduce pollution and to secure support from local residents, who have welcomed these programs.

From what we have heard from Sanitation Department representatives, from our discussions with property owners, and from our observations of waste-handling practices as city schools, we believe that the city's pilot projects are producing positive results. Based upon our admittedly anecdotal reports, we understand that participation rates have been better than expected in the residential pilot projects and that contamination rates have been much lower than expected. It is also important to keep in mind that in cities like Portland, Seattle and San Francisco, the pilot program was given years to develop and built up momentum slowly but surely. Clearly, New York City's program, which is still in its earliest stages, should be given time to continue to develop.

We have two specific recommendations for future action by this Committee on the composting front. First, we recommend that the Committee consider legislation that would extend the school composting program to every public school in the city. There is already, we believe, enough evidence to suggest that this program makes sense both from a waste disposal standpoint and by providing important educational benefits to city schoolchildren. We urge the Committee to advance such legislation in 2014 and believe that such a bill would enjoy strong public support. Second, we urge this committee to take action to support community composting. By collecting food waste in our communities and allowing local residents to utilize this organic material in local gardens and community composting facilities we are taking important steps to environmental sustainability. However, logistical hurdles imposes by the City's Business Integrity Commission have hampered progress in this area. We are all awaiting new BIC leadership to see if they will work cooperatively with us to advance the situation. If they don't, it will be time for this Committee to advance the Community Composting Law of 2015.

We thank you, Chairman Reynoso, for calling this important hearing and we look foward to working with you and your colleagues in the months to come.





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Hearing in relation to the collection of compostable waste

NYC City Council Committee on Sanitation and Solid Waste Management Monday, April 28, 2014 at 10:00 a.m., 14th Floor Committee Room, 250 Broadway

My name is Christine Datz-Romero and I am testifying on behalf of the Lower East Side Ecology Center, a non-profit organization offering composting programs since 1990. We are celebrating our 20 year anniversary of collecting food scraps and raising awareness about composting through our program at the Union Square Greenmarket. This program is sustained by selling products that we generate from our activities, mainly compost, potting soil and worms and through generous donations from our constituency. The program currently offers employment to 3 people and processes 200 tons of organic waste annually, collected from over 1,500 households. The organics are being processed in an in-vessel compost system, housed at East River Park since 1998.

In full disclosure, the Ecology Center also has a contract with the Department of Sanitation and is part of the NYC Compost Project since 2005 offering education and technical assistance in Manhattan and since 2013 is part of the Local Organic Recovery Program, a program that strives to make compost opportunities more accessible to New Yorkers. Through this program we offer two 'Commuter Composting' spots in Lower Manhattan, on W 23rd Street and 8th Avenue and on Avenue & Houston Street. The Ecology Center is also part of the New York City Community Compost Council, another initiative of DSNY, which fosters community based compost groups and facilitates discussion and collaboration among these groups.

Community Based Composting

There is a robust compost community, which has grown organically, ranging from small projects at community gardens to larger undertakings, most of them housed on city owned property. These programs not only divert food scraps to local beneficial use, but they also deliver education and raise awareness about composting. The Ecology Center welcomes a study mandated by LL 77 to improve community composting and would like to see this network of community-based programs nurtured to create programs and collection approaches for the management of organic waste. Our City is made up of diverse communities and through a community based approach we will be well positioned to create programs that deliver cost effective solutions for the collection of food scraps while at the same time providing educational outreach and opportunities for New Yorkers to engage with the compost process.

Food Waste Pilot Programs

We are excited about the recent developments for composting to become an integral part of our solid waste management tools, as the City's Recycling Law of 1989 (LL 19) outlined and envisioned 25 years ago. A pilot for schools and residential buildings started in 2012, and a pilot curbside program collection program started in 2013 offering services to over 30,000 households in Staten Island, Brooklyn and the Bronx. However, Local Law 77 stipulates the expansion of such pilots, without taking into account that we currently have no infrastructure in place to cost efficiently process the collected materials. Pilots should not be about quantity but about quality, and informing us how to make the roll out of such a program successful. We need to get detailed reports from DSNY,

documenting participation, diversion, contamination, tonnage collected and costs of collecting and processing the materials.

We know from the metal, glass and plastic curbside program that materials collected are contaminated, one of the biggest culprits are plastic bags people use to bring these materials to the recycling area in their building. Do we see similar problems with the curbside organics collection? Where are the collected materials being processed and how much does that cost? The City has currently only the compost facility at Fresh Kills to process both yard and food waste, and has used the Newtown Creek Sewage Treatment Plant to process some of the collected organics. However, by putting the organics through the sewage treatment plant, an already overburden system, produces sludge which is used as landfill cover, not the highest end use for organic materials, and sort of ironic since the whole idea of collecting organics is to divert these materials from the landfill into a productive end use. Equally problematic is the long haul transport of organics to be composting in existing compost facilities outside the City. I am concerned that at the end of the day the same conclusions will be reached as in the 1990, when a pilot program collecting organic waste in Park Siope and Starrett City, was cancelled because it was too expensive.

Yard Waste

A seasonal yard waste curbside pick up program had been offered in 37 out of NYC 59 community districts, serving all of Queens and Staten Island and sections of the Bronx and Brooklyn. Ll. 40 of 2006 made it mandatory for people living in community districts where yard waste pick up is offered to participate, and at the height of this program 19,000 tons of yard waste were collected at a cost of \$3 Million. Unfortunately this successful program has been suspended since 2003 due to budget constraints and LL 77 intends to keep it suspended until 2016, even so we have two permitted compost facilities (Fresh Kills and Soundview) that could handle these materials locally. We should reinstate yard waste collection immediately.

Local Law 77 calls for the Compost Facility Siting Task Force, mandated by the Solid Waste Management Plan (SWMP), to be reconvened so it can identify sites to develop local yard waste composting sites in the borough where it was generated. With the recent set backs vis-à-vis the Spring Creek Compost Facility, this Taskforce need to be reconvened immediately to identify sites in Brooklyn and Queens. Additionally a better process needs to be put in place to make the siting process transparent and inclusive to achieve the desired outcomes.

April 28th, 2014



The Brooklyn Solid Waste Advisory Board

BrooklynSWAB@gmail.com

The New York City Council's Committee on Sanitation and Solid Waste Management

File # T2014-0923; Oversight: The City's Residential Compost Program Under
Local Law 77

Good Morning Committee Chair, CM Reynoso:

We are here representing the new Compost Committee of the Brooklyn Solid Waste Advisory Board. We appreciate the opportunity to speak at this hearing and thank the Sanitation Committee for inviting community participation.

The mission of the Compost Committee is to provide information and support to government officials, Brooklyn residents and businesses in order to advance and advocate for community-based composting. We applaud the work that the Manhattan SWAB has done in the last years to encourage community-composting initiatives. Our desire is to complement that work and encourage deeper outreach into the community. We would like to support the advancement of sustainable, green-collar jobs and business opportunities in the recycling and waste management industry.

We initially joined the Compost Committee to collaborate on an implementation strategy for a project called Warsoff Wilds—a proposition to create a community garden and compost center on lot 1718 at the corner of Nostrand and Flushing. The lot is sanitation owned and is zoned for a sanitation garage, which will not be implemented for some time. We are currently exploring a collaborative, long-term design that incorporates mid-scale composting operations and the possibility of a rooftop garden into the Garage layout. We come to you today to express how working on this project surrounding this vacant lot has been our inspiration and acts as a catalyst revealing the political and public context and movement which we would like to support with you now.

We have been introduced to several of the pre-existing models for mid-scale compost facilities registered under the Department of Sanitation's Local Organic Waste Recover Program

such as Earth Matter, Gowanus Canal Conservancy, Build It Green, The Lower East Side Ecology Center, and Added Value of Redhook Community Farm, as well as the Composting Roundtable's policy papers that suggest ways to strengthen and organize community-based composting more succinctly. We would like to thank them and applaud them for their impressive and valuable work. Their sites showcase this comprehensive movement to integrate organic waste management with other elements of green infrastructure throughout the city, establishing a network of sustainability systems that are self-supporting.

The Close the Loop campaign highlights the essential element of the sustainability movement, which is the actions of the local public; these actions are integral to larger initiatives to make NYC environmentally enduring, more socially equitable, and economically advantageous, as it will take a combination of central and local activity to create real long-term solutions. We believe that the current political momentum towards municipal and local interdependence is paving the way for an integrated, multi-departmental approach to developing a New York City Sustainability program that engages social justice issues; we believe this approach must be centered on creating green community spaces that incorporate Composting, urban agriculture, and education into a self-supporting, three-tiered system.

Looking at several key pieces of recently passed legislature open up the conversation for a closed-loop system. Local Law 77, in preparation for the imminent city-wide transition to mandate organic waste source separation, aims to gradually increase a composting pilot program throughout the city. This law also stipulates the need for public education about the source separation of organic waste. Local Law 46 stipulates that the Sanitation Commissioner has the authority to direct the commercial carters to haul their waste to regional, in-vessel composting facilities. We believe that establishing mid-scale composting facilities that function alongside urban agricultural initiatives will help facilitate public education regarding source separating organic waste. By directing some of the developmental strategy of the Compost Pilot program towards the creation of localized composting sites, we believe the Department of Sanitation will better be able to implement Organic Waste Recovery for the long-term by engaging residents directly. These sites can work in tandem with other public health and workforce development initiatives outlined by the Department of Long Term Planning and Sustainability and the federal government.

Congress has recently amended The Farm Bill to transfer some of the funding from Food Stamps to Urban Agriculture in recognition of the greater accessibility to healthy food that results from localizing food-growing activity. Similarly, PlaNYC suggests that the utilization of vacant spaces for urban agricultural initiatives will help New Yorkers better access nutritious food and better engage their neighborhoods. While there are many urban agricultural efforts already established in New York City, there are not enough to cover the spectrum. Many New York City residents have not yet been introduced to the concept of composting and still do not have access to affordable fresh produce. The hands-on educational approach of community-based composting will introduce, train and prepare the public for the imminent shift to source

separating organics while simultaneously increasing access to healthy food and inspiring healthy living.

Based on our findings investigating these active facilities we have begun to develop a proposal with a three-part structure: Compost Center, Urban Agriculture with a showcase of sustainable practices and an Education Initiative. The Compost operations help to resolve the city-wide organic waste recovery, taking the results of organic waste processing and immediately and directly feeding them into urban agriculture, efficiently resolving the inaccessibility to healthy food on the local level. A comprehensive and progressive Educational program would reveal this methodology first-hand, creating a catalyst for more public involvement with a hands-on approach. We believe this three-tiered system is integral to the success of this legislature, resolving the needs of the local communities as well as acting in accordance with government law, bridging the gap and accomplishing mutual goals simultaneously.

On April 25th, the Brooklyn Solid Waste Advisory Board hosted a symposium, the beginning of a series of discussions and workshops. This symposium series is inspired by the public outreach of the City Council, and similarly hopes to explore methods that divert organic waste from landfills among the various stakeholders of the organic waste recovery world. The first discussion has already helped highlight common concerns and has pinpointed some key priorities:

- 1) The creation of green collar jobs, by utilizing preexistent volunteer programs as a model framework for more expansive community-based composting systems
- 2) A greater need for education relating to composting and Organic Waste Recovery for the general public, particularly among youth
- 3) A reassessment of the Business Integrity Commission's requirements, particularly among small-scale organic waste carting operations
- 4) The incorporation of vacant or under-utilized land-space into the city's organic waste recovery strategy

We are currently researching and developing a more thorough investigation that identifies particular solutions to the aforementioned issues, one which examines the city's operating cost related to organic waste management. We hope to compare that data to the projected economic and social benefits of a mid-scale composting facility. We would request that this Sanitation Committee consider the development of mid-scale composting throughout the communities of New York City.

We foresee a green network developing, wherein clusters of community gardens work with larger compost facilities that act as the central force, ideally within each neighborhood. This compost center could act as the powerhouse for information dissemination between central and local initiatives, supplementing, increasing, and strengthening efforts and communication between various stakeholders. This network would allow the City to utilize the preexistent

infrastructure to reinforce this interdependent, three-tiered system that unites education, urban agriculture, and organic waste recovery, and ultimately generating green collar jobs.

To better aid the mission of the Compost Committee, we would like to ask the following questions:

- Does DSNY currently have enough capacity to collect all the anticipated organic waste in the pilot program? (capacity includes trucks and physical space to process the organics)
- 2) Has DSNY encountered any problems related to the pilot program? If so, how are those issues being addressed?
- Have any residential building with 9 or more units along an organics collection route volunteered to participate? If so, how many and where are they located? Has DSNY had to reject any offer to participate, or stop collecting from a building because of a lack of capacity on DSNY's part?
- 4) When DSNY submits its reports to the Mayor and the Council, we request that the same information be made available to the Borough Presidents and the SWABs.
- 5) Does the Department of Sanitation anticipate the development of new composting facilities that incorporate In-vessel machines?

Thank you for your time. We look forward to seeing some of these ideas become implemented. We are deeply encouraged to see the City beginning to regard organics not as a waste stream, but as a resource stream, and we applaud the legislative actions that have been taken to divert trash from our landfills. We hope that our efforts will help the City to gather and organize the public, elected officials, and community organizations for this common purpose of sustainability, to simultaneously tackle waste management, public health, social equity, and workforce development with Organic Waste Recovery infrastructure.

Oliver Lamb and Marissa Provenza,

Representatives of the Compost Committee of the Brooklyn Solid Waste Advisory Board

BrooklynSWAB@gmail.com

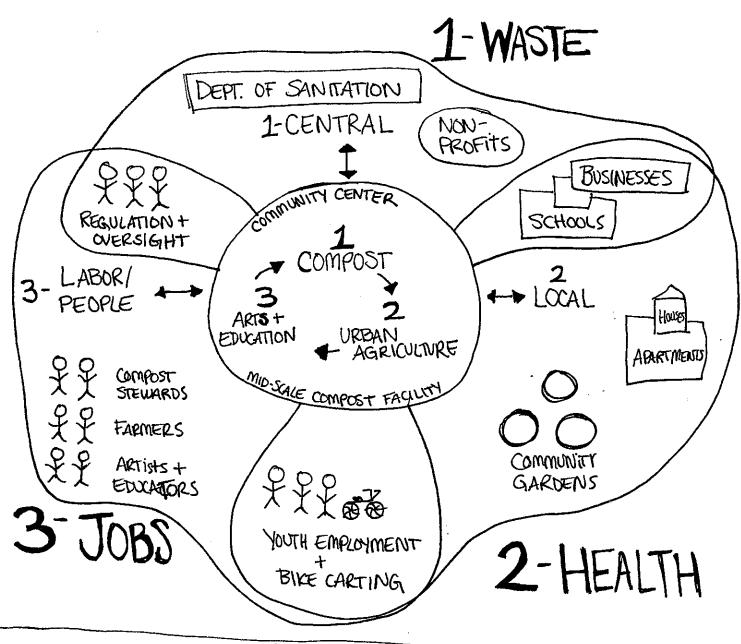
THE THREE PART NETWORK MODEL

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- 2 PUBLIC HEALTH
- 3 UNEMPLOYMENT

SOLUTIONS

- 1 COMPOST CENTER
- 2 ARTS + EDUCATION
- 3 URBAN AGRICULTURE



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Testimony of Beckett Horowitz

Oversight: The City's Residential Compost Program under Local Law 77 of 2013. April 28, 2014, in the Council Chambers, City Hall, New York, NY

Thank you for allowing me to speak here today. My name is Beckett Horowitz; I am a native New Yorker and member of the Manhattan Solid Waste Advisory Board. I'm currently conducting a Masters thesis at the University of Wisconsin-Madison on organics recycling in multi-unit apartment buildings.

Today I am reporting back from a recent fact-finding trip to Seoul, South Korea - a city comparable in population size and density to New York City. Seoul's recycling program is an impressive case of urban waste management because the city has achieved very high compliance and diversion rates. Notably, 90% of food waste in Seoul is recycled for compost, fodder, and Anaerobic Digestion.

In 1995, Seoul made the transition from a tax-funded waste management system, such as what we currently have here in New York City, to a Pay As You Throw (PAYT) system. Curbside collection of food waste using a volume-based fee system began in 2012.

Before collection, food waste is stored in a variety of containers. These include plastic garbage bags with volume-based prices, bins containing identification stickers or RFID chips that record the container's weight upon collection, or building-scale dehydrating receptacles with RFID technology.

The monetary incentive of Seoul's PAYT system has effectively encouraged residents to reduce their volume of organic waste between 20-50% in various districts. This decrease in waste has led to savings in disposal costs and decreased CO₂ emissions. Other innovative programs such as waste reduction competitions among buildings and offering restaurant and cafeteria goers free meal coupons for not creating leftovers also motivate citizens to reduce food waste.

In terms of compliance, Seoul banned garbage chutes in 1995 when they implemented their PAYT system. This action greatly reduced the ability of apartment dwellers to anonymously dispose of recyclables along with their non-recyclables. Neighbors, security guards, and CCTV keep an eye on residents and can identify those who transgress. Since citizens want to avoid fines, this is additional motivation for them to comply with the rules.

Like in Seoul, there are creative ways for organics recycling to work on a large scale in New York City. Incentive programs, new collection and storage technologies, and end market development is crucial to the system's success.

Contact: Beckett Horowitz Email: rghorowitz@wisc.edu

Phone: 646.285.4553



One Bernard Baruch Way
Box D-901
New York, New York 10010-5586
New York,
Tel: 646.660.6814
Samantha.macbride@baruch.cuny.edu

Testimony of Dr. Samantha MacBride Oversight: The City's Residential Compost Program under Local Law 77 of 2013. April 28, 2014, in Council Chambers, City Hall, New York, NY

Summary of Recommendations:

- 1. New thinking for our low-income communities incentives RFI/RFEI. The long-standing low diversion (recycling) rates in our low-income neighborhoods of the city are driven by structural inequality lower maintenance staff levels of service, lack of proper infrastructure (bins, signage) within the building to recycleⁱ. While more education is always needed, the City needs to think creatively about the use of incentives to both residents and staff in building in these (and in fact all) neighborhoods in the city. Incentives may include buy-back programs, youth employment, or participation rewards. Ideas from the nonprofit and private sectors in this area should be solicited through a Request for Information (RFI) and/or Request for Expression of Interest (RFEI) issued by DSNY.
- 2. Variable pricing or pay-as-you-throw. No large US city has succeeded at organics diversion without a pay-as-you-throw or variable-fee pricing in place. In such cases, you pay for garbage collection but not recycling and compost collection. These programs are proven and make huge differences in divresion. Despite claims to the contrary, a pay-as-you-throw program can work in NYC's dense multi-unit environment if it is tied to official city garbage bag fees and a rebate/incentive incorporated into the property tax that rewards higher diversion. What is needed is political to make this happen.
- 3. Business as usual is not up to delivering systemic waste sustainability for the future. Without adequately addressing pay-as-you-throw and other incentives to boost source separation of organics and traditional recycling, the City faces the alternative of business as usual, which means diverted tonnages coming from the affluent areas of New York, and a neglect of other neighborhoods, including public housing, in terms of waste reduction and sanitation. This is an environmental justice issue that concerns equal access to environmental amenities: it needs to be addressed head on. Under business as usuale, it will be extremely difficult for the organics recycling program to succeed.

Chairman Reynoso, Committee members King, Gibson, Constantinides, and Matteo . Thank you for allowing me to speak here today. My name is Dr. Samantha MacBride, I am an Assistant Professor of Public Affairs at Baruch College (CUNY), and I am currently conducting field research on the city's organics pilot in multi-unit buildings, which represent the majority of our housing and the greatest challenge to organics recycling. In my research I am comparing New York to cities of similar size and housing stock, namely Seoul, Korea; Milan, Italy; and Toronto, Canada.

The need for organics diversion is clear. Each year, NYC residents and businesses send millions of tons of mixed municipal garbage to distant landfills, much of it moving through transfer stations in New Jersey in over-burdened communities, to travel as far off as North Carolina, where our tonnages burden yet other communities and contribute to air and water pollution, along with greenhouse gas emissions. The majority of these shipments consist of rotting materials – food scraps, unrecycled paper, yard trimmings, and other decomposable items. If you will excuse my language, such materials are why garbage stinks, why garbage decomposes and poses health threats, and why it generates greenhouse gases when landfilled.

Tonnages of compostable organics are huge. If we can get a system going in which most organic waste goes for composting, instead of disposal, the impacts on NYC waste will be <u>systemic</u>. What do I mean by systemic? I mean large enough to make major shifts in collections and reap economies of scale from doing so. Getting small quantities of commodities recycled is good for the city and the environment in a number of ways; but routing large quantities of organics away from disposal, especially through curbside collection, has the potential to be a game-changer in terms of reducing garbage trucks and routes reducing New York City's carbon footprint in a big way. It can also generate enriching, job producing marketable commodities in and near NYC: namely compost and the gas that comes with it.

The extraordinary informal economy that has grown up around bottle and can deposit redemption shows the effect of very small monetary incentives on vastly boosting recycling. While the capture rate for curbside recyclables is under 50%, it is in the 80% or 90% range for deposit containers. While a deposit system can't work for food scraps, something like it can. Throughout New York City, community-based organizations form a network of neighborhood gardens and local initiatives that offer fertile ground onto which to build incentives for organics recycling and traditional recycling. Building staff can be rewarded for the added labor that source separation entails, as in the case of Seattle which awards multi-unit buildings with a \$100 each for engaged participation in source separation. Employing local residents as on-site recycling coordinators is another job-creating and benefit sharing system that has been used to success in low income housing in London, England.

In cities as diverse as Binghamton, NY and Seoul, Korea, vast improvements in composting and recycling have taken place when buildings pay a fee of a dollar or two for official municipal garbage bags, but can put out separated recycling, and separated organics, in bags at no cost. This system, called "pay as you throw," is proven and, when paired with property tax rebates to cover bag costs and proper enforcement, need not burden building owners with additional expense – provided they separate recyclables and compost from trash. The Bloomberg administration considered such a system but abandoned it for political reasons (resistance from the real estate industry). I encourage you to take up serious consideration of pay as you throw systems in the legislative cycle to come. The city's property tax system, administered by the Department of Finance, offers a pre-built structure for implementing pay-as-you throw in conjunction with RFID tagging.

Like it or not, the 21st century will bring environmental developments that will spell major societal shifts in how we live in cities. The Department of Sanitation, a proud agency with a century of experience under its belt, can handle the new challenges as it continues its excellent work cleaning the streets and picking up stuff from the curb. Its curbside organics program can be a game changer in overall operations, with big, sustainable impacts, but only if qualitative change in multi-unit programs is investigated and implemented. I encourage you to hold the Department to its course in this area, and remain at your service in any way I can be of help.

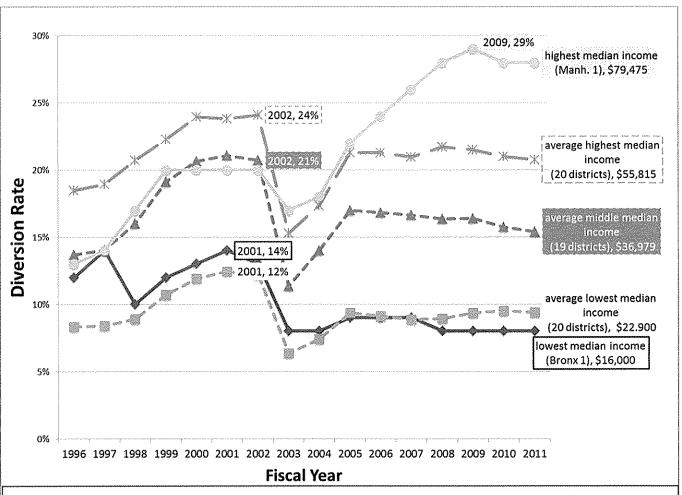
Samantha MacBride, Ph.D.
Baruch College School of Public Affairs
One Bernard Baruch Way, D-0901
New York, NY 10010
samantha.macbride@baruch.cuny.edu
646-660-6814 (o.)/917-613-1789 (c.)

Illustrations of Major Concepts

Figure 1. A Tale of Two Recycling Cities

It comes as no surprise that there is wide income disparity among NYC neighborhoods. Historical data shows that lower income districts of the city have consistently recycled at a lower rate than higher income districts – these districts are disproportionately affected by waste and recycling processing facilities and truck traffic. This is an environmental justice issue. DSNY research has shown that this is not primarily a matter of disparities in education or environmental concern. Lower income people understand and care about recycling at the same levels as their more affluent neighbors. "Level of staffing and service are lower in lower income zones, and there are variations the composition of waste generated by residents in more or less affluent areas (higher income zones generate significantly more paper) that explain trends as well.

The chart below shows changes in the recycling (diversion) rate over time among high, medium, and low income districts, calling out the wealthiest district (Manhattan 1) and the least wealthy (Bronx 1) to show the contrast. "Record years" for each grouping are shown as well. Provision of community-relevant programming, incentives, and rewards is crucial to boosting recycling in lower income zones. Business as usual methods of engaging districts — involving education and exhortations to recycle on environmental grounds, combined with ticketing and enforcement — are laudable but unlikely on their own to produce results when they have failed to do so over a 15 year period. New approaches are urgent.



Data source: DSNY Preliminary Recycling Reports 1996-2011. The dip shown in 2003-04 was due to Mayor Bloomberg's temporary suspension of glass and plastic recycling. "Record years" are shown for each group.

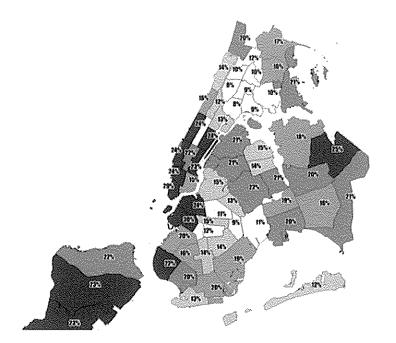


Figure 2. Trends continue to this day

The map for February 2014 shows that the relatively affluent district of Brooklyn 6 in recycling, coming in at 30%, (Carroll Gardens, Gowanus, Cobble Hill, Park Slope, Red Hook, South Slope). The lowest rate was 8%, seen in Bronx 1, (Mott Haven, Port Morris and Melrose). Source: 1QuantNY

Figure 3. What Is in Our Trash

Currently, most of the garbage we send to landfills (or the Covanta incinerators) is organic and could instead be composted. In landfills, this organic material does not harmlessly turn into soil; instead, it emits large quantities of methane, a potent greenhouse gas.

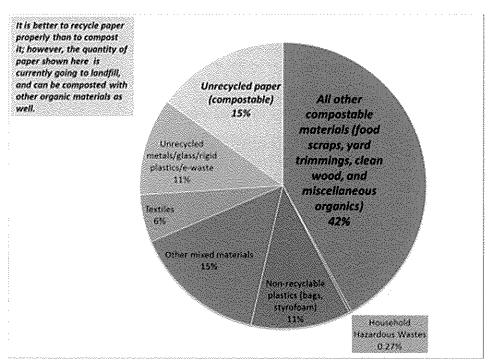
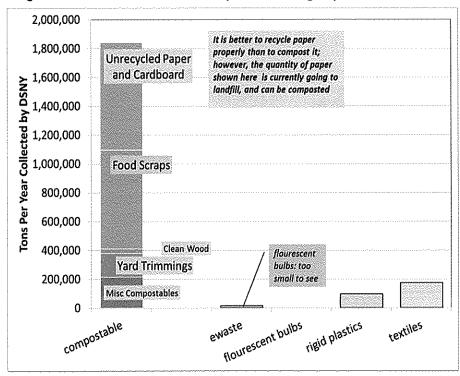


Figure 1. (Data source: DSNY 2004-2005 Residential and Street Basket Waste Characterization Study)

Figure 4: Immense Quantities of Compostables Being Disposed.



Relative tonnages of e-wastes, rigid plastics, textiles, and fluorescent bulbs – all subject to current city efforts to increase diversion — are shown in comparison to compostables.

Recovering these and other recyclables is important, but the mass of organics makes diversion of this portion a systemic game changer for collection and processing infrastructure in the city. When large tonnages of throwaways start to be collected for recovery, instead of disposal, economies of scale mean that truck routes are changed and systemic operations evolve.

Figure 2. (Data Source: DSNY 2004-05 Residential and Street Basket Waste Characterization Study, applied to 2013 DSNY disposal tonnages of approx. 3.2 million tons per year.)

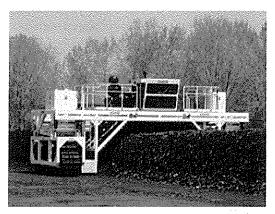
In 1986, the Department began a pilot newspaper-recycling program with trucks that look very different than those used today.



(Photo source: www.nyc.gov/wasteless)

Any new separation program costs more initially than a business-as-usual garbage to landfill system; this was the case with recycling of paper, bottles and cans back in 1989. Today, nearly 1 million tons of these recoverable materials are collected by DSNY recycling routes each year. A two year pilot program for organics recycling will not be enough time for the shift in collection and processing practice to prove itself financially. Curbside recycling grew over time; organics recycling needs this chance also.

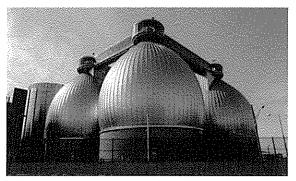
Backyard **composting**, community composting, outdoor municipal composting (currently at sites in Staten Island and the Bronx), and enclosed anaerobic digestion to produce compost and biogas are compatible methods to recover the value from organics that would otherwise go to the landfill. They work together at different scales, involving everyone.



Staten Island Compost Facility (Photo source: www.nyc.gov/compost)



Brook Park Community Garden, Bronx (Photo source: www.nyc.gov/compost)

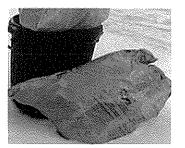


Newtown Creek WWTP is an example of an anaerobic digester.(Photo source: www.nyc.gov/dep)

Pay-as-you throw bag systems incentivize recycling and composting by charging buildings for garbage bags, but allowing recycling and compostables to be put out in clear bags for free. Binghamton NYC is a nearby example of a successful system; Seoul, Korea is a more far off example of a huge dense city like NYC using this method.



Bags used for garbage in Seoul, Korea.(photo source: blog.korea.net)

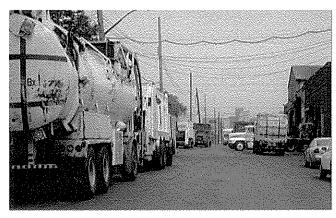


Similar concept in Binghamton, NY where residents must put trash in green city bags, but can set out recycling and yard waste for free collection (Photo source: wbng.com)

In a NYC-based Pay —as-you-throw system, buildings could be encouraged to sign up for reduced cost official garbage bags (RFID tagged or barcoded to the property), in a quantity pegged to maximal diversion for their building (calculated by property size). Such buildings could order bags online for postal delivery, administered by the Department of Finance (DoF) in partnership with the Department of Sanitation. In the first year of the program, participation would be voluntary and would, at years end, result in a property tax rebate again pegged to the building size and number of bags purchased. In the following years of the program, purchase of official garbage bags from retail outlets would become mandatory for all residential properties, while voluntary participation in the DoF bag program would be offered in conjunction with annual property tax rebates. Fines for illegal disposal of refuse in non-official bags would be high, as would contamination of source-separated recyclables and organics. Both streams (recyclables and organics) could be place at curbside in clear bags or colored bins at no cost to the generator. Following the example of Seattle, reduced rates could be available to housing for seniors, disabled persons, and low income private market rental buildings.

Systemic Change: Rather than seeing garbage to landfill as "regular collection," and recovery programs as add-ons that can be cut when need arises, NYC waste management needs to move to thinking of recycling, composting, and other forms of recovery as "business as usual," phasing out most landfilling in the long term. When large tonnages of material are separated for recycling or composting, collection becomes more productive, and less expensive.

Diverting small tonnages of different items is good for the environment, but doesn't fundamentally change the allocation of trucks and routes in NYC.



Changes in truck routing, queuing, and ultimately disposal systems require large tonnages of materials to be re-routed to better recovery destinations. (Photo source: Samantha MacBride)

[.] See the New York City Department of Sanitation's research reports from 2007 and 2005 in which it was found that structural factors related to building maintenance and staffing are major predictors of diversion; and that there are no significant disparities in the generally high rates of knowledge about recycling and care for the environment among lower and higher income NYC residents. Sources can be found at www.nyc.gov/nycwasteless as follows: DSNY 2007, www.nyc.gov/nycwasteless as follows: DSNY 2005, <a href="https://

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