



City of New York Parks & Recreation



Hearing before the City Council Committee on
Sanitation & Solid Waste Management

Oversight – the results of the pilot program conducted by the Department
Sanitation to collect recyclable material from public areas
&

Intro. No. 673 – in relation to establishing a one-year pilot program for recycling in
certain parks

February 14, 2007

Testimony by
Keith Kerman, Chief of Operations, NYC Parks and Recreation

Parks participated at six sites in the Public Space Recycling pilot and has worked to achieve recycling at our facilities for over a decade. Parks staff coordinated closely with our counterparts at the Department of Sanitation to ensure the success of the pilot program. Our staff lined the new recycling bins and the regular waste bins each day with different color bags, removed the bags daily, and found safe and out of the way spots to store the bags until Sanitation could pick them up and analyze them. Within Parks, our managers reported weekly on progress at the sites. Parks also assigned Park Greeters to each site during the pilot period to promote recycling, explain what can and can't be recycled, and answer questions. The pilot period was more labor intensive for our staff than with regular waste removal, but the pilot was also a welcome opportunity to promote recycling and help build new habits.

Parks currently recycles at over 50 recreation centers and at our main administration buildings. We are currently expanding recycling to our twelve nature centers where Parks Rangers will also promote sustainability as part of their education efforts. Parks recycled last year at many special events including the Starlight Concert at Cloves Lake Park, concerts at Jackie Robinson Park, and the AVP Volleyball Tournament in Coney Island. We are working to expand recycling at more events this year, both those managed by Parks and those managed privately. We are also working to introduce recycling at flagship parks. In partnership with DSNY, the Central Park Conservancy recycled at special events last year including Earth Day, the August Film Festival, and the Halloween Ball. This spring, the Conservancy will introduce recycling bins at the Great Lawn, North Meadow, and Heckscher Ballfields.

In addition to the current pilot, Parks has attempted outdoor recycling at many other locations, including 20 neighborhood parks in 2001 and at other flagship parks. Consistent challenges include heavy levels of contaminated, non-recyclable debris going into the bins,

including animal waste. Parks picks up waste from park sites on a daily basis using Parks owned waste removal trucks that are designed for use within park sites. Parks does not have a separate dual bin trucking capacity for removing recycling bags. Storage of potentially contaminated recycling bags for days within parks is a serious concern due to space issues and also due to concerns about having large numbers of waste bags sitting overnight in our parks.

Parks agrees that outdoor recycling is an important part of our green message. We believe we can best promote that message through recycling at special events, at our fixed recreation and nature centers, and through carefully selected, closely monitored and flexibly managed public sites in partnership with DSNY and the current initiative.

**OPENING STATEMENT OF
MICHAEL BIMONTE, FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER
NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF SANITATION**

**HEARING BEFORE THE NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL COMMITTEE ON
SANITATION & SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT
THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 14, 2008 – 10:00 A.M.
250 BROADWAY, 16TH FLOOR HEARING ROOM**

RE: OVERSIGHT – The results of the pilot program conducted by the Department of Sanitation to collect recyclable material from public areas.

INTRO. NO. 673: In relation to establishing a one-year pilot program for recycling in certain parks.

Good morning Chairman McMahan and members of the City Council Committee on Sanitation and Solid Waste Management. I am Michael Bimonte, First Deputy Commissioner for the New York City Department of Sanitation. With me today are Robert Lange, Director of the Bureau of Waste Prevention, Reuse and Recycling for the Department, and Samantha MacBride, Deputy Director for Recycling under Director Lange.

We are pleased to be here today to present to you the results of the pilot program conducted by the Department of Sanitation in 2007 for public space recycling of paper, commingled metal, glass and plastic conducted in selected New York City parks and transit hubs. This program, called for in the City's 2006 Comprehensive Solid Waste Management Plan, evaluated the feasibility and potential for success of public space recycling. The Public Space Recycling Pilot (the Pilot) provided insight into the challenges and potential for success of public space recycling in New York City.

This Pilot was implemented in six parks (one in each Manhattan, the Bronx, Brooklyn and Queens and two in Staten Island), and two ferry terminals (one on Staten Island and the other in Manhattan) over a 13-week period. Recycling receptacles were specially designed to convey a consistent message with the City's existing residential recycling program for separate collection of paper (green bins) and metal, glass and plastic (blue bins). Paired sets of these bins were placed in strategic locations to maximize the potential collection in each of the sites. Servicing the recycling bins added a layer of complexity to the existing waste management at these sites and required a close collaboration among DSNY, Parks and DOT to regularly collect materials, maintain the bins, store the bags of materials and set them out for designated pickup and transport to a transfer station for the waste characterization portion of the study.

Public Education about the program took a variety of forms. Such measures included poster advertising at phone kiosks, bus shelters and ferry terminals near the Pilot sites publicized from the program. In addition, a number of special events were held in which the program was

announced and discussed by prominent elected officials. Throughout the Pilot period, Outreach Coordinators from DSNY's Bureau of Waste Prevention, Reuse and Recycling set up informational tables at parks to educate about and reinforce the program.

The 2007 Pilot provided insight into the challenges and potential for success of public space recycling in New York City. During Pilot, 1,974 bags of newspapers and magazines and 1,889 bags of bottles and cans were collected and removed from the waste stream. People understood and participated in Paper recycling, however Metals, Glass and Plastic recycling was more problematic. Locations characterized by heavy commuter use and workday lunch breaks generated larger amounts of recycling with lower contamination rates. Ongoing consistent bin maintenance and monitoring by dedicated and trained staff was found to be a crucial element to the success of the program.

As a result of the success of the Pilot, four new public space recycling sites (one each in the Bronx and Manhattan and two in Brooklyn) have recently been added to the program, at no cost by using the recycling collection vehicle already servicing the same area, bringing the total number of sites to thirteen. Sixteen new sets of blue and green recycling receptacles have been placed at the four sites, which were selected based on pedestrian traffic volume, proximity to commercial districts and transportation facilities, and the volume of recyclable materials that were entering the waste stream in litter baskets. The Department is hopeful that these new sites will achieve at least the same rate of success as those sites studied for the Pilot.

Before discussing the results of the Pilot in further detail, I would first briefly like to discuss the Department's position regarding Intro. No. 673, under consideration by the Committee today. Intro. No. 673 would require the Department to conduct a one year pilot program, similar to the one conducted in 2007 and expanded earlier this year, at thirty parks evenly distributed throughout the City's five boroughs. While the Department believes that public space recycling plays an integral role in providing additional public education value, as will be further explained in the Department's presentation concerning the Pilot, four of the six parks studied were found to be poorly performing.

What the results of the pilot clearly demonstrate is that some locations are conducive to successful Public Space Recycling while others are not. Furthermore, based upon the results of the pilot, simply selecting a park alone as a selection criterion is not enough to guarantee success. Therefore, any further expansion of Public Space Recycling should be based upon the generic site success factors from the pilot, not randomly. For these reasons, the Department respectfully opposes the requirement that thirty parks be chosen, but supports the concept that public space recycling should be expanded in the future.

Before beginning our detailed presentation regarding the Pilot, I will turn over the microphone to Keith Kerman, Chief of Operations for the Parks Department.

[BEGIN POWER POINT PRESENTATION WITH SLIDES AND PHOTOS]



NATURAL RESOURCES DEFENSE COUNCIL

**STATEMENT OF THE NATURAL RESOURCES DEFENSE COUNCIL
BEFORE THE COMMITTEE ON SANITATION AND SOLID WASTE
CONCERNING INTRO. #673 RE; PUBLIC SPACE RECYCLING
FEBRUARY 14, 2008**

My name is Eric A. Goldstein, and I am a senior attorney and New York Urban Program Director 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 New York regional environmental issues, among others, since its founding in 1970. For more than two decades, we have sought to address the challenges posed by solid waste disposal here. Our long term goal has been to shift the city's waste disposal system from primary reliance on landfilling and incineration to one with recycling and waste prevention as its cornerstones. We welcome this opportunity to appear again before your committee.

At the outset, NRDC would like to thank you, Chairman McMahon, Councilmember DeBlasio, Speaker Quinn and your colleagues, as well as the Council's unheralded staff, for your collective leadership in passing Intro. 104-A, the electronics waste recycling bill, yesterday. We believe that this is truly an historic moment in the city's solid waste history and that this legislation will serve as a model for other jurisdictions.

With that backdrop, we are pleased to be here today to testify concerning Intro. 673 – a bill seeking to establish a one-year pilot program for recycling in certain city parks. This legislation would direct the Sanitation Department to conduct a one year pilot project to collect, in conjunction with the Parks Department, metals, plastic, glass and paper for recycling at a total of 30 parks throughout the city. The bill also requires the Department to collect data on such recycling efforts and to report back to the Council and the Mayor with the results of the pilot and recommendations for expansion.

First, we want to thank Councilmember Jessica Lappin, in particular, for spearheading this much-needed focus on public space recycling. For too many years, New York City has failed to establish a comprehensive program for recycling in the city's public spaces – our parks, our transportation hubs, our shopping nodes. This has been a significant missed opportunity and runs counter to the city's environmental and economic interest in fostering increased participation in its recycling program.

NRDC strongly supports the thrust and intent of the proposed legislation. We do so for three reasons. First, expanded public space recycling would boost city recycling levels, which have tailed off in recent years. Ultimately, if public space recycling

collections were available at all 1,700 city parks, playgrounds and recreation facilities, at over 460 transit stations and at hundreds of other high volume pedestrian areas around the city, thousands of additional tons of recyclables could be collected. Second, a comprehensive, city-wide public space recycling program would play a strong public education role. Each receptacle would serve as an advertisement for the city's program and as a visible reminder of the importance of participating. Third, a comprehensive public space recycling program could be part of a long-term campaign to persuade New Yorkers to think more about the waste they generate; over time, it could lead at least some city residents and visitors to actually begin reducing the waste they generate.

We do, however, believe that the proposed legislation should be expanded in scope to incorporate requirements for a broader, more far-reaching program. In the year of 2008, it is no longer necessary for the city to experiment with public space recycling. Indeed, as far back as 1989, when the city's landmark mandatory recycling law was enacted, the council identified the need for recycling programs by city agencies, including the parks department, and for recycling by transit agencies like the MTA. See New York Administrative Code, Section 16-307 and Section 16-316(8). Moreover, the City's most recent Solid Waste Management Plan, enhanced and approved by the Council in 2006, also called for expanded public space recycling. And just last year, the Sanitation Department to its credit began a small demonstration project which was successful enough that the Department recently announced an expansion of that small program to four additional sites.

Accordingly, NRDC endorses the direction and intent of Intro. 673 and recommends that it be amended to expand its scope and reach. Specifically, we strongly urge that the bill add requirements that additional sites be added over a five-year period. There is no good reason why the council could not mandate that the city be required to add public space recycling in at least 20 new locations every year for the next five years. Such locations should include parks (playgrounds, beaches etc), transportation nodes, tourist centers and other high pedestrian locations. We believe that adding recycling collections for metal/glass/plastic and paper at 100 such facilities over the next five years is both a practical target and necessary to meet the statute's objective of advancing citywide recycling in a meaningful way. We also applaud Intro. 673's objective of insuring that such recycling facilities are equally distributed throughout all five boroughs and we support retaining such a provision in the final legislation.

We thank you Councilmember Lappin and Chairman McMahon for introducing this legislation, and we stand ready to work with you to enhance and advance it in the coming weeks and months.