



Legislation Text

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Res. No. 171

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.

By Council Members Nurse, Krishnan, Hanif, Won, Bottcher, Gennaro, Avilés, Brooks-Powers, Salaam, Sanchez, Williams, Banks and Schulman

Whereas, Compost is organic material consisting of materials such as leaves, grass, food scraps and non-recyclable paper that can be added to soil to assist in the growth of vegetation, and is often used to beautify parks and gardens, as well as for landfill developments; and

Whereas, The average New York City resident disposes of approximately 15 pounds of waste at home per week, which combined totals more than three million tons of residential waste altogether per year for the entire City, not including waste from commercial establishments; and

Whereas, Approximately 31 percent of what New Yorkers dispose of in the trash is food scraps, yard waste and soiled paper that cannot be recycled; and

Whereas, When these materials are sent to landfills to decompose, they release methane gas, a greenhouse gas that is more potent than carbon dioxide; and

Whereas, Instead of sending these materials to landfills, they can be composted and be used to benefit the environment and the City by enriching soil, retaining moisture and suppressing plant diseases and pests, reduce reliance on chemical fertilizers and reduce methane emissions from landfills; and

Whereas, Historically, the vast majority of composting that occurred in New York City was conducted at the community level, through the City's green markets, at non-profits and at neighborhood composting sites in

locations such as community gardens and certain parks; and

Whereas, In prior years, the New York City Department of Sanitation (DSNY) and the Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) entered into a Memorandum of Understanding that DSNY collect leaves and yard trimmings separately from solid waste so they can be recycled as mulch and compost at parklands under DPR where composting and mulching sites could be established; and

Whereas, The City created the NYC Compost Project in 1993, which provided education on composting, as well as fostered community level composting initiatives throughout the City; and

Whereas, In 2013, DSNY began offering curbside organic waste collection services to residents of Westerleigh, Staten Island in a pilot program to test the feasibility of collecting such waste from people's homes; and

Whereas, This program was deemed a success and later expanded to over 100,000 households across the City; and

Whereas, On May 4, 2020, DSNY announced the suspension of the curbside composting program through June 30, 2021 due to budget cuts, however residents can make their own compost and were encouraged to do so; and

Whereas, The suspension included the closures of food scrap drop-off sites due to social distancing mandates and budget cuts to GrowNYC's zero waste programs and the NYC Compost Project; and

Whereas, On April 22, 2021, then-Mayor de Blasio announced that the City would resume the NYC Compost Project and it would be available to 3.5 million City residents who were previously enrolled in the project and launched opportunities for new residents and building owners to enroll on the project in August 2021, with collection services beginning in October 2021; and

Whereas, However, composting service resumed in only seven community board districts, including four districts in Brooklyn, one in the Bronx and two in Manhattan, instead of resuming citywide; and

Whereas, In fiscal year 2023, Mayor Eric Adams (Mayor Adams) proposed \$18.2 million in budget cuts, which includes suspending curbside compost pickup, stating that there are not enough residents participating in the project, which is therefor costing the City too much by sending out trucks to areas where only 10 percent of residents are putting out compost; and

Whereas, However, City residents who support composting expressed that the project is not available in their districts or buildings; and

Whereas, In June 2023, the City Council passed the Zero Waste Act, a legislative package that sets zero waste targets for 2030, codifies a mandatory residential curbside organics collection program, secures community food scrap drop offs, requires Zero Waste annual reporting and creates new community recycling centers throughout the City; and

Whereas, The Zero Waste Act positions the City as a global leader on zero waste, is expected to provide regional environmental benefits by reducing reliance on landfills and incinerators in areas in upstate New York and neighboring states and further demonstrates the City Council's commitment to a safer and cleaner City; and

Whereas, Furthermore, in November 2023, Mayor Adams proposed eliminating the City's composting program and delaying curbside residential organics collection in certain areas by approximately seven months as part of an overall 5 percent budget cut to all City agencies; and

Whereas, According to the environmental organization GrowNYC, the proposed budget cuts could result in over 115 lost jobs in community composting, and according to the City of New York November 2023 Financial Plan, the cuts include the elimination of 262 vacant uniformed positions and 321 vacant civilian positions throughout DSNY; and

Whereas, While Mayor Adams announced on January 11, 2024 that the City will restore some funding for DSNY to maintain thousands of existing litter baskets, many of the proposed cuts to DSNY's budget, including those effecting composting, have not been reversed; and

Whereas, Climate advocates have expressed concerns that closures and budget cuts effecting

composting will have negative impacts on the City, including potential for more greenhouse gases affecting the environment, and also puts necessary environmental and social services at a low priority; and

Whereas, Budget cuts, and suspending the curbside composting project, puts the City in jeopardy of losing several community composting facilities and delaying curbside organic services, which will not benefit the City in reducing its greenhouse gases and potentially further delay the City's goal of sending zero waste to landfills by 2030; now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Council of the City of New York calls 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.

Session 13

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Session 12

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Res. No. 202-2022

Session 11

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