

Testimony of
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Engagement for the City's 2026 Solid Waste Management Plan

Good morning, Chair Abreu and members of the Committee on Sanitation and Solid Waste Management. I am Jennifer McDonnell, Deputy Commissioner of Solid Waste Management at the New York City Department of Sanitation, and I am joined today by Katherine Kitchener, Executive Director of Resource Recovery and by Joshua Goodman, Deputy Commissioner, Public Affairs & Customer Experience.

History: SWMP 2006

It has been close to 20 years since the City of New York last submitted a proposed solid waste management plan (SWMP). In that time, DSNY has achieved significant progress on the goals of the 2006 SWMP, the waste stream and industry have noticeably evolved, and the State has clarified and updated the requirements for solid waste management plans.

Achieving the goals of the last plan has transformed the solid waste system serving New Yorkers and, whether they see it each day or not, the experience of living in New York City. With the successful conversion of four marine transfer stations to the modern, efficient, fully contained intermodal export facilities operating reliably and serving the city every day, coupled with a complement of rail-export land-based facilities, a majority of the solid waste exported by DSNY is leaving the city by rail, drastically reducing truck traffic and associated emissions.

Another goal achieved is the long-term contract with Sims Municipal Recycling resulted in the construction of the metal, glass, plastic, and carton sorting facility at the South Brooklyn marine terminal that continues to process residential curbside recycling to this day. And for paper recycling, the Pratt Paper mill on Staten Island converts much of the residential paper recycling stream to new paper, a true example of the circular economy, right here in our city.

We also advanced transformative programs that were not envisioned in the last SWMP. To divert organic material that constitutes upwards of 30% of the residential waste stream, in 2023, DSNY announced a strategy for citywide, curbside organics collection. Later that year, the Council passed historic legislation to mandate residential source separation of all food and yard waste. As of October 2024, every New Yorker in all five boroughs can participate in the largest, easiest curbside organics collection program in the nation. Since full citywide implementation, we've seen staggering tonnage increases, including three consecutive weeks in November that each set records. Diverting six million pounds of material from the waste stream each week was long

derided as impossible – and now we've done it back to back. In response, the regional market is adapting and building to meet the demand of the city's leadership on organics.

All the while, DSNY continued a commitment to community recycling events, apartment-based collection programs, and efforts further up the waste management hierarchy focused on reuse and waste prevention of all types of materials- through partnerships with businesses, nonprofit, and community organizations engaged in reuse, repair, and innovations in materials management. In sum, DSNY has some of the most comprehensive, residential solid waste programming in the country. From universally accessible curbside recycling and composting collection to FREE compost givebacks, SAFE Disposal Events, special waste drop-offs, refrigerant collection, and no-cost apartment bin programs for electronics and textile recycling, New Yorkers have many options to participate in waste reduction and recycling.

Before we discuss the proposed SWMP, I would like to emphasize again two points: first, state DEC regulatory requirements have evolved significantly since 2006, notably requiring a 10-year planning period rather than a 20-year planning period, and secondly, that while the SWMP provides a framework for diversion and efficient waste systems, the City can and must pursue specific programs that are not contemplated in this document. This is, by design, a beginning rather than an end.

Our record here speaks for itself: neither universal curbside organics nor Commercial Waste Zones were laid out in the 2006 SWMP, and yet the City took historic action to move both policies forward in partnership with the City Council. This is particularly relevant to keep in mind as we discuss SWMP26.

Future: SWMP26

DSNY's rich history of evolution, continuous improvement, and innovation lays the foundation for this next solid waste management plan that we are proud to put forth, to guide future progress in waste reduction and resource recovery over the next decade. With over 24 billion pounds of waste generated by hundreds of thousands of businesses and millions of residents across the 5 boroughs every year, the 2026 solid waste management plan is a flexible framework focused on the areas with the greatest potential impact on the existing solid waste management system.

SWMP26 was designed to meet the regulatory requirements and guidance of DEC, and the program structure follows the stipulations for alternative analysis that all planning units across the state must consider when developing a SWMP. This SWMP was developed over the past three years, beginning with an extensive analysis of the current conditions for the solid waste management system in NYC. The first four chapters of the plan documents in great detail who is generating how much of what materials (to the best of our knowledge), where they are going, and what the end-of-life options are for managing them. As a result of this data-driven analysis, and with input from best practices worldwide, the draft SWMP includes eight dedicated program areas designed to address the primary focus points needed to achieve continued progress in waste

reduction, increased recycling and a path towards zero waste. These programs include: waste prevention and reuse, organics diversion and recovery, residential recycling, residential municipal solid waste, commercial waste, construction and demolition waste, special waste and education and outreach.

For DSNY, this next SWMP is the beginning of the next chapter in our journey, one that has become more inclusive, more expansive, and more effective. As outlined in the 126 initiatives supporting the ~20 strategies underneath each program, we have goals and objectives that we will partner with many Agencies, Offices and stakeholders to implement. The SWMP is not a rigid blueprint for every possible action over the next decade, rather it provides strategic direction and guiding principles as well as comfortably specific objectives. This enables the Department, and the city, to continuously adapt our approach while in pursuit of our goals. It is a plan that lays the foundation for an ambitious future while providing flexibility that is necessary in our ever-changing world.

At the same time, the SWMP is not the only plan guiding DSNY's work, nor all solid waste management efforts throughout the city, and there are specific programs and initiatives that it does not contemplate, such as containerization, curbing illegal dumping, or collection operations. DSNY will continue to innovate and plan in those areas, and intersect them with SWMP programming as appropriate. We will also continue to support others in their journeys on waste reduction and resource recovery, by serving as a technical expert, a resource for educational materials and programming, and a convener of collaborators in the circular economy.

To talk specifically about a few key objectives contained in the SWMP, organics remains a priority, most importantly continuing to increase participation and recovery rates. We plan to achieve this through a diverse combination of applied technology, diversification, and experimentation. For example, we will research alternatives to plastic liners for collection and investigate how we can leverage new equipment to better separate contamination from collected organics. Commercial waste zones are another priority, and an additional focus that was not identified in the last SWMP. DSNY has already committed to full implementation of the zones by 2027, and we are excited about the data quality and diversion improvements that will follow from this thoughtfully designed and rigorous contract-driven program.

Finally, we know very well the responsibility of having a reliable, safe, and resilient system for solid waste export, yet we look to the future where the next generation of this requirement emerges. To get to that future, we have positioned the Waste Reduction program as the first program, one that will enable recovery of value, reduction of impacts, increased benefits, and better environmental outcomes. This work is undoubtedly the most difficult work, and work that requires each and every one of us to steward the resources we consume. In that way, DSNY is serving as a leader - as this a comprehensive plan for managing the waste of the entire city of New York! For that reason, the SWMP includes programs and commitments that are outside of

our Agencies' direct jurisdiction however we are proud to serve as the host for them under the umbrella of a more sustainable city.

The future DSNY envisions is one where all the resources in the city are managed responsibly and to the best value. Whether it's advancing textile-to-textile recovery, turning food scraps from our diverse cuisine into biogas to support a clean energy transition, or developing new ways to reuse materials in future manufacturing industries, the solid waste management plan is designed to address the full breadth of materials management in a city as complex, diverse, and innovative as ours.

SWMP26 Outreach

Before moving to your questions, I would like to share details on the public outreach and engagement we have conducted as part of plan development. These statistics are not included in the plan but are a testament to DSNY's desire to make the SWMP a roadmap for all. We began formal outreach for this SWMP last year, starting with City agencies that, in collaboration with DSNY, would have a major role in implementing SWMP26. These agencies include NYCHA, Parks, DEP, Public Schools, DCAS, DOT, EDC, DDC, and the Mayor's Offices of Environmental Remediation and Climate Change and Environmental Justice. DSNY conducted 15 meetings with New York City agencies in 2024 and 2025. DSNY has also been an active participant on the Clean Construction Executive Order 23 Implementation Working Group and the Environmental Justice Interagency Working Group. These engagement efforts identified synergies between many planning efforts including the State's SWMP, CLCPA, PlaNYC on climate, and Food Forward NYC, as well as the EJNYC Plan, NYC Industrial Plan and Urban Forest Plan, also under currently review. We have included many strategies that commit to this continued agency and office collaboration in SWMP26.

DSNY then began outreach with elected officials, specifically this Committee and Borough Presidents. Since the spring, we have met with each of you or your staff and welcomed you to share information about the proposed SWMP26 framework with constituents to solicit feedback.

Additionally, DSNY met with stakeholder groups including the Solid Waste Advisory Board (SWAB) chairs, Town and Gown's Urban Resource Recovery Working Group, the Regional Planning Association, the NYC Climate Leadership Group, the EJ Advisory Board, and the Transform Don't Trash NYC Coalition.

The comments received through these efforts have already shaped the draft Plan. For example, a resiliency assessment of key export infrastructure was added after meeting with the citywide EJ Advisory Board.

On October 27, 2025, DSNY held a virtual public meeting to share information on SWMP26 and to respond to questions from the public. The meeting was recorded and the recording and presentation are posted on DSNY's website.

We also heard from advocates and from many of you a desire for more time to review the draft SWMP and provide comments. In response to your requests, DSNY was pleased to extend the public comment period an additional 60 days, now concluding on January 16, 2026, rather than the original public comment conclusion date of November 17, 2025. This more than doubles the legally required 45-day review time.

Additionally, DSNY is grateful to the SWABs for hosting a series of Learning Sessions, open to all residents and organizations to gather feedback that will be shared with DSNY and incorporated into the plan. DSNY looks forward to addressing all comments received, as well as relevant feedback from testimonies received today.

Finally, unlike the 2006 SWMP, no new physical infrastructure is proposed in SWMP26. Some may be proposed as part of implementation, and as discussed at the public meeting, there would be dedicated engagement around any specific facility, including requisite environmental reviews. This SWMP will be implemented over the 10-year period, and DSNY will report on implementation every other year in biennial reports to DEC, which are posted on DSNY's website after approval. While drafting the Plan, DSNY identified the need for a minimum of six stakeholder focus groups and 19 strategies that will rely on collaboration with community organizations and composting groups during implementation. Those groups will be formed after the plan is formally approved by both Council and DEC next year. We welcome you to stay engaged throughout the implementation process and are glad to be working with all of you to make this plan a reality.

Thank you for your interest in the Solid Waste Management Plan, I look forward to answering your questions.