

**Testimony of
Joshua Goodman, Deputy Commissioner
New York City Department of Sanitation**

**Joint Hearing before the New York City Council
Committees on Sanitation and Solid Waste Management & Health**

**Thursday, December 7, 2023
10:00 A.M.**

Oversight – Rat Mitigation & Public Health

Good morning, Chairs Nurse and Schulman, Council Members, and staff. I'm Joshua Goodman, Deputy Commissioner, Public Affairs & Customer Experience at the Department of Sanitation. I am joined today by First Deputy Commissioner Javier Lojan, and it is our honor to bring you updates from the front lines in the War on Rats.

“New Yorkers are revolting,” but not in the way the haters, doubters, and Angelenos and Bostonians have long argued. No, New Yorkers are *leading a revolt* – a revolt against the trash, against old ways of doing things, and against the rats.

The Trash Revolution, a tidal wave of change in the management of 44 million daily pounds of waste, has swept across the City over the last two years, and New Yorkers are seeing the difference.

In the prior two decades, the Department of Sanitation had focused on shifting our back-end operations from a model where all trash was dumped at Fresh Kills landfill, to a waste-export model, where all New York City trash moves by barge and rail to destinations as far away as South Carolina. That was a tremendous behind-the-scenes undertaking, but it never addressed how New Yorkers *experience* trash, even as other cities around the world innovated substantially.

Residents and businesses continued to drop their smelly, leaky, and rat-attracting bags of trash on the sidewalk at 4 pm. We had massive, massive piles of bags on our sidewalks just as rush hour was getting under way. And these piles sat and sat and sat, sometimes up to 36 hours before we picked it up. Well, that is now changing, rapidly, thanks to Mayor Adams' vision and commitment to doing what has worked in other cities around the world.

We started by changing the set-out times for trash. The 4 pm setout time was the earliest of any major city in the United States, and it meant that rush hour became trash hour. We moved that time to 8 pm, and incentivized containerization by allowing trash in bins to go out at 6pm on the residential side, or an hour before closing on the commercial side.

We also shifted our operations to pick up that trash much, much sooner, sometimes within an hour of it being set out. This included moving more of our operations to a midnight shift, particularly in the City's Rat Mitigation Zones, and getting 2,500 of the largest residential buildings onto routes that allow for much faster service, among other steps.

We often don't notice what is not there, but if you think back, you can surely remember those massive piles and the rats that made them their home. And if you look now, they are largely gone!

As of this summer and fall, all food-based businesses and all chain businesses are now required to put their trash in an incredible invention, the wheelie bin, and this coming March, ALL businesses will be required to put their trash in these containers.

In Fall 2024, residents who live in buildings with 1-9 units will be required to put their trash in containers. We are engaged in a procurement process to design the first-ever official NYC bins, which will be available when the mandate goes into effect, and required approximately two years later.

At that point, 70 percent of New York City trash will be in containers. And Commissioner Tisch has been clear that we are coming for the remaining 30 percent, mostly from larger residential buildings.

To containerize this trash, we are currently piloting on-street containers for schools and residential buildings in a section of Hamilton Heights.

We plan to further expand the containerization of trash from larger buildings, and we are developing a prototype automated side-loader truck to accomplish this.

These are the plays laid out in our containerization playbook, the Future of Trash report, viewable at nyc.gov/futureoftrash. We said what we were going to do, and we are getting it done, drastically transforming our streetscapes and putting a dent in what used to be an all-you-can-eat buffet for rats.

On behalf of my colleagues here today, we all look forward to answering your questions about our plan to stand up to the Axis of Filth represented by the rats, the bags of trash, and the old status quo, and about the Trash Revolution taking back our streets.