



sanitation

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Trash Revolution: NYC Sanitation ‘Gets Stuff Clean’ in 2023

After generations of accepting mounds of smelly trash bags as an inevitability, New York City is revolting – against the trash. The Adams administration and the New York City Department of Sanitation (DSNY) began a long-overdue transformation of the City’s streetscape in 2023, taking historic steps to remove trash from streets and sidewalks, while launching the nation’s largest curbside composing program and making unprecedented investments to clean highways, catch illegal dumpers and remove derelict vehicles from our streets.

“For too long, New Yorkers were led to believe that we had to live with trash all around us,” said **Jessica Tisch, Commissioner, NYC Department of Sanitation**. “In 2023, the Adams administration showed residents across the five boroughs that trash is a solvable problem – if you have the will to go through with making changes.”

Highlights from the Trash Revolution include:

Drastically shrinking the time trash sits out: Residents and businesses used to drop their bags of trash on the sidewalk at 4 pm — the earliest set-out time of any major American city — leaving massive piles of black bags on our sidewalks just as rush hour was getting under way. These piles sat for more than 12 hours, and sometimes up to 36 hours before they were picked up. That is now a thing of the past. In April, the City changed the set-out time to 8 pm, though residents using containers can place them out at 6 pm, and businesses using containers can place them out an hour before closing. At the same time, DSNY shifted its operations to pick up that trash much, much sooner. The Department moved a quarter of its collection, primarily in densely populated areas, to a midnight shift, and put 2,500 of the city’s largest residential buildings on early morning routes that effectively pick up trash almost immediately after it is set out.

Getting trash out of bags and into containers: Following the findings of its 2023 Future of Trash report, the Department of Sanitation has enacted steps to have 70 percent of all refuse containerized by next fall – with plans in development for the rest. As of this summer and fall, all food-based businesses and all chain businesses, respectively, [are required](#) to put their trash in containers. In March 2024, ALL businesses [will be required](#) to put their trash in containers. And next fall, residents who live in buildings with 1-9 units [will be required](#) to put their trash in containers. The Department began a procurement process to design the first-ever official NYC bins, which will be available when the mandate goes into effect, and required for these smaller residential buildings approximately two years later.

Mayor Adams and Commissioner Tisch have been clear that they are coming for the remaining 30 percent trash, mostly from larger residential buildings. To containerize this trash, the Department is piloting on-street containers for schools and residential buildings in a section of Hamilton Heights, also launched in 2023. To expand containerization across the City, DSNY is developing automated side-loader trucks, which will be the first of their kind in North America.

Launched the largest and easiest curbside composting program in the country: All residents of Brooklyn and Queens now have weekly curbside composting service on their recycling day, under a program that eliminates all the obstacles of past programs. Residents do not have to sign up, nor do they need a special bin. All they need to do is put all of their food and yard waste into a container – with or without a liner – and Sanitation will pick it up weekly, turning it into compost, renewable energy and/or fertilizer. Next October – just in time for leaf season – residents of the Bronx, Manhattan and Staten Island will receive the same service. In the meantime, the Department maintains a network of 400 Smart Composting Bins, which residents can access 24/7 with an easy-to-use smartphone app. As a result of these and other programs, FY2023 was the first year ever that the City diverted 100 million pounds of compostable material from landfill.

Cleaning more areas of the city than ever before: Thanks to a historic investment from Mayor Adams, in 2023 DSNY formed its first-ever Highway Unit to clean highways, increased enforcement of cleanliness violations, installed a network of approximately 270 cameras to catch illegal dumpers who prey on “out-of-the-way” locations, and formed a joint task force with NYPD to remove derelict and abandoned vehicles from our streets.

Taken together, this amounts to no less than a Trash Revolution. These policies and investments have transformed city streets and sidewalks and [put a dent](#) in what used to be an all-you-can-eat buffet for rats. Heading into 2024, New Yorkers should know that the greatest City in the world is taking steps to be the cleanest City in the world.