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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: February 3, 2016

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**RUSH TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO ANNOUNCES CLEANYC – HOLISTIC
EFFORT TO KEEP COMMUNITIES CLEAN ACROSS THE FIVE BOROUGHES**

Mayor Bill de Blasio: Good morning, everyone. Well, we all know that New York City is the greatest city in the world. It is an extraordinary place to live, and work and to visit. I would say as much as it's been in its entire history – maybe greater than its ever been on many levels, and we have some facts to prove it. Our population is the largest it has ever been in our history. The number of tourists that we had last year set an all-time record five – excuse me, 58.3 million. We're safer than ever. In so many ways this city is moving forward, but that does not stop us from thinking about how we can do better and how we can innovate, and how we can improve the quality of life in this city. So today we're taking a major step forward by announcing CleanYC, a set of targeted efforts to make all five boroughs cleaner and more livable. And this is so important for the lives of everyday New Yorkers for whom their neighborhood is the center of their life. It's so important for our small businesses, it's important for our economy. And the people of this city deserve nothing less than the cleanest city we can make it.

I want to thank so many people who are a part of this effort. You're going to hear from a few of them in a moment, but I want to thank, of course, everyone who works for our Sanitation Department and the great job that they do. You'll hear from Commissioner Garcia, but I also want to thank Chief Visconti, the Chief of Cleaning, someone every New Yorker appreciates, thank you Chief Visconti. I want to thank the good folks at the Economic Development Corporation that are playing a major role in one of the initiatives I'm about to tell you about – represented today by Chief of Staff James Katz, thank you James. And I'm going to be joined – I think shortly – by Jessica Lappin, President of Downtown Alliance. We thank her for their support as well.

Now, the men and women of our Sanitation Department do an extraordinary job. They do it every single day. They do it on an enormous scale. Every day they haul 10,500 tons of garbage, and almost 2,000 tons of recycling off the streets of our city. And I remind you my friends, that is one bag at a time – huge human effort. A massive effort every day to keep this city clean. CleanYC is going to build on their tremendous work through four major initiatives.

First, curbside litter baskets tend to fill up on weekends and holidays and that's especially true in the areas that get the most foot traffic – our most popular shopping streets and where we have lots of attractions. So, at the beginning of the warmer weather, around April 1st, we're going to

increase our Sunday and holiday basket pickup service by 40 percent in heavily trafficked areas. This will reach an additional 5,000 litter baskets on top of the 12,000 that we already serve: a grand total of 17,000 trash baskets will get pickups on Sundays and holidays. This is something – I remember my time as a City Council member in Brooklyn – this is one of the things people care about the most. They want their streets to be clean, they hate when they see litter on the streets, they hate when they see those baskets overflowing. And a lot of that problem has come from Sundays and holidays. So, we're doing something about it to make sure that those pickups occur and our streets will be cleaner.

Second, when you're coming off a highway or going onto a highway on a ramp often one of the first things visitors to our city see is something we as New Yorkers see every single day – and too often those ramps and the areas around them are too dirty. So, we're going to be sweeping an additional 100 miles of ramps each week to get rid of the litter and the debris and the leaves.

Third, graffiti in our city requires continuing vigilance. So, we're going to double the capacity of Graffiti-Free NYC, the city's graffiti removal program, allowing us to clean – this is an amazing number – 40 million square feet of space every year. 40 million square feet of space will be cleaned every year, so we can keep ahead of graffiti and make sure this is a graffiti free city. Graffiti-Free NYC has removed – this is another amazing figure – over 200 million square feet of graffiti across the five boroughs since 1999 at no cost to the owners. And I think we got one of their wonderful trucks – when you see that truck in your neighborhood, and again in my time as a City Council member, I can say people really like it when that truck shows up to clean the graffiti away from their neighborhood. We're going to be doing a lot more of that.

Fourth and this is a brand new initiative, we will scrub sidewalks along heavily trafficked commercial corridors in all five boroughs – so major shopping streets in all five boroughs. We use the same ability that these trucks have. This newly upgraded power washing ability that these trucks have – we'll use it to not only get rid of graffiti, we'll use it to scrub sidewalks that need it.

Starting this year, you'll see this work all across our city. And some of the streets we'll focus on initially will include Hyland Boulevard in Staten Island, Church Avenue in Brooklyn, the Downtown Flushing transit hub in Queens, Jerome Gun Hill in the Bronx, and Broadway on the Upper West Side. Those are just examples, they'll be others for sure. But the point is to go to areas that get a lot of foot traffic, that people spend of their lives walking along that need to look cleaner. We're going to literally power wash those sidewalks as part of this overall CleaNYC effort. So you're going to see a difference over the months ahead. You're going to see neighborhoods that are cleaner, that have less litter. It's going to be – for the people of New York City – nicer to walk on those streets, to go out and shop, to go out to eat, to spend time with their families. It's going to be a more welcoming environment both for New Yorkers and our visitors. And this is so important because we know a strong city – a city that will be a city of the future has to have safe streets, livable streets, clean streets. That's what people look for, and we're going to show that to them more and more all over this city. I have to say, I always [hear](#) this from neighborhood residents, I hear this from small businesses, when we have nice clean environment it makes everything else go better. And that's what we're going to bring to the people of New York City with CleaNYC.

A few words in Spanish.

[Mayor de Blasio speaks in Spanish]

With that, the woman who is the expert on keeping New York City clean, did a fantastic job dealing with the recent snowstorm. And thank you again to all the men and women of the Sanitation Department for their great work, and their great work every day. And if there's one person who fights every day for a cleaner city, it is our Sanitation Commissioner Kathryn Garcia.

[...]

Mayor: Alright, we are going to take some questions on this topic and then we're going to go to some off-topic questions. Let's take questions on this topic first.

Question: Mayor, do you think that at a time when homelessness is so tough to grapple with, this type of a beautification effort can send a message to New Yorkers that we're not lapsing back into the "bad old days?"

Mayor: Well I've said many times, we are never going back to the bad old days in this city, not on my watch. I guarantee that. In fact, this city is getting stronger. As I said, people are voting with their feet – largest population we've ever had, more tourists than we've ever had, highest property values than we've ever had. There is no question the city is moving in the right direction and most importantly, safer than ever. And we'll be doing a separate press conference in a little bit to talk about the January safety numbers, which are outstanding. So, we'll look forward to telling you more about that. But you're right that part of what we need to do every day is show people a city that is getting safer, cleaner, more orderly – this is an area where I think people know I strongly agree with Commissioner Bratton on the core concept of the Broken Windows strategy, which is to keep order, to show that things will be addressed – even little things. Graffiti per se, you can't call it a major crime but it really is upsetting to people in neighborhoods. It makes them feel like the quality of life is not as good and I know this from having served in the City Council and representing neighborhoods in Brooklyn. People are really bothered by graffiti. They want to see it addressed quickly. This is going to allow us to do a lot more of that. People hate to see a litter basket overflowing with trash, it suggests disorder. We want to show not only order, but cleanliness. We want our neighborhoods to be more livable. So, yes, I think it is part of showing the people of the city that we are going to get better all the time. We're going to become stronger all the time. And this is the kind of everyday neighborhood issue that people really care about.

Okay, questions on this please.

Question: So, in terms of the highways – cleaning graffiti off them, I know that in the past, like there's always this jurisdictional question about who is responsible for doing that because some of them are state, some of them are city. Is that something you guys thought about or are you just like deciding, "Well screw this, we're going to go for it?"

Mayor: Well, that's your phraseology. I – I will offer my interpretation and Kathryn feel free to add. Look, we just want to get the job done. We want to make sure that these ramps are clean. We want the highways to look better for everyone, the same with graffiti. I don't think there's jurisdictional issue, I think it's about getting the job and, you know, I think everyone wants to work together to make them cleaner.

Any other questions on this topic? Yes.

Question: Mayor, I'm probably dating myself a little – I'm thinking about Rudy Giuliani and when he would do something [inaudible]. What's changed since his effort, you think [inaudible] and the dynamic and how you want to approach this differently than when they did [inaudible]?

Mayor: Well, you know, the graffiti effort, as I mentioned, started in 1999 and I think it's been a great, great effort so I certainly give Mayor Giuliani credit for having help that move along. And the notion here is, we have to build on it. We have to keep going farther. There's been, I think, great enforcement over the years by NYPD, which has a very sophisticated effort for dealing with graffiti and being able to identify any graffiti "artists" and, you know, it's very, very careful about following up on them and stopping them. But it's still a problem and so we want to go deeper to address it. And I think on the other fronts – I mean, some of these other issues, have not been addressed – the overflowing litter baskets have not been addressed; the fact that some of our sidewalks are just not clean enough, that's why the power washing idea came up. I've travel the city all the time. I talk to people all the time. I walk on those sticky sidewalks and, you know, I've seen some that just don't represent how good New York City should be. So, we started talking internally about what we could do about it and what the team at Sanitation and others pointed out is we could use the same power washing capacity we use for graffiti on the sidewalks directly to really improve quality of life. So, there's been some good efforts in the past but this is going to take them to a much higher level.

Yes?

Question: Mr. Mayor, Singapore has a wall – or a rule that there's a \$500 penalty for a possession of chewing gum because you know –

Mayor: Your arcane knowledge is impressive.

[Laughter]

Question: I thought –

Mayor: That's a jeopardy question. If you ever get it you'll be ready now. "What is the fine for chewing gum in Singapore?"

[Laughter]

Question: But, would there be any effort to try to get people to – I mean you do see those black chewing gum spots all over the place and you can't really get them up apparently.

Mayor: You're a little ahead of us on that. We don't have a chewing gum policy yet. I think it's a good question but I don't anticipate governing as they do in Singapore, which I think we could all say is a little more iron-hand than New York City. But look, I think we're going to look at everything and anything that makes us cleaner. I think the power washing is going to make a big contribution, in terms of our sidewalks. I think just not having trash fly around because of overflowing baskets is going to help a lot. But Kathryn will certainly study the chewing gum question.

Do you have anything you want to add?

Commissioner Kathryn Garcia, Department of Sanitation: I don't think you're giving me the enforcement power [inaudible].

Mayor: Yes, she would like the enforcement powers of Singapore. We're going to talk this through – get the legal experts involved.

Alright, other questions on this topic – on this topic, yes?

Question: Do you guys have a sense of which – like how much graffiti is a problem in each of the boroughs? Like any complaint numbers that you can share?

Mayor: I'm sorry. Do you have a sense of that?

Chief of Staff James Katz, Economic Development Corporation: So, since the Graffiti-Free Program has been in effect in 1999 it has taken complaints primarily through the 3-1-1 system. We have the data we can share – but about 48 percent of it comes in from Brooklyn, about 15 from Manhattan, Queens, and the Bronx respectively, and about two to three percent from Staten Island in terms of complaints.

Question: Just to follow up on that – is that, like I know about local elected officials on Staten Island handle a lot of graffiti complaints through their office. That's not something that you guys are taking into account, is it?

Katz: Well, when the mayor talks about the new power washing initiative, with respect to sidewalks and commercial corridors, we anticipate doing that in a proactive way, not simply off 3-1-1 complaints, which will entail close consultation with local elected officials as well as merchant organizations to direct the efforts.

Mayor: But we also welcome – we welcome the 3-1-1 calls, we want people to call in graffiti so we can act on it quickly. We certainly are going to be working with elected officials who have been great allies in fighting against graffiti. So, I think all of the pieces actually complement each other but I think James's point is key – we're going to go places whether there's a complaint or not. If we think there's a cleanliness problem we can address, we're going to do it proactively.

Yes?

Question: Mr. Mayor, you know, just wondering if you could talk a little bit about whether there's going to be stepped-up enforcement efforts on graffiti in general. I don't know if the NYPD is going to be cracking down on that more than usual?

Mayor: I would say it's part of the broader efforts the NYPD will be making on quality-of-life crimes because what's happened over the last few years is we've been able to drive down more serious crime – the more violent crime, and we have 2,000 more officers who will be on patrol by the end of the year. The whole vision here – it certainly fits in with the neighborhood policing strategy – is to therefore be able to go at quality-of-life crimes a lot more than we were able to in the past. And that's something to really think about. Years ago, of course, NYPD officers had to focus a lot of time on the most serious crimes, now some time is being freed up to go after quality-of-life crimes, so, you're certainly going to see consistently more enforcement of them.

On this topic. Last call on – yes, please.

Question: [Inaudible]. How will cracking down on graffiti [inaudible]?

Mayor: Street art?

Question: Preserving [inaudible] –

Mayor: Well, I'll let James speak to it. I think there's a difference between something that's authorized to be in a certain place versus something that is, you know, vandalizing a place. So, let's talk about that.

Katz: So, it's a great question and one we've been thinking about since the program has been around. Street art is typically commissioned by somebody and also typically put on private property with the property owner's consent. The Graffiti Free Program, as it's been structured, has also taken the rights and responsibilities of private property owners into account. And so, the property owner can either ask themselves to have the graffiti removed or the system allows them – if the complaint comes elsewhere – to opt out if they want the art on their property and view it as street art, as many of us do.

Mayor: Okay, thank you. On this topic. Last call on this topic. Going once, twice – now, let me just say for the off-topic – happy to talk about anything, I remind you again, we're going to have a press conference at One Police Plaza coming up. So, if it's anything police related, I'd suggest we do it there with me and Commissioner Bratton together.

Go ahead, Andrew.

Question: Mayor, about 90-minutes from now, Bernie Sanders is scheduled to meet with his supporters at City Hall Park. [Inaudible] 75,000 signatures and march over to the Board of Elections. Do you interpret his appearance right in front of City Hall at all as snub to you since you endorsed his opponent and do you regret that endorsement at all?

Mayor: One, I didn't know he was doing it until you asked the question. Two, no, of course I don't regard it as a snub in any way, shape, or form. You know, campaigns do whatever they want to do to build support. I'm very happy I endorsed Hillary Rodham Clinton. It was an honor to work on her behalf in Iowa. We – the team that went out there, we knocked on over 2,500 doors, which we're very proud of. And I think, look, she won. She won Iowa. She's doing great and I think she's going to do great as goes forward.

Yes?

Question: Sir, on your community redesign plans – on Friday, there was an announcement that you'd be investing in job creation in East New York. Will you be making similar investments in other communities?

Mayor: Well, again, wherever we are looking at rezoning, my view is, I think, different than some of my predecessors. I see the rezoning as a chance to right some wrongs and to make up for some things that were not done properly in the past. A lot of communities did not have the kind of job creation they deserve. We didn't have, often – we've talked about the fact – we haven't enough of a five borough economy. That is changing in the last two years. I want to thank everyone at EDC, who's done a great job really trying to create neighborhood-based economy in a five borough economy. But one of the things we can do through to a rezoning process is maximize the creation of local jobs and maximize the ability of local residents to get them. So, that's something we're going to focus on intensely as we do rezonings.

Yes?

Question: Mr. Mayor, the horse carriage drivers say that the union that you negotiated the agreement in concept with was not representing their interest, and never came back to them for approval. I'm wondering if that's something you're trying to get to the bottom to and whether it's a problem that one of the three parties may not have been representing the drivers?

Mayor: The – any union that represents workers and is democratically elected to represent those workers is the authorized representative of those workers. That's who we dealt with.

Yes?

Question: Mr. Mayor, if I can get back to Iowa for a second. I think your preferred candidate – you mentioned won the caucus by a very small margin. I'm curious as to your interpretation of that especially considering that she's down rather significantly [inaudible] in New Hampshire?

Mayor: Look, I think she's running a great campaign. And I've said, seeing what was happening on the ground in Iowa was very, very impressive. I was out there in '08. This was a much stronger effort – great ground game, great enthusiasm. I had the pleasure of going to a number of the staging areas where volunteers were gathering to go out canvassing and revving up the volunteers and really telling them how important it was to get out every vote. Little did we know that more than ever – it was literally the closest Democratic caucus in the history of the Iowa caucuses. So, I think in the end she had a great ground game. Her campaign is stronger than ever,

certainly. And when you look at how it was in the past it is the strong – a much stronger campaign. And look, we all know New Hampshire has a history of going with someone from a neighboring state. They did that with John Kerry, they've done it with other people in the past. It's not a surprise. As this campaign goes forward I think she's going to get stronger and stronger. I think the states up ahead are going to be very, very good to her. So, I think her campaign's in great shape.

Please?

Question: Just a follow up – do you have plans to do more campaigning on her behalf?

Mayor: It's totally up to the campaign what they need. And I'm happy to do whatever they need.

Jen?

Question: Just a little bit on Iowa, since it was so close do you feel like you had an impact? I mean, are you glad that you went?

Mayor: Absolutely glad I went. I don't presume to say what kind of impact. I'm glad that we knocked on over 2,500 doors in such a close race. I think that people to people contact matters in every election, but nowhere more so than in the Iowa caucuses. So, I hope we helped, and it was certainly, you know, a great experience being with all those wonderful Democratic activists who are supporting Hillary Clinton.

Question: Mr. Mayor, are you comfortable with the council asking for \$10,000 more in the raise than the [inaudible] panel had originally suggested? Do you think there are adequate kickbacks on their part?

Mayor: Look, first and most importantly, the report of the Quadrennial Commission, which if you haven't had a chance to read is really worth reading – it's an exceptional document. And, you know, Fred Schwartz, and Joe Bright, and Paul Quintero deserve a lot of credit. They looked very deeply at the question of what was the right way to handle things. And one of the most important points they pointed out was that the kinds of reforms that the council is now discussing are absolutely historic – making the City Council role a full-time job, which it has never been before, ending the practice of committee chairs getting favoritism in the forms of special compensation. These are things people have talked about for decades in this city, and the Commission put forward that proposal. I'm very hopeful from everything the Council said and from they have in their legislation that that's what's going to happen. We're going to get reforms we've been wanting for decades. That to me is the big story. In terms of what they put forward on compensation, I think they've made a good case for it. I'm going to certainly wait to see what the final vote is and then we'll discuss it. But I think they've made a good case given the magnitude of the reforms that they're undertaking.

Other questions? Yes.

Question: Do you think the council should – has put off this vote on the raises given the controversial horse carriage deal?

Mayor: No. There's no connection between them. The Quadrennial Commission did its report, everything's moved on a timeline since then. The horse carriage issue we've been working on for months and months when we finally got to a fair understanding and a fair deal between the council and the Teamsters and the Mayor's Office it was time to move. The two things happen to correlate. I'm perfectly comfortable with it moving forward.

Last call. Yes?

Question: How confident are you in the horse carriage deal going through on Friday given the sense that the labor [inaudible]?

Mayor: Well again, the Teamsters union, democratically elected leadership, is the people we worked with. Right – well, TWU, God bless them, but they have not had any involvement with this issue previously. So, I want to just affirm that I'm very happy to work with the pedicab drivers to figure out a good long-term plan for that industry, but TWU has not been a part of that process previously. And I think there's a lot of support in the Council. This is the kind of balanced plan the council members said they wanted, and we're going to get it done.

Question: You've announced CleaNYC – is there going to be any push for the plastic bag bill?

Mayor: For?

Question: The plastic bag bill.

Mayor: Well, that's something we've been talking to the council about. And I've said that we share the goal of addressing the problem of plastic bags. This is a real environmental problem. There are still some issues being worked through on the best way to do it, but, you know, when there are two parties who agree on the goal it's just a matter of time of figuring it out the best way to get it done. And I'm pretty confident we'll get there.

Last call – a couple more, okay.

Question: I know you're going to talk about it later again, but at a time when the crime level in the city seems to be at record lows you still have slashing –

Mayor: Well, I'd like to talk about that with Commissioner Bratton present. Of course, we'll talk about it.

Question: There's some more information out today that your office is [inaudible] FOIL requests for sensitivity and anything that reflects poorly on you.

Mayor: I don't think it's about what reflects poorly. It's about – look, there are confidentiality issues; there are legal issues. Once we clarify that something is appropriate to provide, we provide it. It's as simple as that.

Question: [inaudible]

Mayor: Again, perception is such an interesting discussion because it is in the eye of the beholder. The order is clear. We have to make sure that anything that we provide is legally appropriate and does not violate confidentiality, and fits within the purview of the FOIL law. But once that is true, it is provided.

Question: What's your opinion of [inaudible] being that the race was so close on Hillary?

Mayor: I don't have an opinion on that. Look, the Iowa Democratic Party is legendary for running a very, you know, highly developed complicated process of the caucuses. They've done it for decades. I have faith that they handle their work very, very well. And again, I think it was a great well fought campaign. And in the end she won the day.

Thanks, everyone.

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