



CITY OF NEW YORK
MANHATTAN COMMUNITY BOARD FOUR

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LOWELL D. KERN
Chair

JESSE R. BODINE
District Manager

February 21, 2021

Hon. Bill de Blasio
Mayor, City of New York
City Hall
New York, NY 10007

Hon. Corey Johnson
Speaker, New York City Council
224 W. 30th Street, Suite 1206
New York, NY 10001

Re: Litter Basket Pickup Service and Alternative Program Funding

Dear Mayor de Blasio and Speaker Johnson,

Manhattan Community Board 4 (MCB4) requests that the Mayor's Office and City Council work toward restoring the budget for Department of Sanitation (DSNY) basket pickups in the FY2022 budget, while also investigating complementary solutions to mitigate the problem of overflowing litter baskets. These comments were approved at the February 3, 2021 Full Board meeting with 40 in favor, 2 against, 0 abstaining and 0 present but not eligible to vote.

Background

Due to budget cuts in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, DSNY has reduced litter basket pickup service by 63%, with no plans for restoration this fiscal year. In Manhattan Community District 4 (MCD4), there are now only 2 basket pickup trucks operating on Sundays and Mondays, and 1 truck on the remaining days of the week.¹ The reduction of DSNY service has led to overflowing litter baskets, which reduces usable sidewalk space and creates unsanitary and unsightly conditions on many

¹ From DSNY presentation to Arts, Culture, Education & Street Life committee on Jan 11, 2021.

street corners in both Chelsea and Hell's Kitchen. Overflowing baskets are now especially problematic from a health perspective given that they are often within close proximity to outdoor dining sites.

At a meeting of the MCB4 Arts, Culture, Education & Street Life Committee (ACES) on January 11, 2021, committee members heard from Marissa Yanni, DSNY Manhattan Community Affairs Liaison, as well as Catie Savage, leader of the Hell's Kitchen Litter Legion.

The Hell's Kitchen Litter Legion is a grassroots group started in June 2020 as a response to trash-strewn sidewalks in our neighborhood, and has subsequently hosted more than 25 community clean ups involving 225 volunteer participants. We thank Catie and her volunteers for their initiative and tireless efforts. At the same time, we call upon the City government to step up and take ultimate responsibility for maintaining sanitary streets and sidewalks. Private citizens should not have to resort to organizing and mobilizing volunteers to pick up overflowing trash around their neighborhood in order to live in sanitary conditions- DSNY should be adequately resourced to pick up the trash throughout the city.

Recommendations

MCB4 advocated for a restoration of funding for DSNY basket pickups in its FY22 Statement of District Needs and continues to reiterate the importance of a timely restoration of pickup service. We urge the city to use recent data on truck capacity rates by route to strategically determine the areas most urgently in need of service restoration given the altered residential, tourist and workplace traffic patterns during the pandemic. Leaders of business improvement districts and community groups like the Hell's Kitchen Litter Legion can also provide valuable feedback on the most problematic corner basket sites within our neighborhoods.

Additionally, we request an investment in other complementary solutions to help keep our sidewalks clean. As an example, in Hell's Kitchen, The Association of Community Employment Programs for the Homeless (ACE)² has hired a worker who provides supplemental cleaning on 9th Avenue between 42nd and 59th Streets. This has helped with sidewalk sanitation on 9th Avenue, but we would support City funding for an additional ACE worker in Hell's Kitchen on 10th Avenue and in other problematic areas in MCD4. If funding becomes available, we would encourage ACE to engage with the shelters in our neighborhood and recruit locally for any additional workers. Increased funding for programs like ACE can help to mitigate the issue of sidewalk litter throughout MCD4.

²ACE website: <https://acenewyork.org/>

We thank DSNY for its willingness to engage on the issue of overflowing baskets, and request feedback if there are additional ways MCB4 can help to advocate for a solution to this sanitation issue in our neighborhood.

Sincerely,



Lowell D. Kern
Chair
Community Board 4



Allen Oster
Co-Chair
ACES Committee



Kit Tollerson
Co-Chair
ACES Committee

CC: Edward Grayson, Commissioner, NYC DSNY
Hon. Gale A. Brewer, Manhattan Borough President