



CITY OF NEW YORK  
MANHATTAN COMMUNITY BOARD FOUR

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JESSICA CHAIT  
Chair

JESSE R. BODINE  
District Manager

February 22, 2024

Jessica S. Tisch  
Commissioner  
NYC Department of Sanitation  
125 Worth Street  
New York, NY 10013

Paul D'Amore  
Acting Borough Commissioner  
NYC Department of Parks & Recreation  
Arsenal West, 24 West 61<sup>st</sup> Street, 5<sup>th</sup> Fl.  
New York, NY 10023

**Re: Syringe Collection**

Dear Commissioners Tisch and D'Amore,

In recent years, The Manhattan Community Board 4 (MCB4) district has seen a proliferation of empty and used syringes along with various discarded drug paraphernalia in both our parks and on our street and sidewalk areas.

By a Full Board vote of 36 in favor, 0 against, 0 abstentions and 0 present not eligible, MCB4 requests specific attention to this matter and approves the following comments.

Since the beginning of the COVID epidemic where our district saw a concentration of social service outlets and temporary shelter resident hotel housing, we have seen more needles and dangerous narcotic tools litter our public spaces including but not limited to sidewalks, streets, tree beds, in bushes and shrubs and, perhaps most disturbing, playgrounds.<sup>1</sup> Without promoting cause and effect, the disturbing increase in public syringe sightings also directly corresponds to New York State's decriminalizing possession of these types of drug tools.

We understand the protocol when finding a syringe is to report it to 311. This is important because it documents where these hazardous materials are located, which allows the City to supply the corresponding services. According to DSNY, in a three-month period of time at the end of 2023, over 360 needles

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<sup>1</sup> Recent photographs of syringes found in our district enclosed.

were recorded and collected in our district. The reality is the vast majority of people who encounter these syringes either leave them or dispose of them on their own. Also, when in and around playgrounds, there is an urgency to discard the needles as quickly as possible.

Another contributing factor to inaccurate 311 numbers is Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) provide street cleanup, including syringe pick up. For example, in 2023, Hudson Yards Hell's Kitchen BID (HYHK) is estimated to have picked up over 2,250 needles in their service area, all not registered with 311. The Garment District BID approximates collecting a few hundred needles a month, also not registered with 311. Foisting the burden of syringe cleanup on our BIDs is not appropriate considering their services are secondary, supplementing NYC agencies, not primary.

We understand the DSNY Syringe Collection Unit is comprised of twelve individuals covering all of New York City. In addition to syringe cleanup, this team also makes up the environmental Police Unit responsible for additional biohazard cleanup - an "incredibly small unit"<sup>2</sup> and an onerous responsibility for a dozen people.

Knowing DSNY has prescheduled routes for syringe cleanup, MCB4 was surprised to hear only one overlaps our Community Board district (north Chelsea) and there are none in Hell's Kitchen despite our glaring problem areas. We request the following "hot spot" locations be added to the prescheduled route list:

- West 36th/37th/38th Streets to Dyer Ave/Lincoln Tunnel entry including "the canoe" public space
- West 43rd Street between 8th & 10th Avenues
- West 47th Street between 8th & 10th Avenues
- West 45th Street between 8th & 9th Avenues
- West 50th to 54th Streets between 10th & 12th Avenues
- West 51st between 8th & 9th Avenues

We would also like to call attention to problem areas in and around these parks and open areas:

- Ramon Aponte at West 47th between 8th & 9th Avenues
- McCaffrey Playground at West 43rd between 8th & 9th Avenues
- DeWitt Clinton Park at 11th Avenue between West 52nd & 53rd Streets
- Empty lot on 10th Avenue between West 48th & 49th Streets
- Chelsea Park at West 28th between 9th & 10th Avenues

MCB4 understands DSNY is responsible for public space clean up and Parks is responsible for clean up inside the Parks. It is concerning only eight Parks staff members covering our district are trained and certified for syringe collection, especially considering the large number of needles found in our area. Though there are no prescheduled syringe clean up routes for Parks as there is with DSNY, we request Parks maintenance staff note the highlighted areas above where we can regularly anticipate a significant amount discarded syringes and assign the appropriate resources for collection.

We thank the P.S. 212 PTA for participating in our meeting and alerting us to this situation.

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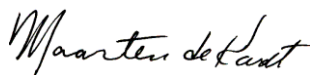
<sup>2</sup> DSNY comment at January, 2023 CB4 WPE meeting  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iCDhdy1cRKQ&t=3363s>

MCB4 hopes you recognize the urgency to keep our public spaces clear of discarded syringes and drug paraphernalia, especially in and around children's playgrounds. MCB4 will continue to work with both DSNY and Parks to identify and update any "hot spots" in our district.

Sincerely,



Jessica Chait  
Chair, Manhattan Community Board 4



Maarten deKadt  
Co-chair  
Waterfront, Parks & Environment Committee



Leslie Boghosian Murphy  
Co-chair  
Waterfront, Parks & Environment Committee

Enclosure

CC: Hon. Brad Hoylman-Sigal, NYS Senator  
Hon. Tony Simone, NYS Assembly Member  
Hon. Erik Bottcher, NYC Council Member  
Robert Befatto, President, HYHK BID  
Barbara A. Blair, President, Garment District BID



Pic. 1  
361 W. 36th St. residential building entrance showing needles, alcohol swipes and "cooking" tins. Photo submitted by the West 36th Street Block Association



Pic. 2  
Found on W. 36th St.  
Photo submitted by the West 36th Street Block Association



Pic. 3  
Found at the entrance of PS51 elementary school on W. 44th St. A parent discarded them due to the urgency. This was not recorded to 311. Photo submitted by Chad MacDonald



Pic. 4  
Found in Ramon Aponte Playground on W. 47th St. next to PS212 elementary school. Photo submitted by Cody Lindquist