

Statement on DSNY Rules for Waste Containerization for Small Residential Buildings

Jim Wright, AIA

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My name is Jim Wright, a transportation architect, urban designer, and advocate for sustainable infrastructure and a world-class public realm in all parts of the city. I support a coordinated approach to street and sidewalk management which prioritizes pedestrians while balancing the needs of all uses.

Those of us who support a complete streets approach to public space planning have long supported a well-managed waste removal and recycling network that includes containerization for commercial and residential buildings to replace the chaotic and unsanitary bag system now in place. While I support the City's overall goal of waste containerization, the proposed implementation strategy falls short of best-practices waste collection strategies in several ways-

- Since many small residential buildings do not have indoor space to hold bins, these bins will often be stored between pick-ups on sidewalks within 3' of the building line according to the proposed rules. This storage location is inefficient operationally and produces unnecessary conflicts with other uses that share the sidewalk – a minimum 8' unobstructed, accessible lane for pedestrian circulation as well as conflicts with sidewalk cafes, retail storefront displays, street trees, sidewalk hatches, sidewalk sheds, and other sidewalk furniture.
- Despite being covered, the bins will be unsightly and smelly in between pick-ups, particularly in hot temperatures which now run from May through September and beyond. It could be argued that this is no worse than black bags now placed on the sidewalk at the curb, however the goal should be to improve waste removal as well as public space, not just move the trash from one place to another on sidewalks.
- The proposed rules do not require that recycled materials be placed into containers so those materials will still be bagged while waiting for pick-up, further clogging sidewalks.
- The proposed rules do not address containerization for organic waste which is being phased in under DSNY's composting program but is struggling to achieve its environmental goals.
- By rolling out the transition in a piece-meal and inconsistent way, DSNY is missing a real opportunity to educate and train users for a new and complete waste/recycling/composting system.

Fortunately, there is a straightforward solution to these problems – locating waste, recycling, and composting containers in the street curb lane. The Center for Zero Waste Design has developed a realistic strategy for shared street containers at the curb lane where they belong, the same type of containers which are proposed by DSNY for trash from large residential buildings. By removing the bins entirely from sidewalks, this system is not only more sanitary but it is easier and safer for pick-up by sanitation workers.

I strongly urge DSNY and the City to adopt a more innovative and consistent approach at the beginning of the transition to waste containerization to assure that the program meets all of its potential to contribute to a more orderly, sanitary, and lively public realm.