



# sanitation

Edward Grayson Commissioner

## Testimony of Gregory Anderson, Deputy Commissioner New York City Department of Sanitation

### Intro 2409 - A Local Law to amend the administrative code of the city of New York, in relation to the cleaning and maintenance of city property

#### New York City Council Committee on Government Operations

Monday, November 29, 2021  
10:00 A.M.

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Good morning Chair Cabrera and members of the City Council Committee on Governmental Operations. I am Gregory Anderson, Deputy Commissioner for Policy and External Affairs at the New York City Department of Sanitation (“DSNY”). I am joined today by Stephen Harbin, Chief of Cleaning Operations at DSNY. From the NYC Department of Transportation (“DOT”) I am joined by Montgomery Dean, Chief of Staff to the First Deputy Commissioner, and Rebecca Zack, Assistant Commissioner for Intergovernmental and Community Affairs. From the Department of Parks and Recreation (“Parks”), I am joined by Mark Focht, Chief Operating Officer, and Matt Drury, Director of Government Relations.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on Intro 2409 on behalf of the Administration. Given the number of bills and topics on today’s agenda, I will keep my testimony somewhat brief.

At DSNY, our mission is to keep New York City healthy, safe, and clean. Our frontline Sanitation workers empty litter baskets, sweep the streets, pick up litter and dumped trash, and manually clean public spaces across the city. While some of our core cleaning services were cut during the COVID-19 pandemic, we have since restored funding for many services, including litter basket collection and syringe litter removal. We have also launched our Precision Cleaning Initiative, with teams that conduct targeted cleanings of litter conditions and illegal dumping. These conditions are eyesores that affect New Yorkers’ quality of life and threaten NYC’s recovery.

This year, the City also created the City Cleanup Corps, Mayor de Blasio’s New Deal-inspired program, intended to foster the city’s economic recovery by employing 10,000 New Yorkers to refresh and revitalize our city to make it welcoming to residents, workers, and tourists alike. Since its launch six months ago, the Corps has contributed significantly to cleaning the city’s streets and sidewalks in neighborhoods across the five boroughs.

At the program’s peak, 3,200 of these Corps members served as new Parks maintenance employees, helping keep the City’s 30,000 acres of parkland clean and safe. Whether serving

on fixed-post crews assigned to a given park, playground, or recreational facility, or as part of a mobile crew traveling to site to site as a team, Parks maintenance workers are able to observe conditions in the spaces they care for, address issues as they arise, and report serious concerns to their supervisors. Sector staff perform daily park maintenance, as well as garbage collection, mowing, snow plowing, and basic repairs and upkeep. Parks staff are tasked with cleaning a park for as long and as often as it takes to make it clean and safe for the public. The agency has rigorous standards for cleanliness, safety, and cleaning frequency. To ensure these standards are met, every park receives monthly inspections by the sector's supervisors, as well as at least two random audit inspections per year by highly-trained inspectors from the independently-administered Parks Inspection Program.

DOT also continued working throughout the pandemic to do its part to keep the city clean. DOT Arterial maintenance employees work daily in all five boroughs to sweep roadways, pick up bulk debris, clear catch basins, repair attenuators, guiderails and fences, and fill potholes. Since the beginning of the City Cleanup Corps program, DOT has engaged dozens of Corps members to support its Arterial maintenance program. Corps members worked along major arterial corridors and adjacent areas, including exit ramps, center medians, shoulder areas, and more, and to date have removed over 2,000 cubic yards of debris. In addition, over 100 Cleanup Corps members supported operations, sanitation, and horticultural needs at 22 Open Street locations through DOT's contract with The Horticultural Society of New York, providing support in areas that were the hardest hit by COVID and have low existing partner capacity. Through the OneNYC Plaza Equity Program, DOT continued to work with its Plaza Partners to provide maintenance and operational support at 32 plazas in under-resourced neighborhoods.

All 8.8 million New Yorkers, as well as the millions of visitors and commuters, have a role to play in keeping our city clean. Litter and trash does not just magically appear on city streets – each piece, bag, or pile has a person associated with it—someone who tossed it on the ground, dumped it on the corner, or threw it out a car window. As we recover and move along toward a post-COVID New York City, we ask all New Yorkers to do the right thing: Don't litter. Use litter baskets properly. Clean up after your pet. Move your car for alternate side parking. Sweep the sidewalk in front of your home or business. And if you see a litter condition that needs attention, please let us know by calling 311.

Intro. 2409 would delineate jurisdiction over various city properties for cleaning and maintenance purposes. In short, the bill assigns responsibility for arterial highways including on- and off-ramps to DOT, for parks and planted areas to Parks, and for all other areas, including center malls, underpasses, overpasses, step streets and dead ends, to DSNY. The bill also provides that any governmental body or agency having jurisdiction over a subway, railway or other developed property clean alongside such property. This provision would apply to state or federal agencies and authorities, including the MTA, Port Authority, and Amtrak. The bill also requires each city agency to develop a web application to track the agency's progress in cleaning its properties.

The bill largely codifies assignments created in a memorandum issued by Deputy Mayor for Operations Nathan Leventhal during the Koch Administration in 1983. Known as the "Leventhal Memorandum," this document has for nearly four decades served as the basis for how the cleaning of these properties is distributed amongst the agencies. However, our approach to public spaces has changed over time, particularly with the expansion of public plazas and bicycle, pedestrian, and transit infrastructure in the last decade. With these changes comes the need for flexibility and continuous improvement in the management of public space.

The Administration has a strong commitment to the vibrancy and cleanliness of our public spaces. When there is an issue in a particular location, we are committed to working together to find solutions to address the problem, rather than pointing fingers or passing the buck. Each of the agencies represented here today shares your goal of keeping our city clean and improving the quality of life for New Yorkers in every neighborhood.

The Administration understands the impetus for this legislation and agrees with the intention of more clearly defining cleaning responsibilities for all manner of public properties and infrastructure across the city. We have some concerns that the strict and inflexible assignment of such responsibilities in the Administrative Code may preclude future improvement in the public realm and may not account for new categories of public spaces yet to be deployed in New York City. We look forward to further discussions with the Council about the City's cleaning and maintenance programs. Once again, we remain committed to keeping our City – and all of our public spaces – healthy, safe and clean.

We look forward to working with the Council to discuss these matters further and would now be happy to answer any questions you may have.