

# COMMUNITY NEEDS



Roosevelt Avenue Litter Basket, March 2021  
Source: Queens SWAB Organizing Committee Member

Queens residents can make their needs about waste and resource recovery known to local electeds and agency leaders in many ways.

In this section, we review five publicly available sources offering a broad overview of what Queens residents consider their top waste needs, including:

- 2019 and 2020 311 requests;
- FY20 and FY21 *Community District Annual Needs Statements*;
- FY2021-22 [Citywide Statement of Needs for City Facilities](#);
- recent [Participatory Budgeting](#) (PBNYC) submissions, and,
- FY21 [New York City Council discretionary and capital funding](#).

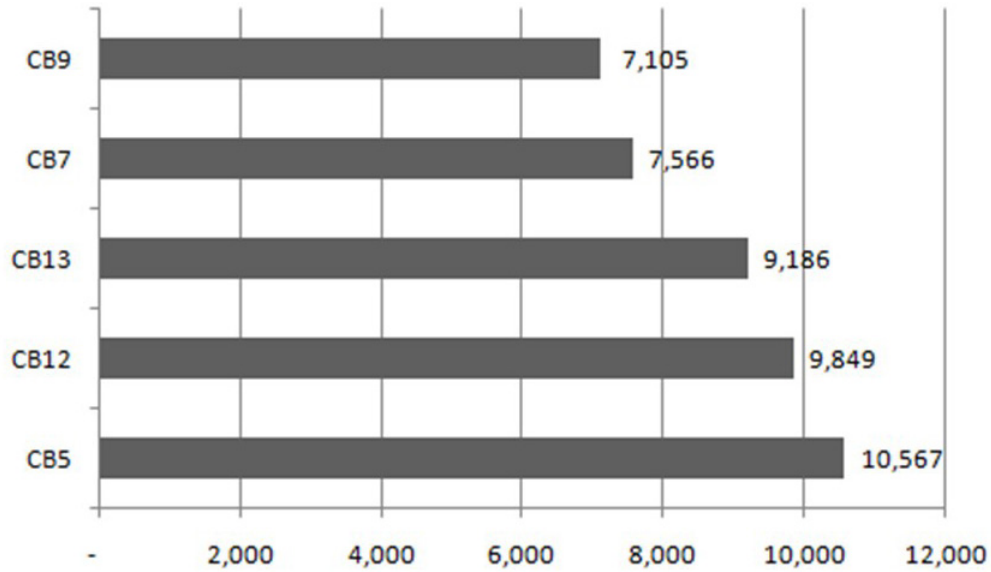
## 311 Service Requests: 2019 and 2020

[New York's 311 system](#) allows people to call, text, or email a central number to quickly and easily access New York City government services and information. Agencies use 311 information to improve service delivery and inform future agency modifications.<sup>1</sup>

Because 2020 was an unusual year due to COVID-19, we compared 311 requests made by Queens residents in 2019 and 2020 to identify whether the pandemic impacted waste concerns.

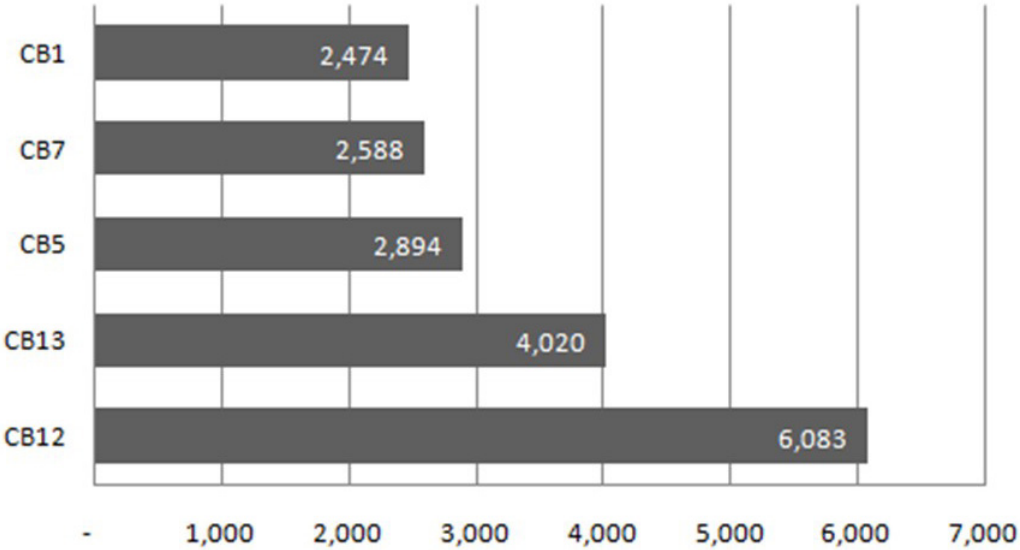
Queens’ DSNY 311 Requests: CY 2019-2020

In calendar year (CY) 2019, Queens residents submitted over 81,667 DSNY-related requests to 311 as compared to 32,821 in 2020. In 2019, the top five Community Boards (CB) with the most requests included 5, 12, 13, 7, and 9, in order of frequency. In 2020, the five CBs with the highest contacts in order of frequency were 12, 13, 5, 7, and 1.



Queens Community Boards with the most DSNY 311 Requests: CY 2019

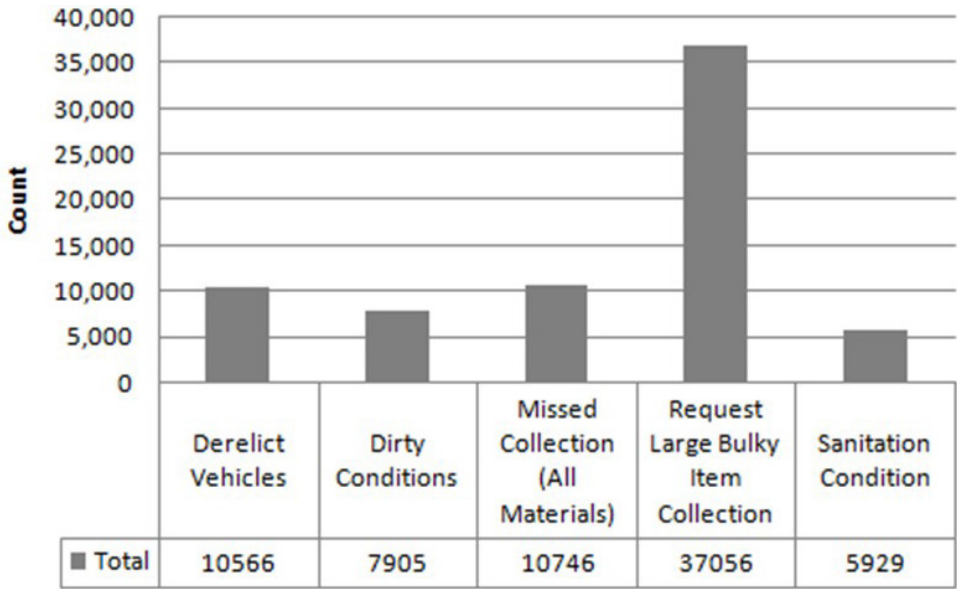
Source: NYC Open Data



Queens Community Boards with the most DSNY 311 Requests: CY 2020

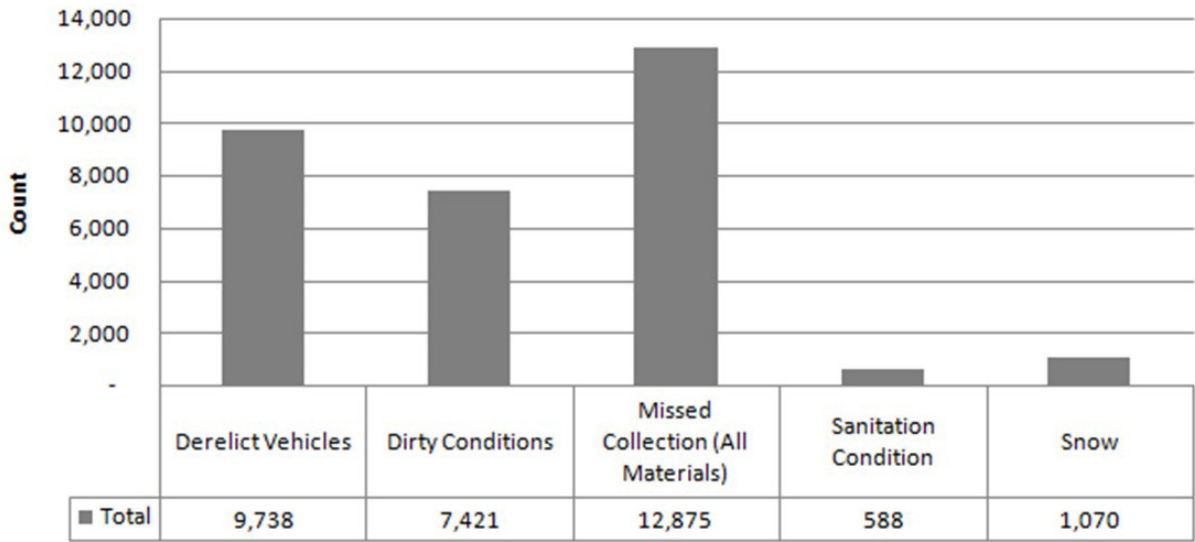
Source: NYC Open Data

In 2019, the most often made requests were for the removal of large, bulky items followed by missed collections. In 2020, residents’ most frequent 311 calls were for missed collections followed by derelict vehicles and dirty conditions. A higher number of missed collections and dirty conditions tracks with anecdotal news reports and reflected in the organizing of neighborhood clean-up groups responding to COVID-19 related DSNY budget cuts.



Queens’ Most Frequent DSNY 311 Requests: CY 2019

Source: NYC Open Data

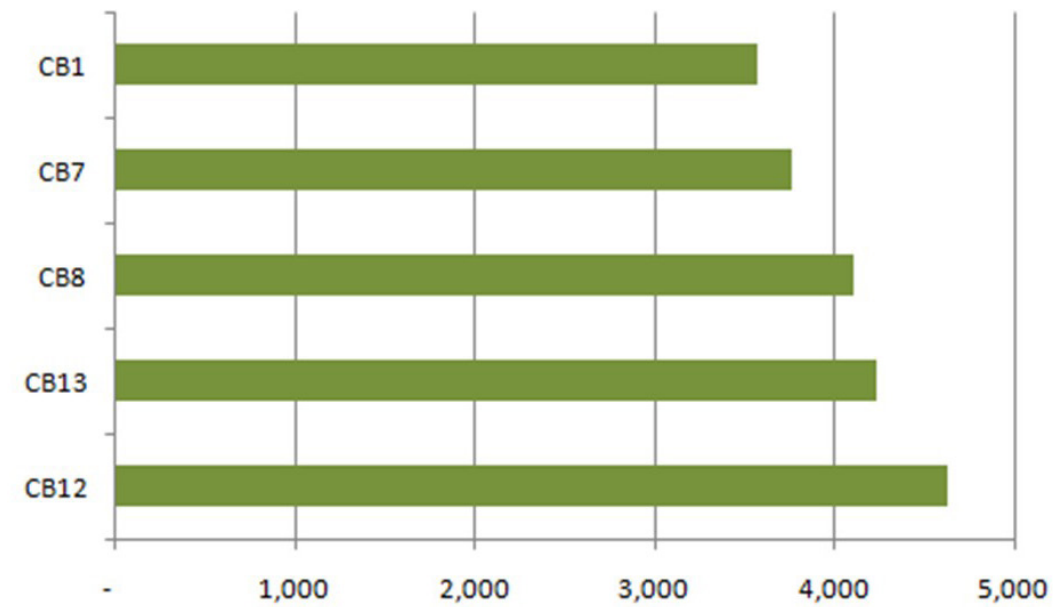


Queens’ Most Frequent DSNY 311 Requests: CY 2020

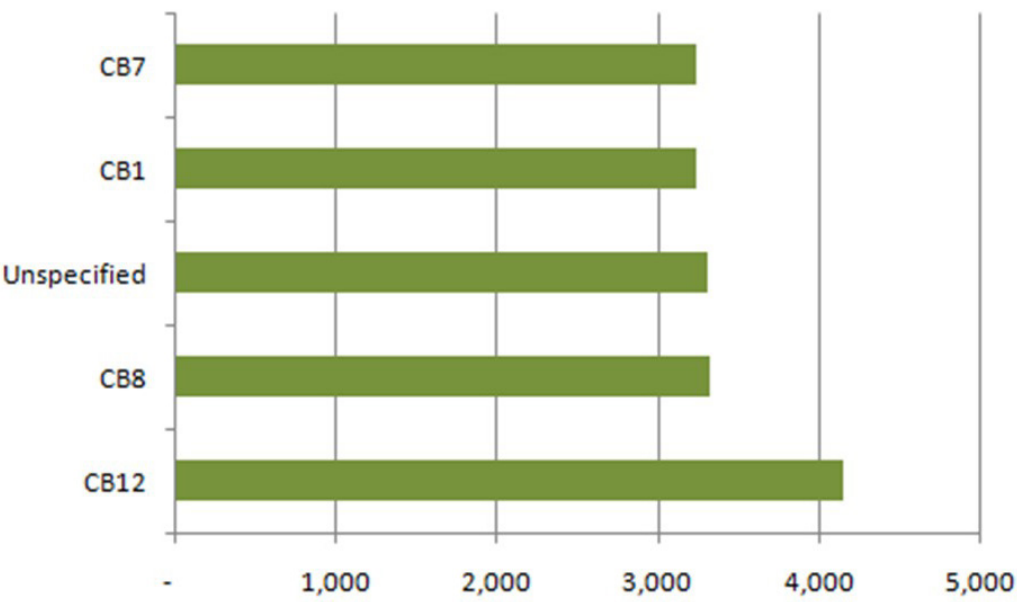
Source: NYC Open Data

Queens DEP 311 Requests: CY 2019-2020

In 2019, Queens residents submitted 42,468 requests to 311 for DEP-related issues. In 2020, those requests declined slightly to 38,278. In both years, the Community Boards with the most DEP requests were 12, 8, 7, and 1.

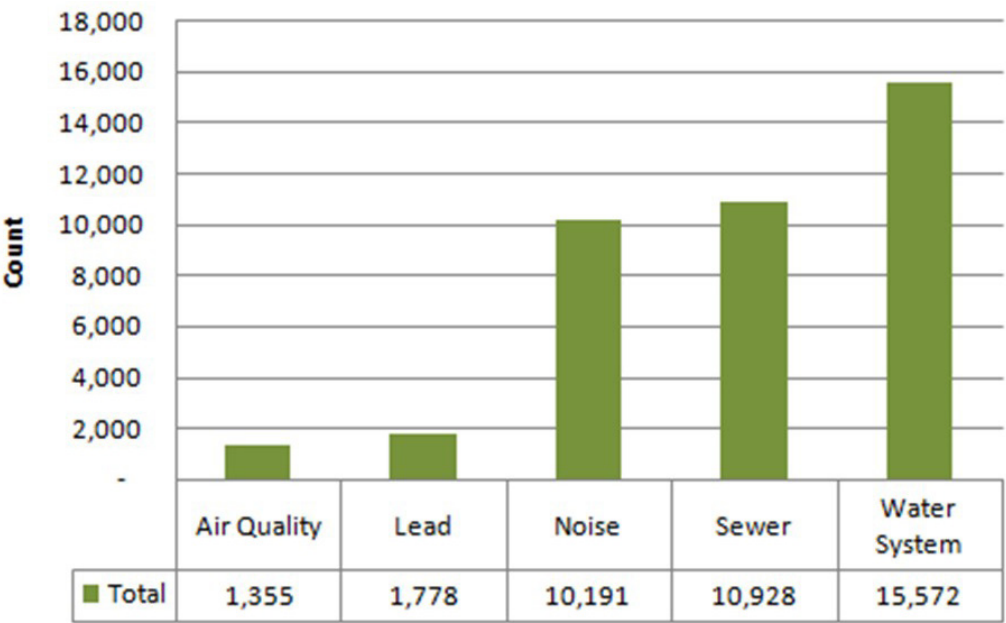


Queens Community Boards with the most DEP 311 Requests: CY 2019  
Source: NYC Open Data

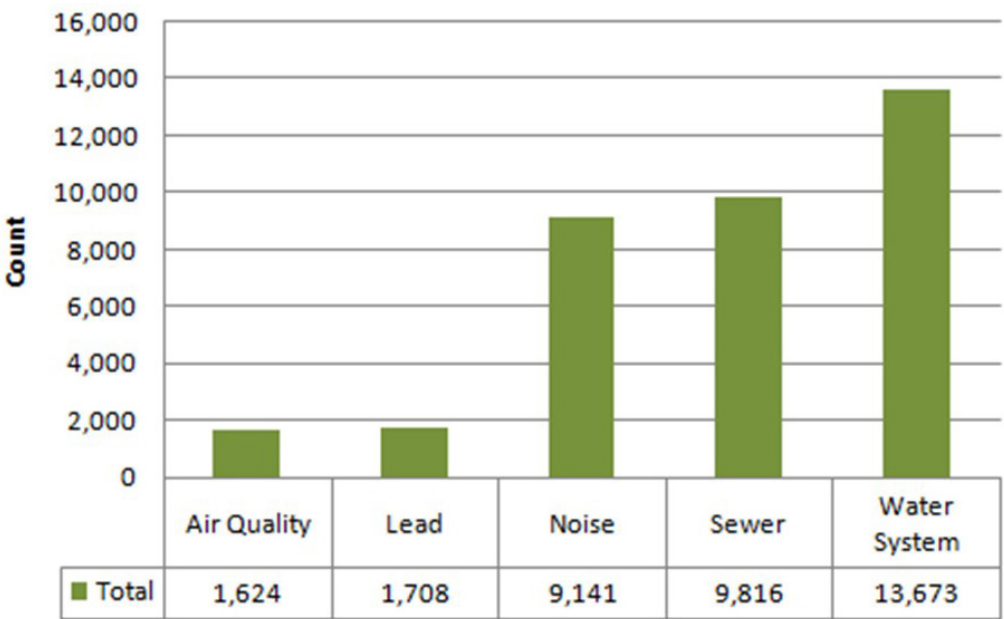


Queens Community Boards with the most DEP 311 Requests: CY 2020  
Source: NYC Open Data

In both 2019 and 2020, requests from most- to least-frequent involved water systems, sewer, noise, lead, and air quality.



Queens CBs' Most Frequent DEP 311 Requests: CY 2019  
Source: NYC Open Data

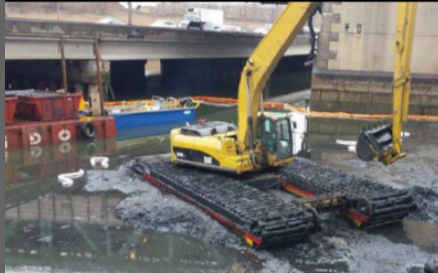


Queens CBs' Most Frequent DEP 311 Requests: CY 2020  
Source: NYC Open Data

New York City is home to 6,000 miles of sewer pipes and 14 wastewater treatment plants. A comprehensive sewer system is currently underway in Southeast Queens to address chronic flooding and poor street conditions.

Source: The General Contractors Association of New York, Inc. 2019 Annual Report

Water and Sewer Mains



Source: The General Contractors Association of New York, Inc. 2018 Annual Report



Community Boards

The New York City Charter requires each Community Board to develop and vote each year on up to 40 capital and 25 expense budget requests they want the City to prioritize for funding. Capital requests address physical improvements to infrastructure and public facilities, land acquisition, and major equipment purchases. Expense requests fund programs and staff. Through the Community Board’s Service Program, CBs also rank in order of importance 85 programs by 26 agencies most relevant to their neighborhoods. A helpful summary of how CBs participate in the City’s budget process can be found here: [https://www1.nyc.gov/html/mancb4/html/budget/budget\\_process.shtml](https://www1.nyc.gov/html/mancb4/html/budget/budget_process.shtml).

In FY20, Queens Community Boards submitted 114 requests to the City with DSNY identified as the responsible agency (105 - Expense; 9 - Capital) and 159 with DEP as the responsible agency (63 - Expense; 96 - Capital). In FY21, requests dropped significantly to 50 for DSNY (47 - Expense; 3 - Capital) and 57 for DEP (20 - Expense; 37 - Capital). In FY20, the five Community Boards with the most DSNY- and DEP-related requests were CBs 2, 3, 5, 10, 11, and 14\* (\*5 and 14 both had 24). In FY21, CBs 1, 2, 3, 10, and 11 were among the top five. For a list of specific locations of concern by Community Board in FY21, see Appendix II.

The top DSNY and DEP Expense and Capital Requests for FY20 are detailed in the chart below:

DSNY and DEP Expense and Capital Requests: Queens Community Board Annual Needs Statements: F20	
DSNY Expense Request	# of Requests
Other cleaning requests	21
More frequent litter basket collection	15
Other enforcement requests	15
DSNY Capital Request	
Provide new or upgrade existing sanitation garages or other sanitation infrastructure	6
Provide new or increase number of sanitation trucks and other equipment	3
DEP Expense Request	
Clean catch basins	12
Inspect storm sewer on specific street segment and service, repair or replace as needed	12
Inspect sanitary sewer on specific street segment and repair or replace as needed (Expense)	12
DEP Capital Request	
Inspect sanitary sewer on specific street segment and repair or replace as needed (Capital)	39
Evaluate a public location or property for green infrastructure, e.g. rain gardens, stormwater greenstreets, green playgrounds	24
Other capital budget request	9

Source: Community Board Annual Needs Statements FY20

For FY21, the top DSNY and DEP Expense and Capital requests include the following:

DSNY and DEP Expense and Capital Requests: Queens Community Board Annual Needs Statements: F21	
DSNY Expense Request	# of Requests
Other cleaning requests	10
Provide more frequent litter basket collection	5
Other enforcement requests	5
DSNY Capital Request	
Provide new or upgrade existing sanitation garages or other sanitation infrastructure	2
Provide new or increase number of sanitation trucks and other equipment	1
DEP Expense Request	
Other expense budget request for DEP	4
Clean catch basins	4
Inspect sanitary sewer on specific street segment and repair or replace as needed	4
DEP Capital Request	
Other capital budget request for DEP	24
Evaluate a public location or property for green infrastructure, e.g. rain gardens, stormwater greenstreets, green playgrounds	8
Develop a capital project for specific street segments currently lacking sanitary sewers	3

# Citywide Statement of Needs for City Facilities

Each year the City publishes a *Citywide Statement of Needs for City Facilities*, highlighting City-owned buildings requiring capital investment. The only Queens location involving waste infrastructure in the most recent FY22-23 report is a sanitation garage in CD1.<sup>2</sup> The report described the facility, located in a residential district, as “outdated, undersized, and in poor condition.”<sup>3</sup> The report called for the garage to be relocated to a more appropriately zoned district that would allow full accommodation for equipment and personnel. The proposal to move the facility was first made in FY17 and is currently in progress.

## Participatory Budgeting

Starting in 2011, New Yorkers had a new way to offer input on the City’s capital budget: Participatory Budgeting (PBNYC).<sup>4</sup> PBNYC lets New Yorkers propose and vote on projects in their City Council Districts costing at least \$35,000 and lasting at least five years. Projects receiving the most votes during a nine-day Vote Week are incorporated into the City’s budget and implemented by City agencies. In 2021, community members participating in PBNYC will have decision-making power over more than \$35M in taxpayer dollars.<sup>5</sup>

*\*In the text below, CD refers to City Council Districts*

Eight of Queens’ 14 Council Districts currently have access to PBNYC through their Council Member:

- CD19 (QNS Community District 7, 11): Paul Vallone
- CD22 (QNS Community District 1): Costa Constantinides
- CD26 (QNS Community District 2): Jimmy Van Bramer
- CD27 (QNS Community Districts 12, 13): I. Daneek Miller
- CD28 (QNS Community District 9, 12, 83): Adrienne E. Adams
- CD29 (QNS Community District 6,9): Karen Koslowitz
- CD31 (QNS Community District 13, 14, 83): Donovan J. Richards
- CD34 (QNS Community District 5): Antonio Reynoso<sup>6</sup>

Between 2015 and 2017, the most recent period for which data was publicly available, Queens residents submitted 13 project ideas related to green infrastructure, most for NYC Parks. In that same period, PBNYC voters proposed only two requests for capital funding for composting infrastructure, neither of which won.<sup>7</sup>

Vote Year	Council District	Description	Address	Votes	Winner	Cost
2015	26	This project will initiate the relocation of the composting facility to a new site 1,000 ft. away that will allow for an expansion of services. Includes better drainage, bioswales, outdoor classroom.	Queensbridge Baby Park, LIC	101	N	\$400,000.00
2015	26	An industrial sifter and industrial bagger are integral for this composting site to keep up with the growing demand for composting in New York City.	Queensbridge Baby Park, LIC	75	N	\$150,000.00

Source: Participatory Budgeting, NYC Open Data



Clogged Catch Basin

Source: Ryan Van Manen

In the current 2021 PBNYC cycle, which was recently suspended due to COVID-19,<sup>8</sup>the projects below are representative of DSNY and DEP-related ideas community members have submitted for consideration:

**Water Harvesting Tanks at NYC Public Schools near 23-02 33rd Avenue, 11106 (CD 26, QNS Comm. District 1)** “so sewer excess or overflow does not contaminate water or harm wildlife or prevent residents from coming in contact with water. Rainwater can be released to treat plants after a rain event when volumes are lower.”

**Community Composting Center near 203 Totten Avenue, 11359 (CD 19, QNS Comm. District 7)** “so people can drop-off food scraps and reduce the trash going into landfills.”

**Street and Park Cleanup of Litter near 32-03 39th Avenue, 11101 (CD 26, QNS Comm. District 1)** “so that, given the increased use of masks, gloves, and outdoor spaces since the COVID-19 pandemic, community members can address the increase in trash on the

streets and in parks. Designated clean-up crews in the community would help with this issue.”

**Trash Barrels for High-Density Dog Walking Areas near 47-31 Center Boulevard, 11109 (CD 26, QNS Comm. District 2)** “so people can deposit pet-dog refuse easily and conveniently. This is a high-density dog area that is in front of a pet store.”

**Catch Basin Cleaning Equipment and Education near 33-02 Skillman Avenue, 11101 (CD 26, QNS Comm. District 2)** “so people can help keep catch basins clear to prevent flooding/erosion and keep streets clean. This would include trash and recycling receptacles near catch basins and pokers/sticks to pick up accumulated litter. Residents would also need signs to educate the public on the importance of doing so and provide instructions on how to use the equipment.”



# Capital and Discretionary Funding by Electeds to Queens: FY21

In response to community members communicating to electeds and agencies their DSNY- and DEP-related capital and expense requests, electeds, in turn, provide funding through New York City Council Discretionary and Capital Funding budget lines.<sup>9</sup> In FY21, Queens Council Members, the Queens Delegation, the Queens Borough President, Council Speaker Johnson, and NYCC Members from other boroughs jointly allocated over \$3.77M through discretionary funding to address waste issues in Queens. Of those funds, \$2.89M came from the NYC Clean Up initiative and \$316K from A Greener NYC.<sup>10</sup> The only Capital Funds allocated in FY21 indirectly related to resource recovery were \$50K from Council Member Koo to the Queens County Farm Museum for a new education center. As an example of the money required to help Queens improve local compost processing capacity, Manhattan Council Member Kallos recently awarded \$90K to a Roosevelt Island organization to purchase a commercial-grade composting system with an auto-loader able to handle over one ton of food scraps per week.<sup>11</sup> For details on Queens’ FY21 Discretionary Funding by elected and Program Name, see Appendix IV.

Discretionary Funding Category	Amount Funded
Cleaning/ Cleanup	\$2,129,500.00
Extra Basket Pick up / Support	\$748,000.00
Greener NYC	\$316,169.00
Anti-Graffiti / Graffiti Removal	\$212,500.00
Community Programs	\$209,500.00
Beautification	\$103,500.00
Gardens	\$50,000.00
E-Waste Collection	\$10,000.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$3,779,169.00</b>

Source: NYC Open Data

# Conclusion

Keeping streets clean, maintaining regular waste pick-ups, and ensuring sanitation infrastructure, including sewers and storm drains, are in working order are basic needs residents have come to expect in a functioning city. Amid COVID-19, and due to Citywide budget cuts, the City cut many DSNY services, as evidenced by an increase in 311 complaints about Missed Collections and Dirty Conditions, even as the overall number of calls from Queens residents in 2020 declined. Based on the data examined in this section, we find that:

- Residents in Queens Community Boards 5, 12, and 13 have been the most active in the last two calendar years in making calls to 311 for DSNY and DEP issues.
- Representatives of Community Boards 2, 3, 10, and 11 have been most consistent in the last two fiscal years in submitting discretionary and capital funding requests for DSNY and DEP unmet needs to the City in their *Annual Needs Statements*.
- Council District 26, which includes Queens Community Districts 1 and 2, have had the most Participatory Budgeting submissions for waste-related projects, with none yet funded.
- The NYCC has allocated over \$3M in FY21 discretionary funding to keep streets clean and pick-up litter from public baskets but far less for gardens and beautification (\$153K). Assuming even one-quarter of material disposed in public litter baskets or on streets includes food waste (less than the 34% in residential streams), the comparative cost to divert these materials locally into compost, rather than paying for cleaning, deserves further examination. Based on a comparative analysis of Citywide FY21 capital funding, a minor investment of \$90-100K would allow a local Queens processor to handle one ton of organic material per week.



Queens County Farm Museum Compost Processing

Source: Queens County Farm Museum

ENDNOTES

1 “NYC 311.” Welcome to the State of New York, [www.ny.gov/agencies/nyc-311](http://www.ny.gov/agencies/nyc-311). Accessed 8 April 2021.

2 Citywide Statement of Needs for City Facilities FY 22-23 [https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/planning/download/pdf/about/publications/son\\_22\\_23.pdf](https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/planning/download/pdf/about/publications/son_22_23.pdf) Accessed 16 March 2021.

3 Ibid.

4 Participatory Budgeting NYC FY22 <http://ideas.pbnyc.org/page/about> Accessed 16 March 2021.

5 Ibid.

6 Ibid.

7 “Participatory Budgeting Projects: NYC Open Data.” Participatory Budgeting Projects | NYC Open Data, NYC Open Data, 12 May 2017, data.cityofnewyork.us/City-Government/Participatory-Budgeting-Projects/wwhr-5ven.

8 Ibid.

9 New York City Council Expense Funding FY21, 2021, [www.nyc.gov/html/citycouncil/html/budget/expense\\_funding.shtml](http://www.nyc.gov/html/citycouncil/html/budget/expense_funding.shtml).

10 Ibid.

11 New York City Council Capital Funding FY21, 2021, [http://www.nyc.gov/html/citycouncil/html/budget/capital\\_funding.shtml](http://www.nyc.gov/html/citycouncil/html/budget/capital_funding.shtml).