

The State of Waste in Queens



Source: Queens SWAB Organizing Committee member

A Report by the Queens Solid Waste Advisory Board Organizing Committee

April 2021





Queens SWAB Organizing Committee Meetings and Events: 2018 - 2021
Source: Queens SWAB Organizing Committee members

ABOUT THE QUEENS SOLID WASTE ADVISORY BOARD ORGANIZING COMMITTEE

In early 2020, the [Queens Solid Waste Advisory Board \(QSWAB\) Organizing Committee](#) established as its mission to serve as a trusted voice advocating for fairness, equity, and anti-racism within the waste sector in Queens. In carrying out the functions of the citizens' board as outlined in the City's Administrative Code ([§ Title 16-317](#); [§ Title 16-318](#)), the QSWAB Organizing Committee aimed to raise awareness about the importance of responsible waste management and resource recovery on the local, state, and regional environment and the health and well-being of Queens' communities. The group shared information and resources with the Queens Borough President, Queens City Council Members, Queens Community Boards, and the public via meeting agendas and minutes maintained from January 2018 through March 2021.

Prior to the QSWAB Organizing Committee, Queens had a SWAB from 1989, shortly after passage of [Local Law 1989](#) the Mandatory Recycling Law, until approximately 2011 when the group disbanded. In January 2018, five Queens residents reactivated a Queens SWAB, brought together by a shared desire to ensure the borough was contributing to the broader New York City conversation about re-imagining "waste" as a "resource." The group continued to meet monthly, growing from the original five organizers to over 25 attendees by the end of 2020.

From January 2018 until March 2021, the group operated under the name Queens Solid Waste Advisory Board Organizing Committee due to lack of formal recognition. Encouraged by New York City Council Member Antonio Reynoso (Chair of the New York City Council's Sanitation and Solid Waste Committee), Queens Borough President Donovan Richards began the legal process to appoint a formally recognized QSWAB. Applications were posted on the Queens Borough President's website in February 2021 and a new group with formal recognition was appointed in April 2021.

SWABs are required to have at least 20 members representing a diverse range of constituencies that may include representatives from Community Boards, recycling and carting industry representatives, environmental organizations, government agencies, labor and business groups, property owners, tenant organizations, and the general public. Like Community Boards, SWAB members are appointed by the Borough President with additional input from local elected officials. Members are expected to serve two-year terms in a voluntary, unpaid capacity.

Each borough's SWAB is responsible for submitting to their respective Borough President an annual recycling plan and advising him or her on the following:

1. recycling and reduction goals, and the methods proposed to achieve such goals;
2. means to encourage community participation in the recycling program; and
3. means to promote the recycling program and educate the public about the program.

Both [Manhattan](#) and [Brooklyn](#) have had active SWABs for decades. A [Bronx SWAB](#), inactive for many years, began taking shape with new leadership in November 2020 with new leaders formally appointed in March 2021. Only Staten Island currently lacks an active SWAB. The SWABs' work today extends beyond annual recycling reporting to include advocating around issues ranging from mandatory composting to pharmaceutical diversion that inform the City's public policy and practices.

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BACKGROUND

The following report, nearly a year in the making, represents the collective effort of over 20 Queens Solid Waste Advisory Board (SWAB) Organizing Committee members and countless government, agency, civic, nonprofit, commercial, and community readers and contributors.

This report provides a baseline for measuring Queens’ contributions to New York City’s goal of sending zero-waste to landfills by the year 2030.

The report also introduces the QSWAB Organizing Committee (soon to be formally recognized) to Queens residents, many of whom may be unfamiliar with the civic group’s role as a legally mandated advisor to the Queens Borough President and local electeds on the City’s Solid Waste Management Plan.

The report begins by exploring Queens’ **Waste Statistics**, highlighting the materials residents use and discard and how well or poorly we divert recoverable resources from our waste stream. Given the City’s rising export costs, the way improperly managed organics contributes to climate change, and the environmental impacts of landfills and incineration on environmental justice communities, examining our borough’s waste behaviors is critical to helping the City pilot and implement prevention and intervention strategies.

One way to understand **Community Needs** around waste is through facilitated listening sessions. Due to the social distancing constraints of COVID-19, we turned instead to publicly available data that captured how Queens residents want to improve their waste landscape. Using 311 data, Community Board (CB) *FY21 Annual Needs Statements*, and Participatory Budgeting submissions, we captured the waste-related priorities and services residents want in order to address local challenges.

Although the conversation around waste often skews negative, this report also highlights Queens’ **Community Assets** related to recycling, diversion, and resource recovery. Among these are a nationally recognized small compost processor, a nonprofit that provides meals by rescuing food from commercial establishments, and countless volunteer groups providing food scrap diversion and compost processing to replace services lost this past year due to COVID budget cuts.

Because waste has often been linked to public health, we next examine how Queens residents view the **Impact of Waste** on their lives. We created a broad online survey completed by over 400 respondents and administered a narrower, in-person survey at three waste-collection sites. With a focus on environmental justice, we also held in-depth conversations with leaders from Community Districts 5 and 12 who have fought for decades to address waste inequities caused, respectively, by outmoded diesel trains carrying construction and demolition debris and unenclosed waste transfer stations.

COVID-19 Impacts to the City and borough were far-reaching, affecting both waste output and public sector services. Queens’ pandemic experience as it relates to waste serves to remind us why a clean city is critical to public confidence and urges us to heed the lessons of COVID to ensure we are prepared for the next health or economic crisis.

Finally, we conclude the report with policy and practice **Recommendations** designed to engage a broad range of stakeholders. If we want to achieve a zero-waste future, we need all parties at the table and mutually committing to the change we want to see.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

New York City last submitted a Comprehensive [Solid Waste Management Plan](#) (SWMP) to New York State’s Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) in 2006, five years after the City’s last-remaining landfill, Fresh Kills, closed.¹ The SWMP detailed how the NYC Department of Sanitation’s (DSNY) Bureau of Solid Waste Management would reduce and dispose of residential waste, residential recycling, and commercial waste for the next 20 years — until 2025.²

When the City’s Independent Budget Office reviewed the plan at its halfway mark, they discovered something unexpected: predictions about the City’s waste output had been overstated. The SWMP envisioned a nearly 21% increase in curbside and containerized waste, but by 2017 residential waste had decreased by nearly 9% from a high of 13,456 tons per day in 2007 to 12,246 tons in 2016.² As of DSNY’s Fiscal Year (FY) 2020 Annual Report, tonnage had declined further to 10,154 per day.³

DSNY will soon draft a new SWMP to guide policy for the next 20 years. But in light of the challenges inherent in forecasting, combined with the still-uncertain realities about City life post-pandemic, it may be time for a collective pause to ask how are we doing *now* in terms of residential and commercial waste management?

For the purpose of this report, our focus is not on the City overall but a single borough: Queens. Queens is the most ethnically diverse urban area in the world,⁴ with the City’s largest land mass (178 square miles).⁵ And how Queens is doing in terms of waste management may be an indicator for conditions Citywide.

Queens is also home to the QSWAB Organizing Committee members who wrote this report. Founded in January 2018 to serve as an interim guide to elected officials, City agencies, and residents in advance of formal appointment by an incoming Queens Borough President, the group wanted to address waste by not only reporting quantitative data but also telling the stories of people working outside formal structures to manage resources, reduce waste, and ensure a more equitable environment for all.

Here is what the data and Queens residents told us.

What is the current state of waste and resource recovery in Queens?

Queens residents throw out trash in numbers nearly equal to their share of New York City’s total population and recycle at nearly the same rate. But **while some Queens Community Districts divert recyclable materials (Paper, Metal-Glass-Plastic-Cartons, Organics) at levels approaching DSNY’s 2020 Recycling Goal of 25%, others are as low as 13%.** This suggests a clear need to tailor education and outreach to communities’ unique dynamics to ensure full participation across the borough in removing recoverable materials from our waste stream.

One reason diversion rates lag is unequal access to resources. For example, **only 9 of Queens’ 14 Community Districts, or 46% of Queens’ households, had access to Curbside Organics Collections (COC) prior to the COVID-19 Citywide suspension.** While voluntary COC has not yet realized the promise of recovering the 34% or more of organic materials New Yorkers now pay to export to landfills — and diverting it to beneficial uses (i.e., compost) — failure to provide COC, along with a lack of local, alternative diversion options (i.e., food-scrap drop-off sites, community garden compost bins), guarantees that participation rates will remain low when COC returns in Fall 2021 and that widespread acceptance around separating food waste, should Mandatory Organics legislation be passed, is unlikely.

Finally, while Queens is thought of as a borough of single-family homes, **many of the borough’s large buildings (10 units or more) are not taking full advantage of free DSNY diversion programs that could further eliminate textile and e-waste from the waste stream.** More information is needed to determine what distinguishes participating from non-participating buildings, but the fact that 638 of Queens’ 422,970 (.15%) larger buildings are enrolled in refashion NYC and 3,497 in eCycle NYC (.82%) is a missed opportunity.

What are Queens residents and organizations doing to help the borough manage waste and resources?

In the wake of COVID-19, countless Queens residents, nonprofits, businesses, and institutions stepped up in ways large and small to contribute to waste management and resource recovery in the borough. The last year saw the activation of at least nine cleanup groups, 17 volunteer-led food scrap drop-off sites, and an overall increase in businesses supporting zero-waste practices. From buy-nothing groups (15) that encourage reuse to sustainability/beautification advocacy nonprofits (8), **this report identified nearly 200 Queens community assets — some long-established others newly formed — that directly or indirectly help Queens residents contribute to a greener, cleaner borough.**

Yet as with recycling diversion, **community assets are not always distributed equally.** We found in our research that Astoria and Long Island City were represented by 20 or more assets, while neighborhoods like Bayside, Hollis, and College Point had less than five. DSNY’s own data showed that, compared to other boroughs, Queens ranked third in the number of its retail, repair, and reuse outlets. Council Member Keith Power and Antonio Reynoso’s proposed [Community Organics and Recycling Empowerment \(CORE\) Act](#), which would ensure a minimum of three food-scrap drop-off sites and potentially more compost-processing sites in each Community District, could help level the playing field.

What still needs to be done in Queens and Citywide to achieve the goal of sending zero waste to landfills by 2030?

Although budget cuts linked to COVID-19 have been devastating, there are reasons to feel encouraged about what this period revealed about Queens’ commitment to creating a healthier environment. **Groups like [Rescuing Leftover Cuisine](#), founded by an Astoria resident, last year diverted more than 1.6M lbs. of food from the waste stream by redirecting it to people facing food insecurity.**⁶ **Currently though, only one Queens restaurant — a commercial kitchen — partners with the nonprofit.** More Queens restaurants should be enlisted in the effort in 2021.

To ensure Queens youth learn why getting to zero waste is critical to their future as environmental citizens — and how they can contribute — far more Queens public schools need to be brought into the fold. **Currently, approximately half (148) of Queens 377 DOE schools are included in DSNY’s Organics Collection, but less than 20 engage in higher-level zero waste educational offerings, including [Zero Waste Pledge](#), [S.E.E.D.](#), and [Race Against Waste](#).**⁷ Likewise, the nonprofit [Cafeteria Culture](#), which successfully engaged youth to pass [Local Law 142 of 2013 banning single-service foam food and beverage containers](#), among their many accomplishments, has only worked in 10 Queens public schools.⁸

That needs to change.

We also know that not all neighborhoods are shouldering the burden of waste externalities equally. **Many of our neighbors in CD12 live in areas that coexist with unenclosed waste transfer stations that release dust, leachate, and particulate matter into the environment. In CD5, transporting of waste by rail has for decades polluted the air and land in ways activists are still fighting to have taken seriously.**

As the 20+ volunteers who researched, wrote, edited, and designed this report — in the middle of a pandemic during one of the worst economic crises in modern history — we know this document is just the start of a longer conversation with local electeds, agencies, and community stakeholders about our borough’s waste and resource recovery accomplishments and challenges. Notably, **the report barely touches on waste produced by restaurants, retailers, hospitals, offices, and other businesses, which in 2018 were estimated by the New York City Comptroller to generate 13,000 tons of solid waste every day, representing over half of the City’s overall solid waste output.**⁹ The next step is to track progress over time and, ideally, inform the next SWMP.

In addition to reading the report, we encourage people to visit our website to find local resources, see data visualizations, and read summaries from three years of guest presenters to learn what experts and innovators in the field recommend as best practices.

In the end, with support from the public, private, and nonprofit sectors — and if we each do our part — **Queens can lead the way in sending zero waste to landfills by 2030.**

RECOMMENDATIONS

STATE OF WASTE IN QUEENS: NEXT STEPS

This report concludes with a focused set of recommendations based on previous sections’ findings and our review of goals articulated in public reports such as *OneNYC*, DSNY’s recent *Waste Characterization* reports, NYCHA’s *Sustainability Plan*, and, most importantly, the City’s now 15-year old *Solid Waste Master Plan* (SWMP).

The last SWMP, drafted in 2006 and meant to guide policy into 2025, is nearly at its end. And although it presented a path for New York to achieve a zero waste future, implementation has proven elusive, with diversion rates stagnant, enforcement declining year over year for the last five years, and laws passed in piecemeal fashion, driven by politics rather than policy.

For this reason, the City's SWABs must be allowed to participate in the formulation of the next SWMP, and the process should be as inclusive and transparent as possible. Fortunately, with a new QSWAB in place, Queens’ ability to play a leading role in advising on waste management policy for the next 25 years is more assured now than ever.

Waste Statistics

Recommendation	QSWAB's Role	Step 1 (Short-Term)	Step 2 (Long-Term)	Who Is Involved
Increase Queens’ Paper, MGPC, and Organics diversion and captures rates to at least 20% (DSNY’s annual goal is 25%) emphasizing improvement in CDs with lower than average rates. Reduce contamination rates to below 10%.	Work with Community Boards, neighborhood civics, and environmental nonprofits to increase awareness about removing recoverable materials from the waste stream as an environmental justice and climate change issue. Prioritize outreach and education in CDs with lower than average diversion and capture rates.	Recruit new QSWAB members from Community Districts with lower than average diversion and capture rates to better understand the knowledge and/or resource gaps that may be contributing to reduced community buy-in/participation.	Work with the QBP’s office to create a CD diversion, capture, and/or contamination challenge with a reward that incentivizes improvement. See MBP’s Paper Challenge as an example. (http://manhattanpaperchallenge.com/). Propose to the QBP a competition for Queens grade, middle, high school and colleges to design a marketing campaign tailored to CDs with lower than average diversion and capture rates.	QBP, Community Board leaders, Queens civics and environmental nonprofits, Queens DOE Schools TBD: QSWAB Members
Increase access to Organics Collection opportunities in all 14 Queens’ Community Districts, particularly Environmental Justice communities and CDs not covered by Curbside Organics Collection.	Examine maps of current Curbside Organic Collection and FSDOs, supported by DSNY and volunteer-run, and identify new locations where collection could be piloted (e.g., at curbside, near transit centers, Greenmarkets, community gardens, large food distribution centers, food banks, CSA distribution sites, City-owned sites suitable for agriculture, churches). Work with trusted neighborhood partners such as Community Boards, civic groups, nonprofit, and faith-based organizations to increase local buy-in/participation.	Engage trusted neighborhood partners who can help locations that could become sites for food scrap drop-off and/or local small-scale community compost processing. Address community members’ concerns and misconceptions about organics collection. Work with trusted neighborhood partners to devise linguistically and culturally appropriate outreach to encourage resident sign-up for Curbside Organics Collection in August 2021 especially in Environmental Justice communities and communities that lacked COC prior to its suspension. Invite MWBE entrepreneurs (BK Rot, Common Ground Compost, Vokashi) to speak to Queens Community Board leaders and local civics and environmental groups, particularly in Environmental Justice communities, to provide guidance on starting microhauling businesses in Queens.	Work with the City’s other borough-based SWABs to co-lead the Envisioning Organics Project to reimagine reaching zero waste to landfills by 2030 with an emphasis on mandatory organics diversion and local community composting. Identify trusted neighborhood partners interested in advocating for Mandatory Organics and passage of the C.O.R.E. Act	DSNY, Community Groups TBD, City’s other Borough-Based SWABs, QSWAB Members
Increase participation in refashionNYC, ecycleNYC, and Organics Collections in Queens’ buildings of 10 or more units.	Identify at least five new buildings in each CD that could be introduced to refashionNYC and ecycleNYC.	Gather marketing materials from Manhattan SWAB to learn about strategies to engage management and supers in larger 10+ unit buildings.	Pilot refashionNYC and ecycleNYC in at least three new buildings in each CD and document experiences on QSWAB website.	MSWAB, Building Management and Supers TBD, QSWAB Members
Improve diversion, capture, and contamination rates at NYCHA buildings and increase access to Paper, MGPC, and organics diversion for NYCHA residents.	Continue QSWAB engagement with the MSWAB / NYCHA working group by assigning a new person to that committee.	Recruit a NYCHA resident/tenant or super to serve on the QSWAB in a board or liaison role. Work with DSNY and tenants as needed to collect and publish CD/borough-specific data on DSNY collections at the largest five NYCHA properties in Queens.	Connect with NYCHA Tenant Representatives and/or Supers in partnership with the QBP’s Office and hold a future QSWAB meeting at QueensBridge Houses or another large NYCHA property.	QBP’s Office, DSNY, NYCHA residents and supers TBD, MSWAB Members TBD, QSWAB Members
Improve diversion, capture, and contamination rates at Queens DOE Schools.	Identify at least five Queens DOE Schools in each CD that could be enrolled in DOE Zero Waste Programs outside of Organics Collection.	Connect teachers/administrators in at least five Queens DOE Schools with mentor teachers from Queens schools that have successfully completed Zero Waste Programs to offer guidance.	Invite teachers/administrators from Queens DOE Schools that have completed Zero Waste Programs to speak at QSWAB meetings to share best practices.	DOE Teachers/Administrators TBD, QSWAB Members
Make publicly available commercial waste data, including tonnage of C & D materials generated at City and City-funded capital projects and where/how materials are handled.	Initiate conversation about C & D waste with DSNY, HPD, Business Integrity Commission, The General Contractors Association of New York, Private Carters Serving Handling C & D, and WTS.	Convene individual and/or joint meetings to better understand the C & D sector.	Work with City agencies and the NYCC to set C & D diversion benchmarks and annual reporting guidelines for City and City-funded capital projects. Begin to more closely monitor Active Major Construction Data to identify larger construction firms and projects working in Queens. (https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/buildings/html/nyc-active-major-construction.html)	DSNY, HPD, Business Integrity Commission, The General Contractors Association of New York, Private Carters Handling C & D, WTS Owners
Pass, following further refinement, S. 1185B and the federal Break Free From Plastics Act.	Work with Queens State Senators, such as co-sponsors Joseph Addabo, Jr., Leroy Comrie, and Jessica Ramos to recommend changes to S. 1185B to make it more effective.	Form a Legislative or Policy Committee within the newly formed QSWAB tasked with overseeing legislative initiatives and building relationships with electeds.	Work with the other SWABs to draft testimony and joint policy recommendations to be delivered to State Senators and engage broader coalitions around supporting the Break Free from Plastics Act	Queens’ City, State, and Federal Electeds, Citywide SWABs, QSWAB Members
Evaluate data and reporting as part of the next Citywide Solid Waste Management Plan and consider measurement and reporting on additional categories (e.g. bulk and commercial waste).	Participate in SWMP development.	Publish an annual update on key statistics found in this report.	Engage with stakeholders on the value of data and reporting and make reporting a requirement of the CWZ contracts, including data on diversion (Paper, MGPC, Organics, and recoverable industrial byproducts).	QBP, NYCC Members, Mayor’s Office, DEC, DSNY, QSWAB Members
Perform CD spot audits on capture and contamination rates and publish data.	Collaborate with Community Board leaders to participate.	Establish schedule to reach all QNS CDs.	Set and achieve targets to increase on both metrics in all QNS CDs.	Queens Community Boards, DSNY, Queens Residents, QSWAB Members

Community Needs

Recommendation	QSWAB's Role	Step 1 (Short- Term)	Step 2 (Long-Term)	Partners
Investigate the nature and location of DSNY and DEP 311 calls in Community Districts 7, 12, and 13 and determine potential prevention and intervention responses.	Arrange a presentation of the State of Waste in Queens report to the leadership of Community Boards 7, 12, and 13 and their Sanitation Committees.	Share with leaders in Community Boards 7, 12, and 13 volunteer groups in other Community Districts have addressed "Dirty Conditions" in ways that reduced recidivism.	Conduct quarterly check-ins with CBs 7, 12, and 13 to ensure sanitation concerns are being addressed jointly with the QSWAB.	Community Board leaders in Community Districts 7, 12, and 13, Sanitation Committee leaders in Community Districts 7, 12, and 13, Representative Volunteer Groups TBD
Secure funding to address repeatedly unmet DSNY and DEP needs in Community Districts 2, 3, 10, and 11.	Reach out to Community Board leaders and Sanitation Committee members who sit on CBs 2, 3, 10, and 11 to foster productive collaboration with the QSWAB around sanitation needs.	Work with CB 2, 3, 10, and 11 leaders and Sanitation Committee leaders to ensure Annual Needs Assessment concerns are brought to Council Members' and DSNY attention.	Hold accountable through annual or bi-annual reporting the status of unmet DSNY and DEP needs in CBs 2, 3, 10, and 11.	Community Board leaders in Community Districts 2, 3, 10, and 11, Sanitation Committee leaders in Community Districts 2, 3, 10, and 11. Council Members representing Community Districts 2, 3, 10, and 11
Examine the NYCC Expense Budgets for Cleaning, Litter Basket Collection, and Enforcement and determine whether a percent could be redirected to installing Big Belly Solar Bins in busy commercial locations where litter issues are endemic.	Explore NYC Open Data to determine number and location of Big Belly Solar bins in Queens and how these correlate to 311 calls regarding Cleaning, Litter Basket Collection, and Enforcement and relation to Council Member funding for each category.	Identify Community Boards that may want to advocate for re-direction of Expense Funding for Solar Bins as an alternative to Litter Basket Collection in a few pilot locations.	Evaluate performance of Solar Bins in Community Districts where they currently exist or in new Community Districts where they are piloted to make the case for their expansion.	DSNY, BetaNYC, Community Boards TBD
Expand Participatory Budgeting to all Queens Community Districts and better engage community members who want to submit waste diversion projects to shape successful submissions.	Encourage QSWAB members who live in Community Districts without Participatory Budgeting to advocate for its expansion with a petition campaign.	Work with QSWAB members who live in Community Districts that have Participatory Budgeting and encourage them to submit waste diversion projects for consideration.	Evaluate status of submitted Participatory Budgeting waste diversion projects to determine if they won or lost and what can be done to ensure projects speak to community members' needs.	Council Members representing Community Districts without Participatory Budgeting, QSWAB Members, Community Members TBD

Community Assets

Recommendation	QSWAB's Role	Step 1 (Short-Term)	Step 2 (Long-Term)	Who is Involved
Ensure the long-term security of Big Reuse as a critical Community Asset and restore support for DSNY nonprofit partners Queens Botanical Garden and GrowNYC to be able to expand and increase their outreach and programming (e.g., FSDOs, Master Composter program).	Work with Big Reuse to advocate for their ability to extend their lease and continue compost processing on NYC Parks space where the by-product of their work is most beneficial.	Explore other opportunities to expand Big Reuse's local community composting to other vacant and under-utilized City-owned sites.	Work with environmental lawyers and the NYC Department of City Planning to create legal and zoning protections to ensure that small to mid-size community-led composting on City-owned land is an allowable use with community approval.	Big Reuse, Department of City Planning, Pro Bono Legal Consult TBD, QSWAB Members
Encourage and increase collaboration among Queens' colleges and university around sustainability education and waste-diversion.	Arrange a meeting for sustainability representatives of Queens institutions of higher learning to encourage collaboration and sharing of best practices that can be adapted to the particularities of each campus.	Organize annual presentations by Queens colleges and universities to report on progress in achieving sustainability and waste diversion goals at scale.	Create a grant fund, similar to that of the MSWAB, that would support Queens students working to pilot innovative waste diversion projects and solutions.	Queens College and University Sustainability Leaders, QSWAB Members
Expand Cafeteria Culture's reach to 12 Queens DOE primary schools.	Introduce Cafeteria Culture to Principals of Queens DOE primary schools, particularly ones in underserved communities with low diversion rates and/or where Curbside Organics Collection had not yet been introduced.	Work with Cafeteria Culture to understand their capacity to expand and help them target Queens schools most in need of their services (i.e., Title 1 Schools).	Evaluate and document at the end of each school year Cafeteria Culture's expansion to Queens DOE Schools and make plans in advance for the following year's target schools.	Cafeteria Culture, Queens DOE Schools TBD, QSWAB Members
Recruit at least 25 Queens restaurants to partner with Rescuing Leftover Cuisine.	Work with the QBP's Office to introduce Rescuing Leftover Cuisine to at least 25 Queens restaurants with a high-volume food output and/or in communities with high levels of food insecurity.	Ask QSWAB members to pledge to volunteer with Rescuing Leftover Cuisine at least 1x per year and recruit one friend or colleague to do the same.	Document and report the tonnage of food waste diverted from landfills in Queens through RLC restaurant partnerships and redistributed to food-insecure communities.	Rescuing Leftover Cuisine, QBP's Office, Queens Restaurateurs TBD, QSWAB Members
Encourage the creation of at least one volunteer clean-up group in each Community District and connect groups with one another to share resources, challenges, and learning.	Identify community groups in Community Districts that have reported higher than average cleaning concerns and connect them with volunteer groups in other Community Districts that have organized successful cleanups.	Invite DSNY's Bureau of Community Affairs to present to the QSWAB about the process of leading DSNY-supported cleanups.	Document and report the impact of volunteer community groups' work annually or bi-annually in updated State of Waste reports.	DSNY Bureau of Community Affairs, Volunteer Community Groups TBD, QSWAB Members
Identify new potential FSDO and local community composting sites in Queens that could be created by building on existing assets and City-owned land suitable for agriculture.	Outreach to community gardens, farmer's markets, CSA distribution sites, and City agency representatives to explore interest in setting up FSDO or compost processing at these locations.	Connect currently existing FSDO representatives with community members seeking to start FSDOs or processing organics locally to understand challenges, protocols, and best practices to ensure success.	Document and report community group's annual organics diversion to confirm groups' impact and use data to advocate for funding to expand their reach.	NYC Department of City Planning, Existing Volunteer FSDO and Composting Volunteer Groups, Community Members TBD, QSWAB Members
Increase the number of Queens-based businesses providing reuse opportunities.	Request a list of Queens-based businesses providing reuse opportunities from DSNY's 2019 Reuse Sector Report.	Confirm the status of Queens-based reuse businesses post-COVID.	Map the locations of Queens-based reuse businesses and share on the QSWAB website. Identify geographic gaps and outreach to BIDS to suggest they recruit businesses providing this service. Encourage the City to provide tax incentives to waste diversion/reuse businesses.	DSNY, Queens BIDs, Queens Chamber of Commerce, NYC Law Department, New York City Council Members, Business Owners TBD, QSWAB Members
Create Right to Repair workshops in Queens DOE middle and high Schools.	Introduce the Right to Repair concept to 10 Queens DOE middle and high schools.	Research implementation and outcomes from repair workshops in other schools (e.g., Ethical Culture Fieldston) and share with Queens DOE leadership to encourage adoption.	Pilot a repair workshop in a DOE middle- or high school that expresses Interest and document impact.	NYC DOE Queens Leaders, Right to Repair Consultants and Nonprofit Advocates, DOE Teachers, QSWAB Members
Make new and existing assets accessible to Queens residents so they can be utilized to their full extent. Increase awareness of resources and the benefits of using them.	Create an interactive asset map on the QSWAB website and update quarterly in collaboration with partners.	Encourage community members to send us information about new assets to ensure maps are up-to-date.	Annually document change in asset number and location to help community members more quickly identify asset gaps.	Queens businesses and nonprofits and community groups TBD, QSWAB Members
Provide more recognition for Queens DOE Zero Waste School Award Winners	Invite Queens DOE Zero Waste School Award Winner representatives to present to the QSWAB to learn more about their success strategies.	Recommend to the QBP that Zero Waste Award Winners receive additional recognition from their office to increase public awareness.	Help promote Zero Waste School award winners on social media and to local Queens press and identify opportunities to connect these schools with their peers.	DOE Zero Waste School Award Winners, DSNY, QBP, QSWAB Members

Waste Impacts

Recommendation	QSWAB's Role	Step 1 (Short-Term)	Step 2 (Long-Term)	Who is Involved
Pilot the T.O.S.S. Model in partnership with Queens BIDS to reduce overflow commercial trash where pedestrians use sidewalk space.	Introduce the T.O.S.S. concept to new QSWAB members, Queens Community Board leaders, and Queens BIDS.	Send to NYCDOT and DSNY a letter from the QSWAB supporting the QSWAB concept.	Identify five business improvement districts in Queens open to piloting the T.O.S.S. model.	Queens BIDS, T.O.S.S. leaders, Queens Chamber of Commerce: QSWAB Members
Zero-Waste 2030: Divert quantified amounts of Queens' organics and recyclable materials from landfills.	Identify in partnership with others the adverse community impacts from waste export (e.g., CD 12 transfer stations, CD 5 waste-by-rail export) as well as local opportunities to divert waste that reduce harmful health and environmental impacts both in the borough and on communities farther away.	Direct targeted education and outreach to NYC households that better connects individual household practices to adverse community impacts from waste export. For example, show how greatly increasing Organics and recycling diversion of household MSW handled by Waste Management's Review Avenue and Varick Ave. transfer stations means fewer rail cars of exported waste in CDs2 and 5 and less problematic Organic waste at Upstate landfills that have led to lawsuits against the City.	Evaluate and document diversion rate of organics and recycling materials from the waste export stream, including positive and negative consequences to communities.	Queens Borough President, City Council Members, DSNY, Community Boards, Big Reuse, Targeted households, QSWAB Members
Zero Waste 2030: Divert quantified amounts of C&D waste processed in and transported through Queens' waste from landfills.	Identify adverse community impacts in Queens from C&D export (e.g., CB 12 transfer stations, CB 5 waste-by-rail export). Quantify tonnage processed and hauled annually in Queens, and provide education and outreach to NYS DEC, NYC Council Members, DSNY, and others identified by QSWAB members through a presentation by, for example, Building Products Ecosystems under the auspices of the Queens Borough President.	Set date and time and send out invitations to a webinar that demonstrates the feasibility of increasing C&D diversion and the need for state legislation that makes it illegal to landfill gypsum wallboard with in-person participation for select invitees, if possible, and public access and rebroadcast for others.	Evaluate and document participation, participant feedback, next steps.	Queens Borough President, City Council Members, DSNY
Require Queens transfer stations covered under Waste Equity Local Law 152 and Commercial Waste Zone Local Law 199 to comply with state law, city law, and consent decrees.	Work with the community to identify performance standards according to state law, city law, and consent orders for Queens Transfer stations in communities identified by NYC as environmental justice communities pursuant to Local Laws 60 and 64. Identify the extent of compliance and enforcement, and opportunities to achieve measurable long-term improvements in community health, environment, and quality of life. Report findings to the Borough President annually, and on an ad hoc basis as needed.	Work with the community in CD 12 Jamaica on a pilot report on transfer stations' performance for the Queens Borough President.	Conduct quarterly reporting to QSWAB on progress in CD 12 Jamaica. Hold transfer stations accountable through their quarterly reports to the community and their giving the community access for inspections.	Queens Borough President, CUNY Center for Urban Environmental Reform, NYC Environmental Justice Alliance (NYC-EJA), The Transdisciplinary Center on Early Environmental Exposures Icahn School of Medicine at Mt. Sinai, York College CUNY Department of Earth and Physical Sciences, DSNY, NYCEDC, NYCIDA, NYSERDA, Civic Associations, QSWAB Members
Require MTA-LIRR to issue an RFP to repower MP-15 locomotives to US EPA Tier 4 Switch Duty Cycle emissions standards using NYS appropriations in Comptroller's Contract #DR36644. LIRR has been given \$27 million in appropriations since 2013, enough to complete the repower the New York & Atlantic Railway's fleet (@ \$2 million per locomotive), which is used for waste-by-rail.	Support the Borough President in MTA-LIRR's completion of this funded locomotive repowering project, which will remove at least 95% of this freight locomotive pollution from community air in Queens, including in neighborhoods identified by NYC as environmental justice communities pursuant to Local Laws 60 and 64.	Provide draft public comment for the Borough President on the waste supply chain analysis that will be included in NYMTc's Regional Transportation Plan/Freight Plan update, scheduled for release and public comment in June 2021. The public comment will support mitigation of Queens burdens from waste export by supporting MTA-LIRR's repowering of the New York & Atlantic Railway's high-polluting 1970's Switch Duty Cycle locomotive fleet and the use of rail cars that seal waste inside the rail car/waste container. Repowering locomotive fleets to Tier 4 or cleaner emissions standards and the use of covered rail cars for waste are official NYMTC Goals that were included in NYMTC's Plan 2018-2045.	Approach NYMTC's current voting members about harms from 1970's locomotives, including Patrick Foye - MTA CEO and Chairman, Henry Gutman - NYC DOT Commissioner, and Marisa Lago - NYC Department of Planning Director, and Steve Bellone - Suffolk County Executive (the open rail cars of C&D come into Queens from Suffolk County, where waste-by-rail transfer stations and community impacts from the old locomotives are proliferating). Quarterly reports to the Queens Borough President on MTA's procurement progress.	Civic Associations, Queens Borough President, NYC Council Members, New York Metropolitan Transportation Council, Strategic Programs Office of the Regional Administrators US-EPA Region II, *CUNY Center for Urban Environmental Reform, *NYC Environmental Justice Alliance (NYC-EJA), *The Transdisciplinary Center on Early Environmental Exposures Icahn School of Medicine at Mt. Sinai, *York College CUNY Department of Earth and Physical Sciences: *these organizations involved if current plans for waste-by-rail in CD12 go forward.
Support Hon. Grace Meng's Federal initiatives to completely contain waste, blowoff, leachate, and odors in rail cars/containers.	Work with communities where high-polluting, unregulated 1970's freight locomotives haul open rail cars of construction and demolition debris that emit waste blowoff, leachate, and odors (cads 5, 9, 12, and 13, including in communities identified by NYC as environmental justice communities pursuant to Local Laws 60 and 64) and provide current information to the Borough President.	Provide quarterly reports to the Borough President on the progress of Hon. Grace Meng's federal initiatives, including the most recent:"Not later than 1 year after the date of enactment of this Act, the Administrator of the Federal Railroad Administration shall initiate a public process to seek input on addressing spills, emissions, and odors and other public nuisances associated with top loading rail cars, open-top hoppers, and gondolas, including evaluating the feasibility of a requirement that such railcars be covered while in transit, including while being held, delayed, or transferred."	Provide draft testimony and public comment for the Borough President, if the FRA study is included in pending federal legislation.	Civic Associations, Community Boards, Queens Borough President, NYC Council Members, DSNY, Hon, Grace Meng, Federal Railroad Administration.
Pass NYS Assembly Bill A3269 that would require containment of landfill-bound solid waste in rail cars and containers as part of transfer station and transload operations. Hon. Joseph P. Addabbo sponsored S2490, which twice passed in the NYS Senate but A3269 has not made it out of the NYS Assembly's Environmental Conservation Committee.	Work with the Queens Borough President and the Manhattan, Bronx, and Brooklyn SWABs on the sponsorship required to pass a bill in both chambers that requires the use of covered rail cars/containers that do not emit spills, waste blowoff, leachate, or odors, and that gets signed into law.	Provide a quarterly progress report on this legislation to the Queens Borough President.	When the bill has the sponsorship it needs, provide educational information and outreach that may help support its passage to communities in Community Districts 5, 9, 12, and 13.	Queens Borough President, NYC Council Members, Hon. Senator Joseph P. Addabbo Jr., Community Districts 5, 9, 12, and 13, Civic associations, NYC SWABs

COVID Impacts

Recommendation	QSWAB's Role	Step 1 (Short-Term)	Step 2 (Long-Term)	Who is Involved
Pass Intro. 1942 and 1943, the Community Organics and Recycling Empowerment (CORE) Act, to support equity in Organics and e-Waste collection opportunities in all NYC Community Districts. Strengthen the legislation by ensuring funding for outreach, education, and local composting processing and distribution.	Outreach to Queens NYC Council Members and Queens Community Board leaders to educate them about the CORE Act and ask for their support.	Ensure that the CORE Act is taken up in the next NYCC FY and work with the City's other borough-based SWABs and Queens partners (e.g., Big Reuse, Queens Botanical Garden) to advocate for its passage.	Track progress on CORE Act passage and improve its potential impact by ensuring sufficient coverage in Environmental Justice communities that struggle with storm water runoff. Advocate for use of locally made compost in these communities to enhance soil conditions in tree beds and rain gardens.	Queens New York City Council Members, Queens Community Boards, Queens Compost-Focused Nonprofits, QSWAB Members
Ensure DSNY has at the ready a long-term resiliency plan that includes scenarios in which Municipal Solid Waste increases as it did during COVID. Ensure future DSNY budgets include a "Rainy Day Fund" to cover the predicted increased expenses that we saw during COVID due to waste generation moving from commercial to residential generators.	Research how other U.S. and international cities handled the increase in MSW during COVID to identify alternative approaches.	Work with the City's other borough-based SWABs to advocate for the drafting and/or sharing of a DSNY Resiliency Contingency Plan that takes into account lessons learned from COVID-19.	With the City's other borough-based SWABs, request from DSNY to host a post-mortem dialogue on COVID to assure the agency can communicate to community members lessons learned and changes the agency foresees making to its policies or practices if post-COVID MSW rates continue to remain higher than anticipated due to a decrease in commercial activity.	DSNY, Citywide SWABs
Provide more support for communities post-COVID to initiate and lead public clean-ups. Increase public education about costs to taxpayers when public baskets are used to dispose of residential waste.	Provide a dedicated page and calendar on the QSWAB website for communities to sign-up to lead cleanup events and help promote them.	Invite Juan Saldana from DSNY's Bureau of Community Affairs and volunteers from successful volunteer cleanup groups to speak at a QSWAB meeting about the process of leading successful community cleanups.	Track # and impact of volunteer-led community clean-ups and survey participants to gather feedback about the factors that contribute to these being meaningful experiences. Convene a meeting of Queens volunteer cleanup groups to support the creation of a How-To Guide for communities that currently lack a similar effort. Offer to host the How-to Guide on the QSWAB's website.	DSNY, Volunteer Community Groups, QSWAB Members
Consider more innovative approaches to public litter baskets such as strategies used in Amsterdam to surround bins with greenery https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/jun/12/amsterdam-plants-mini-gardens-around-bins-in-drive-to-cut-littering or underground storage to reduce vermin https://www.core77.com/posts/102208/Amsterdams-Smart-System-of-Underground-Garbage-Bins.	Use the State of Waste in Queens report to identify neighborhoods where public litter baskets were most cut during COVID and 311 calls about litter were highest.	Introduce innovative approaches to public litter (e.g., Amsterdam models, T.O.S.S. pilot) to Queens Community Boards as a first step toward securing public buy-in for local pilots.	Invite a speaker from a City that has piloted innovative public litter technology to present to the QSWAB and the City's other borough-based SWABs to share process and outcomes.	DSNY, Queens Community Boards, Citywide SWABs, National/International Experts TBD,, QSWAB Members
Increase discretionary funding for community-led compost and food scrap drop-off groups with funds distributed through a nonprofit fiscal sponsor. Explore possibility of forming a dedicated 501c3 cooperative to allow Queens composters to better leverage their efforts to raise funds.	Invite people who have started community compost sites to present at a future QSWAB meeting to share the process with residents in other communities.	Invite a volunteer community composting group such as Astoria Pug to present at an upcoming QSWAB meeting.	Convene a meeting of Queens volunteer FSDO site hosts and community composters to support the creation of a How-To Guide for communities that currently lack these opportunities. Offer to host the How-to Guide on the QSWAB's website.	Community Composters, Community Members, QSWAB Members
Formally honor and recognize Queens-based volunteer cleanup and FSDO groups started in response to COVID-19.	Recommend a formal proclamation from the Queens Borough President's Office honoring volunteer Queens community groups who helped keep neighborhoods clean and diverted organic waste from landfills during the pandemic.	Identify communities with low MGPC and Organics Diversion Rates and high numbers of 311 Litter calls to help identify key community members who may wish to spearhead a volunteer cleanup group or FSDO effort with QSWAB support.	Help document Queens' volunteer groups' impact in future updates to a State of Waste in Queens report. Explore ways to make it easy for groups to report data to ensure annual accuracy. See Farming Concrete Data Toolkit as an example: (https://farmingconcrete.org/barn/static/resources/DataCollectionToolkit.pdf).	Queens Borough President's Office, Volunteer Community Groups, New Groups TBD, QSWAB Members
Raise awareness around established, new, and emerging Queens sustainable and zero waste businesses and identify opportunities to promote them.	Recommend to the NYCC a special designation and incentives to certify Zero Waste businesses similar to the MWBE certification to increase vendor purchasing opportunities for these businesses.	Convene a meeting with NYCEDC to explore ways in which City purchasing could be enhanced through awarding contracts to zero waste vendors.	Document year over year growth in sustainable and zero waste businesses in Queens. IN partnership with the Queens Chamber of Commerce or a similar entity, survey new businesses to better understand the nature of these business, gross and net annual sales, location, target audiences and business needs and challenges to ensure their long-term success. Encourage the QBP to create a borough-specific Zero Waste Challenge and invite local businesses to participate (https://www1.nyc.gov/site/sustainability/initiatives/zero-waste-challenge.page).	New York City Council, NYCEDC, Queens Chamber of Commerce, Business Owners, QSWAB Members
Identify ways to incentivize, promote, and/or reward larger Queens restaurateurs (e.g., gross sales over \$250K/yr) forgoing single-use plastics.	Work with the Queens Chamber of Commerce and the City's licensing entities as needed to identify the borough's largest restaurateurs.	Convene a conversation with 10-20 large restaurateurs to understand the cost of doing business to purchase and dispose of throwaway plastic versus using reusable tableware.	Highlight on the QSWAB website businesses that agree to forgo single-use plastic as the City emerges post-COVID. Look into the possibility of creating a coupon book of zero waste and sustainable restaurants to encourage more Queens residents to eat at these venues.	Queens Chamber of Commerce, Licensing Entities TBD, Restaurateurs, QSWAB Members