

A CLEANER, SMARTER, AND SUSTAINABLE NEW YORK CITY

“We’ve been expected to shrug off the mess, to take leadership failures in stride as just another part of city life. But New Yorkers shouldn’t have to endure neglect as a way of life. It’s time for a city leadership that works as hard as its people. It’s time to transform our streets and our city.” – Scott Stringer

STRINGER

DEMOCRAT FOR MAYOR

Poor sanitation remains one of the most visible and damning markers of ineffective governance

in New York City. Trash-strewn streets and overflowing garbage bins aren't just eyesores—they tell a story of unsuccessful and incomplete policies that aren't getting the job done.

We deserve better. New Yorkers deserve a modern waste management system that prioritizes efficiency, sustainability, and public health—not empty rhetoric. Scott Stringer's plan takes the bold vision of containerization and does what the Adams administration has failed to do: turn promises into measurable, lasting progress for the people of New York City.

The first step to cleaning up New York City's streets and upgrading its infrastructure is real leadership from City Hall. Despite billions spent annually, New Yorkers dodge mountains of trash on sidewalks, deal with rising rat infestations, and watch piecemeal fixes from politicians only trying to kick the garbage can down the road.

New York City's livability starts with clean streets and effective sanitation. To reclaim our city's vibrancy, we need bold action and innovative solutions.

A Transformative Moment Squandered

New York City's waste management system is suffering due to decades of half-measures and fragmented policies. The city has become trapped in a cycle of high costs, inefficiencies, and public frustration. In short, we have a 20th-century system in a 21st-century city.

The Adams administration made bold promises to address these issues, but its flagship containerization policy—announced with much fanfare—risks squandering the momentum and public support it initially garnered. The current administration lacks leadership and a coherent, comprehensive vision.

As a result, experts, urban planners, and residents are already raising the alarm that what could have been a transformative moment in sanitation policy has instead faltered due to poor planning and lackluster execution. Right now, New York City sanitation is characterized by:

- **Sidewalk Clutter:** Poor design threatens to overwhelm neighborhoods with walls of garbage bins, obstructing sidewalks, especially in neighborhoods where space is already at a premium. This isn't just unsightly—it's impractical for pedestrians and businesses alike.
- **Incomplete Vision:** The Adams administration's failure to integrate recycling and composting into its waste management plan is a missed opportunity to meet sustainability goals. Worse, it alienates residents who are already skeptical of the city's environmental commitment.
- **Rodent Control:** Containerization was supposed to help, but poorly sealed garbage bins and inconsistent collection are making the rat crisis worse, not solving it.
- **Public Frustration:** Since 2019, trash complaints have surged by 250%, with neighborhoods like Flatbush emerging as hotspots. This trend reflects widespread dissatisfaction with the city's inability to handle basic sanitation.¹
- **Eroded Public Trust:** When residents see recyclables mixed with trash or hear about inefficiencies at recycling plants, it undermines confidence. Many are left wondering if their efforts to recycle even make a difference, further weakening participation in sustainability programs.
- **Lack of Leadership:** What we're seeing isn't just operational missteps—it's a fundamental lack of leadership. The administration has failed to articulate clear goals or show measurable progress, leaving pilot projects and new rules feeling like piecemeal efforts rather than a cohesive strategy, sowing disillusionment among residents.

Like so many of the city's challenges, sanitation has been plagued by a disconnect between lofty promises and tangible outcomes. Without a clear, comprehensive strategy and determined follow-through, initiatives like containerization risk becoming another unfulfilled pledge, further eroding public confidence in city leadership.

Scott's Approach: Smart Design, Effective Management, Real Results

Scott's plan is built around **five key priorities**:

1. Designing a System That Fits Our City

By the Numbers: Waste Management in New York City

- **\$2.3 billion:** Annual waste management spending in New York City, split between the **New York City Department of Sanitation (DSNY)** and private waste haulers. DSNY spends approximately **\$1.6 billion** managing 3.8 million tons of waste annually from residential buildings, government facilities, and nonprofits, while private businesses pay an estimated **\$730 million** to handle 4 million tons of commercial waste annually.²
- **6.15 million tons annually:** New York City generates 6.15 million tons of waste each year, with **DSNY** collecting **3.15 million tons** from residential buildings and government facilities, while private haulers manage **3 million tons** from commercial establishments.³
- **\$545 per ton:** DSNY's combined collection and disposal costs total **\$545 per ton** as of fiscal year 2021 (**\$342 for collection** and **\$203 for disposal**), far exceeding per-ton **private hauler** costs as well as benchmarks for cities like Washington, D.C. and Phoenix.⁴
- **17% vs. 32%:** DSNY recycles just 14% of waste, compared to 32% nationally. Approximately **85%** of DSNY-collected waste is sent to landfills, reflecting inefficiencies that contribute to **high costs** and poor outcomes for New Yorkers.⁵
- **Lagging Behind Peer Cities:** Other major cities like San Francisco (80% recycling rate) and Seattle (60% recycling rate) outperform NYC in waste management efficiency and environmental impact.⁶
- **\$22.5 million:** Estimated annual revenue potential if the city's organic waste were utilized to produce biogas for electricity generation.⁷
- **2–3 times per week:** DSNY's residential refuse collection frequency, with recycling once weekly.⁸
- **7,800 uniformed and 2,000 civilian sanitation employees:** Approximate DSNY workforce, supported by over 2,000 collection trucks.⁹
- New York City is **one of only three major U.S. cities** that fund residential waste collection entirely through general revenue.
- **Public trust concerns:** Reports of recyclables being mixed with trash and inefficient recycling facilities have eroded public confidence, underscoring the need for systemic reform.¹⁰

2. Integrating Sustainability into Sanitation

3. Delivering Results Through Better Management

4. Building for the Future: Mandating Waste Management Infrastructure

5. Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR): Shifting Costs to Polluters

Each priority addresses what the current administration has missed, offering practical, innovative solutions tailored to New York's unique challenges, all working together to reduce costs, boost recycling, and create a system that works for everyone.

1. Designing a System That Fits Our City

The Problem: One-size-fits-all containerization doesn't work for New York City. Individual bins for every unit might work elsewhere, but in dense neighborhoods, they could clutter sidewalks, creating "walls of bins" and inconveniencing pedestrians.

Scott's Solution:

For too long, New York has lacked the leadership to think ahead. This plan addresses this gap with proactive policies that both clean up our streets and prepare us for a more sustainable future. It's time to stop making excuses and start making progress.

- **Shared On-Street Containers:** Instead of individual bins for every building, Scott will prioritize communal containers on the curb, which have been successfully implemented in other cities. These containers reduce clutter, improve aesthetics, and streamline collection.
- **Mandate Waste Management Infrastructure:** For years, we've allowed new developments to replicate outdated, inefficient waste practices. Under this plan, all new construction and major renovations will be required to include features like recycling and composting chutes, compactors, or space for communal bins. Even in new developments, where modern solutions like recycling chutes or communal bins could have been implemented, the city's failure to act locked us into the same inefficient and unsanitary practices.
- **Innovative Storage:** In areas where on-street bins are impractical or parking is at a premium, Scott will pilot semi-underground containers to minimize space usage and improve efficiency.¹¹ To adapt these to New York City, we'll tackle challenges like subsurface utility congestion with targeted feasibility studies, ensuring practical and effective solutions.
- **Neighborhood-Specific Plans:** New York is a city of neighborhoods, and a one-size-fits-all approach won't work. Scott will work with planners, building managers, and community leaders to design customized solutions for each neighborhood, such as communal bins, underground storage, or flexible collection schedules. Every neighborhood deserves a waste system that meets its unique needs.

The Outcome: Cleaner streets without sacrificing sidewalk space. Pedestrians reclaim their public spaces, and residents get a waste system that works for them—not against them.

2. Integrating Sustainability into Sanitation

The Problem: A modern waste system isn't just about getting rid of trash—it's about managing waste responsibly. The current plan leaves out recycling and composting, jeopardizing NYC's sustainability goals.

Scott's Solution: Take the bold step of unifying these pieces into one cohesive system: containerization paired with recycling and composting, supported by education, incentives, and smarter infrastructure.

- **Full Integration:** Scott will expand containerization to include **recycling** and **composting**, using **color-coded bins** to ensure everyone knows where their waste goes.
- **Incentives for Green Practices:** Buildings that adopt on-site composting systems or innovative waste management practices will be eligible for grants and incentives.
- **Public Education Campaign:** Scott will launch a multilingual outreach program to provide information to residents on how to properly separate and dispose of waste.

The Outcome: A holistic waste management system that reduces landfill use, boosts recycling rates, and helps New York City meet its climate commitments.

3. Delivering Results Through Better Management

The Problem: A good plan is only as strong as its execution. The Adams administration's rollout has been inconsistent and opaque, raising doubts about whether their strategy can deliver results. Beyond these immediate concerns, New York City's waste management suffers from a fundamental lack of a cohesive, long-term strategy. Band-aid solutions won't fix foundational issues that require bold, forward-thinking approaches.

Scott's Solution: Execution is paramount. Drawing on lessons from prior missteps, Scott's **10-Year Waste Management Modernization Plan** is about more than just cleaning up today's mess. It's a forward-thinking strategy designed to make New York's waste system sustainable, efficient, and future-ready. This plan will focus on:

1. **Upgrading Recycling Facilities:** Modern problems require modern solutions. By upgrading our Material Recovery Facilities with AI-powered sorting systems, we'll increase efficiency, reduce contamination, and make recycling easier for everyone.

- 2. Composting Infrastructure:** Build neighborhood-scale composting facilities and partner with private organizations to process organic waste into marketable compost and biogas.
- 3. Modernized Collection Systems:** Outdated trucks and inefficient routes belong in the past. With automated side-loading vehicles and fill-level sensors, we'll save time, reduce costs, and make our streets safer and cleaner.
- 4. Local Processing and Reduced Landfill Dependency:** Investing in local waste-to-energy plants and recycling facilities will cut costs, reduce emissions, and keep resources within New York.
- 5. Regular Updates and Public Oversight:** Annual progress reports and public hearings will ensure transparency and adaptability, overseen by a Sanitation Advisory Council comprising experts, community leaders, and DSNY officials.

The Outcome: A waste management system that reduces landfill dependency, improves recycling and composting rates, and enhances public health.

4. Building for the Future: Mandating Waste Management Infrastructure

The Problem: By failing to mandate infrastructure like recycling and composting chutes or communal bin spaces, the city has locked itself into outdated systems that burden both residents and sanitation workers. Even in new developments, where modern waste solutions should be the standard, we're seeing the same systemic inefficiencies as older buildings.

Scott's Solution: Enact policies that require all new construction and major renovations to integrate advanced waste management features, ensuring that New York City's built environment aligns with its sustainability and sanitation goals. These policies will include:

- **Recycling and Composting Chutes:** Mandatory installation in all new multi-unit buildings to streamline waste separation and increase recycling and composting rates.
- **Space for Communal Bins:** Requirements for designated areas in building designs to accommodate shared waste containers, reducing sidewalk clutter and improving operational efficiency.
- **Waste Compactors:** Incentives for integrating compactors in building designs to minimize waste volume and reduce collection frequency.
- **Advocating for Innovative Solutions:** Scott championed policies like leveraging public land for affordable housing development and pushing for reforms to affordability standards to better serve working families.

The Outcome: Mandating modern waste management infrastructure in new developments will revolutionize New York City's approach to waste handling, yielding multiple benefits:

- **Cost Savings:** Every percentage increase in recycling rates could save the city \$4.7 million. Savings stem from a \$150 per-ton cost disparity: \$203 for refuse disposal versus \$53 for recycling. A smarter system could fund critical infrastructure upgrades, reduce landfill dependency, and cut greenhouse gas emissions.
- **Efficiency Is a Necessity:** Features like recycling and composting chutes in buildings simplify waste separation at the source, reducing contamination and ensuring higher-quality recyclable materials. By reducing waste volume and collection frequency, these systems save time, labor, and fuel costs dollars that can be reinvested in better infrastructure and public services to give us a more livable city.
- **A Smarter, Greener City:** By improving how we handle waste, we can reduce landfill dependency, cut greenhouse gas emissions, and increase recycling and composting rates. Smarter systems for waste separation and recycling can help us build a city that's not only efficient but also environmentally responsible. By aligning waste management with climate commitments, we can transform public health, urban livability, and our reputation for leadership in sustainability.
- **Public Health and Sanitation:** As New York City grows denser, proper waste infrastructure is critical to prevent sidewalks from becoming overwhelmed with clutter. Without thoughtful planning, new

construction only compounds the problem. Mandating proper waste infrastructure ensures our streets are clean, clear, and safe, no matter how the city grows.

5. Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR): Shifting Costs to Polluters

The Outcome: Taxpayers shouldn't foot the bill for corporate waste. Under the current regime, taxpayers shoulder the ballooning expenses of packaging disposal, allowing producers to externalize these costs onto public systems. This not only strains city finances but also does nothing to curb waste generation at the source.

Scott's Solution: EPR shifts responsibility to where it belongs. By requiring producers—especially e-commerce giants—to pay fees for their packaging waste, we incentivize sustainable practices and reduce waste generation at the source. This isn't just a new theory—it's a proven solution. States like Maine, Oregon, and California have successfully implemented EPR laws, demonstrating that we can replicate these successes in New York City.

- **EPR Framework Shifts Responsibility to Where It Belongs:** By requiring producers—especially e-commerce giants—to pay fees for their packaging waste, we incentivize sustainable practices and reduce waste generation at the source.
- **Modest Change, Massive Impact:** For example, a modest \$0.50 per package fee could generate over \$400 million annually to fund infrastructure upgrades (like underground or semi-underground containerization), reduce landfill dependency, and expand recycling programs.
- **Advocating for Innovative Solutions:** Scott championed policies like leveraging public land for affordable housing development and pushing for reforms to affordability standards to better serve working families.

Immediate and Long-Term Goals:

- **Short-term:** We can start locally with initiatives requiring merchants to cover packaging waste costs.
- **Long-term:** Advocate for state-wide EPR legislation modeled after successful laws in Maine, Oregon, and California. In the long term, EPR will instill a culture of corporate accountability. Producers will no longer see waste as someone else's problem, but as a challenge they need to address through innovation, efficiency, and environmental stewardship.

The Outcome: A fairer system where producers bear responsibility for reducing waste while securing sustainable funding for sanitation improvements. When producers are held accountable for the full lifecycle of their products, they are motivated to innovate: reducing packaging, adopting recyclable materials, and embracing sustainable practices. Ultimately, it's about fairness. Why should taxpayers subsidize waste management for corporations making billions in profit? EPR levels the playing field. The fees collected through EPR programs can be reinvested into critical environmental initiatives, including advanced recycling technologies, zero-waste education programs, and green job creation. Over time, this revenue can transform the waste management landscape. As global commitments to climate action intensify, EPR places New York at the forefront of sustainable policy innovation.

Paying for the Plan

Scott's **10-Year Waste Management Modernization Plan** will be financed through a combination of existing city funding, innovative partnerships, and cost-saving efficiencies:

1. **City Investments with Long-Term Returns:** By allocating funds from the Fiscal 2025 Executive Plan, the city will make critical upgrades to recycling facilities, composting infrastructure, and waste collection systems—investments that will pay off in efficiency and sustainability.
2. **Tapping into State and Federal Grants for Sustainability:** Securing grants such as the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Sustainable Materials Management Grants to fund sustainable waste initiatives, including composting and waste-to-energy projects.
3. **Partnering with the Private Sector:** Engaging developers and private-sector stakeholders to co-invest in local processing plants and advanced waste technologies.

4. Efficiency Saves Money: Modernized trucks, optimized collection routes, and reduced landfill dependency will generate significant cost savings over the plan's duration, redirecting funds to other critical areas.

5. Fairness Measures: To ensure inclusivity, the plan provides grants and subsidies to low-income communities and small businesses, fostering citywide participation and compliance.

5. Taxpayer Relief: Rather than raising taxes, this funding plan is about smart investments and cost-sharing measures that benefit everyone while keeping taxpayer burdens low.

The Outcome: By combining sustainable funding sources with innovative cost-sharing and efficiency strategies, Scott's plan will transform New York City's waste management system into one that's cleaner, greener, and more efficient—all while staying fiscally responsible.

A Vision for the Future

New Yorkers are tired of broken promises and half-baked policies. Scott offers a clear, actionable, and achievable plan to deliver measurable progress that New Yorkers can see and feel in their neighborhoods.

What You Can Expect from Scott's Leadership:

- **Sidewalks that are clean and clear—not cluttered with bins.**
- **A waste system that integrates recycling and composting for a greener New York City.**
- **An end to the rat crisis, rodent-proof infrastructure, and efficient collection.**
- **Results you can see and leadership you can trust.**

Scott has the experience, the vision, and the determination to get this done—because New Yorkers deserve nothing less.

A Call to Action

Sanitation isn't glamorous, but it's essential. Clean, clear sidewalks aren't just practical—they're symbolic. They reflect a city that values its public spaces and respects its residents. Scott's plan is a step toward restoring that pride in our shared spaces.

For decades, New Yorkers have endured trash-strewn sidewalks, eroding trust in leadership as promises of change went unfulfilled. This crisis isn't the result of one administration's oversight but decades of deferred solutions and half-measures.

This cycle ends here. Containerization must be more than a superficial fix; it must be part of a comprehensive vision that integrates recycling, incentivizes waste reduction, and prioritizes well-designed public spaces. By addressing these challenges with thoughtfulness and ambition, Scott's plan reclaims New York's legacy as a city that dares to dream big—and delivers.

This is about more than clean streets. It's about restoring pride in our public spaces, rebuilding trust in city governance, and creating a system for everyone. New York City wasn't built on complacency but on bold ideas and relentless execution. It's time to honor that legacy with a waste management system worthy of America's greatest city.

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