



DEPARTMENT OF STREETS AND SANITATION
CITY OF CHICAGO

COMMITTEE ON BUDGET AND GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS
Budget Hearing for the Chicago Department of Streets and Sanitation
October 20, 2023
Commissioner Cole Stallard

Honorable Chairman Ervin and members of the Chicago City Council:

For the record, I am Cole Stallard, Commissioner for the Department of Streets and Sanitation (DSS). I am grateful for the opportunity to serve Mayor Brandon Johnson and the members of the Chicago City Council in the delivery of necessary and year-round services that keep our great city operating, including but not limited to Sanitation, Recycling, Forestry, Street Operations, Graffiti Removal, Rodent Control, and Traffic Services. I also want to acknowledge the valuable DSS leadership team, who is here with me today to help review the year's progress, and to highlight a few of our goals for 2024.

This past summer, when the City experienced unprecedented flooding in homes on the West Side and other areas, DSS sanitation crews immediately partnered with the Mayor's Office, other city departments, unions, and local community groups to initiate a collaborative flood cleanup effort. The team came together to help residents clean up their property and to remove damaged personal belongings from their homes.

For recycling, we continued to onboard new staff, reinforcing our dedication to a sustainable future through increased recycling rates, waste reduction, and environmental progress. With these added resources, and in partnership with the Mayor's Office of Climate and Environmental Equity (OCEE), we were able to launch a new Food Scrap Drop-Off program at 15 locations throughout Chicago. By providing composting options to all Chicago residents, we can both reduce harmful greenhouse gas emissions that occur when organic food material decomposes in a landfill and return organic materials to the earth creating healthier soils and communities.

To enhance transparency of our recycling process, we collaborated with our recycling partner LRS and the Department of Assets Information and Services (AIS) to create a Blue Cart Recycling Story Map. Featured on the chicagorecycles.org website, the Story Map illustrates the journey of recyclables from the point of pick-up, where the materials are sorted, the tonnage of recyclables collected, and the destinations for processing recyclables into new materials for reuse.

The DSS Bureau of Forestry continues to work in partnership with the Chicago Department of Transportation (CDOT), the Chicago Department of Public Health (CDPH), and OCEE on the Our Roots Chicago program, where we plant trees using an equity-based Tree Ambassador program. The City is

on track to plant over 20,000 trees by year's end, enhancing our city's green landscape and promoting health and equity.

The Bureau of Forestry also optimized a new citywide area tree trimming approach this year. Now, crews can schedule and trim all trees in one geographic area at the same time, creating a more efficient and equitable process for Chicago residents, and allowing for the proper maintenance of the city's overall urban tree canopy. This strategy is already showing results, with the Bureau of Forestry trimming 53,188 trees to date this year, compared to 19,525 for the same period last year, improving tree trims by 172%.

Our Bureau of Street Operations is fully prepared for this winter's operations, with 425,000 tons of salt stored for the upcoming season. Last winter, we revamped the City's "Plow Tracker", empowering residents to monitor snow removal activities more effectively, and we launched the inaugural "You Name a Snowplow Contest," fostering engagement with city residents during winter months. We will keep you posted on the details for this year's contest, which will be announced soon.

Street Operations also continues to oversee sanitation services in the Central Business District, citywide graffiti operations, working in partnership with Cook County on SWAP clean-up efforts, and collaborating with the Department of Family and Support Services (DFSS) on quality-of-life conditions for residents experiencing homelessness.

DSS also works with the Chicago Police Department and other City departments every Friday in the summer months to clean targeted areas as part of the City's public safety efforts. This year we have participated in 14 Operation Clean events, and to further assist with public safety, DSS partners with the Community Safety Coordination Center to clean vacant lots in these same communities.

DSS continues to provide the necessary city services for special events. In 2023, we collaborated with the Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events (DCASE) and other city departments on nearly 1,300 special events, including the Chicago Marathon and other large-scale gatherings. Our Bureau of Traffic Services works hard year-round to provide barricades, cones, and postings that help to ensure events run smoothly and safely.

The Bureau of Rodent Control continues to respond to 311 requests and proactively address rodent baiting through door-to-door abatement, face-to-face engagement with residents, and informational materials in four different languages.

In closing, I would like to thank all City Council members and staff for your support, especially for our Spring Clean & Green event, which brings residents together to clean and beautify Chicago neighborhoods. I also want to acknowledge the entire staff of the Chicago Department of Streets and Sanitation for their tireless efforts and commitment to the residents of Chicago.

My staff and I are happy to answer any questions you may have.