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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**GrowNYC Milestone:  
Three Million Pounds of Food Scraps Collected and Diverted by  
Farmers Market Shoppers in Public-Private Partnership**

**July 10, 2014, NEW YORK, NY** – NYC Department of Sanitation Commissioner Kathryn Garcia and the non-profit GrowNYC announced a new milestone with Manhattan Borough President Gale Brewer and Councilmember Mark Levine today at the Columbia University Greenmarket — GrowNYC Greenmarkets have collected three million pounds of food scraps for composting. These scraps come from City residents visiting 33 drop-off sites in the Bronx, Brooklyn, Manhattan, and on Staten Island.

“We’re so thankful to the New York City Department of Sanitation for being a true champion of the food scrap collection program. Our numbers have steadily climbed and the next level is already in motion: organics as part of DSNY’s curbside collection. New York is walking the walk now with some 180,000 ‘donors’ coming from all parts of the city to participate each year,” said GrowNYC Executive Director Marcel Van Ooyen. “This program is a perfect illustration of how the public sector can work in partnership with local non-profit organizations to increase waste diversion in New York City. We are thrilled to be a component of the City’s efforts to compost more and waste less,” he added.

“While some may see food waste as trash, we see it as big opportunity to turn last night’s dinner in to a useful product,” said Sanitation Commissioner Garcia. “Our pilot curbside organics collection program is in 100,000 households, and we are collecting scraps from more than 350 schools. Residents living in the pilot areas place their food scraps, soiled paper and yard clippings in sealed, locked containers, and we collect it once or twice a week. The material is turned in to compost, which we use to nourish plants around the city.”

New Yorkers can drop off fruit and vegetable scraps for composting while shopping for healthy, local produce at the Greenmarket. At these “Sustainability Centers,” the public can deposit their food waste, including apple cores and coffee grounds, into collection tubs. The scraps are then transported by GrowNYC or the Department of Sanitation to one of several sites in the five boroughs where material is transformed into compost, a fertile soil amendment for use in urban farm and gardening programs.

“GrowNYC and the Department of Sanitation have been major driving forces in the expansion of food scrap recycling throughout the City. The collaboration brings together two complementary



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approaches: GrowNYC heightens awareness and encourages participation via education and outreach, while DSNY provides transportation of organic waste to composting sites. New Yorkers want to be conscientious about their organic waste disposals. I commend the partnership in harnessing this collective enthusiasm to reach the important milestone of 3 million pounds of food scraps,” said Manhattan Borough President Gale Brewer.

In 2011, GrowNYC received funding to test the public’s response to a food scrap recycling program. Driven by demand as GrowNYC’s farmers markets shoppers came out in droves to compost, in April 2012, GrowNYC expanded the program as a partnership with the NYC Department of Sanitation as part of the City’s efforts to double its waste diversion rate to 30 percent by 2017.

The public-private partnership has grown to 33 drop-off locations, diverting a whopping three million pounds of food scraps from disposal – that’s enough to cover Morningside Park with six inches of food scraps. Measured in pounds, participation rates in 2014 are up 35-40 percent over last year. In addition, individual food scrap donations each month are up almost 50 percent.

Enthusiasm for the food scrap collection program is reflected in the city’s aggressive effort to expand curbside organics collections in select residential areas and schools throughout the city.

GrowNYC manages 33 sites which provide 36 collection opportunities each week, complementing existing, ongoing collections conducted by BIG! Compost and Lower East Side Ecology Center.

The top performing collection site is Grand Army Plaza in Brooklyn with an average of more than 5,100 pounds weekly in 2014, and in total has diverted more than 568,000 pounds of food scraps. The entire program collects on average more than 60 tons of food scraps each month from almost 15,000 individual “donations.” At Columbia University where food scraps are collected twice a week, some 3,000 pounds of material is collected for composting each week.

Food comprises about 17 percent of NYC’s waste stream. When this material is sent to a landfill, it contributes to disposal costs and creates greenhouse gas emissions. When composted, food scraps and other organic waste is transformed into a useful product that adds nutrients and improves the quality of soil for street trees, gardens and more.

GrowNYC expects the program to continue to grow as more New Yorkers learn about the benefits.

Download images of food scrap drop-off sites: <http://GrowNYC.dphoto.com/album/8f6ddv>



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For more information, including a full list of participating sites and FAQs, visit [www.grownyc.org/compost](http://www.grownyc.org/compost) or call 212.788.7900.

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#### **About GrowNYC**

GrowNYC, a 44-year-old environmental nonprofit, improves New York City's quality of life through environmental programs that transform communities block by block and empower all New Yorkers to secure a clean and healthy environment for future generations. Programs: Greenmarket, Office of Recycling Outreach and Education, Open Space Greening, Environmental Education and Grow to Learn NYC: Citywide School Gardens Initiative. Learn more at [www.grownyc.org](http://www.grownyc.org)

#### **About the New York City Department of Sanitation**

The Department of Sanitation (DSNY) promotes a healthy environment through the efficient management of solid waste and the development of environmentally sound long-range planning for handling refuse, including recyclables. The Department operates 59 district garages and manages a fleet of 2,022 rear-loading collection trucks, 450 mechanical brooms and 365 salt/sand spreaders. The Department clears litter, snow and ice from approximately 6,000 miles of City streets and removes debris from vacant lots as well as abandoned vehicles from City streets.

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