

Calling Your City Council Member About Sweeps

Here are tips and suggested message points for calling your city council member's office advocating against sweeps of homeless encampments:

Some basics

- **You don't need to be an expert:** *"I'm a neighbor and I care about this"* is enough standing to call.
- **Calls from residents carry more weight than you think:** Legislative staffers track volume. Even 10–15 calls on an issue gets noticed.
- **Encourage your friends:** Share these tips and ask others to call as well.
- **You can call repeatedly:** As the issue comes up in the news or in the budget cycle, call again. Consistency signals long term interest and attention.
- **Ask if they're tracking calls on this issue:** If so, they may just log your name and stance on the issue — that still counts. Every tally matters.

Before You Call

- **Find your council member:** Go to <https://council.nyc.gov/districts/> and enter your address, including your Borough. Click on your council member's name and look for the district office phone number.
- **Pick a good time:** If possible, call on Monday through Friday between 9am and 5pm—that's when you're most likely to reach someone in the Council Member's office. If you aren't able to call during that time (or if your call goes to voicemail), you should call whenever you can and still leave a voicemail!
- **Take a moment to prep:** Jot down 2–3 thoughts you want to make sure you say. You don't need to be perfect, you just want to register an opinion.

When Someone Picks Up

Start simple: *"Hi, my name is [Name] and I live in [neighborhood]. I'm calling to share my opinion on the city's approach to homeless encampments, and I'd like the council member to hear my perspective."*

Short and sweet points to hit on:

- My unhoused neighbors don't make me feel unsafe.
- Sweeps don't solve homelessness — they just move it.
- Sweeps undercut other efforts that require building trust, not taking belongings.

- I want the city to be working on housing solutions, not displacement.
- This is a housing policy failure, not a public safety issue.

Examples of what this might sound like – skim these samples and make them your own!

I live in [neighborhood] and I want the council member to know that I don't feel threatened by my homeless neighbors. Sweeps don't reflect my values or the values of my community.

Encampment sweeps displace people without connecting them to housing. Research consistently shows that criminalization of homelessness makes it harder, not easier, to get people into stable shelter.

Health and safety are served by connecting people to services, not by taking their belongings and moving them along.

The Department of Homeless Services should be resourced to do sustained, relationship-based outreach — not quick, compliance-driven cleanups that destroy people's belongings and break whatever fragile trust has been built.

I'm asking the councilmember to push the Department of Homeless Services and the Mayor's office to prioritize low-barrier shelter options, safe haven beds, and permanent supportive housing instead of sweeps that are really just moving suffering out of sight.

People are on the street because we don't have enough affordable housing. That's the crisis we should be addressing.

I know some people complain about encampments but I'm a resident too, and I'm telling you the opposite. Not every constituent wants sweeps — and I want my voice counted.

Before You Hang Up

Ask:

- Will you share this with the council member?
- Is there a way I can follow up in writing or attend a relevant hearing?
- Does the council member have a stated position on encampment sweeps?

After You Call

Once you've reached out, [fill out this super quick form](#) to help us keep track of outreach and any response you received.

Then, if possible, **follow up with an email** to the district office reiterating your call. Written contact reinforces your phone outreach.