

meditations by John pate

THE CLEAN CITY ECONOMY

Can public hygiene create local prosperity?



How can a city council turn a necessary public-health service into a source of lawful municipal revenue and new commercial opportunity? When densely populated cities and suburban centers require professional cleaning, the demand can support neighborhood porters, independent contractors, equipment makers, service coordinators, training programs and businesses that turn waste into recoverable resources.

A local mercantile and services exchange could connect family-owned operations with mid-sized contractors, while transparent procurement and licensing keep the market open. Public benefit might come through business activity, taxes, appropriately priced service fees and reduced avoidable sanitation costs - not private enrichment of council members.

Necessity creates demand. But does a new hygiene standard spread opportunity through the local economy, or concentrate contracts in a few hands?

TO PONDER

- How could small and mid-sized firms both enter the market?
- What revenue should be reinvested in public health and cleaner infrastructure?

THE HUMAN COST OF WASTE WORK

Exposure, recovery and the length of service



How long should anyone be assigned to work that repeatedly exposes them to human waste? A porter, restaurant employee or sanitation specialist may confront contamination, offensive odors, physical hazards and emotionally exhausting duties. Training and protective equipment matter; so do respect, agency, adequate staffing and the right to recover.

I propose two-year terms for designated high-exposure hygiene duties, with a maximum of four terms and at least two years between terms. This is a protective policy idea, not a medically established threshold. Research has not identified a universal number of years required for psychological recovery from restroom cleaning or fecal exposure.

If society depends upon the work, should it also guarantee the worker a route into another occupation, paid education, health monitoring and a stable life beyond the assignment?

TO PONDER

- What evidence would establish a reasonable exposure limit?
- How can recovery mean opportunity rather than unemployment?

A FAIR WAGE FOR ESSENTIAL CLEANING

Three times, six times, and whose minimum wage?



Should essential hygiene work receive three times the minimum wage, six times the minimum wage, or a rate that changes according to the risk, the locality and the company receiving the service? The same work may be performed for a small suburban shop, a wealthy metropolitan business and a large commercial institution. Equal dignity does not erase the differences in exposure and economic capacity.

One proposal is a locally anchored base calculated from the applicable wage law where the work is actually performed, with a transparent 3-to-6-times premium informed by the client's average profitability over the previous four completed fiscal years. Contract rules would have to prevent false profit reports and guarantee the premium reaches the worker.

Does a wage reflect the difficulty of a task, its value to public health, or a business's ability to pay? Can a fair policy recognize all three without excluding small businesses?

TO PONDER

- Should the higher city or county legal minimum set the floor?
- How should profit, risk and worker training influence the premium?

THE INVISIBLE CONTRACT

Global labor, regulation and public accountability



When a New York business buys a service, how far does its responsibility reach? A contract may pass through agencies, subcontractors, distant suppliers and technology platforms before anyone performs the work. In that chain, the worker's actual pay, training and protections can become difficult for the public to see.

Should cities examine labor arrangements connected with lower-wage regions, including Myanmar (formerly Burma), without assuming that a worker's nationality determines their rights or conduct? What matters is whether the work is safe, the wage legal, and every company in the chain accountable for conditions where the service takes place.

Transparency should not be a slogan. It could mean auditable payroll, disclosed subcontracting tiers, verified safety training and clear responsibility when violations occur. How much of a city's economy can be understood only by following the contract?

TO PONDER

- Who is accountable when a subcontractor fails to pay correctly?
- Can public procurement reward transparent local and international supply chains?

THE DAY THAT NEVER COMES

Happiness, heritage, and the decision to act



What makes people happy in prosperous countries, and what happens to belonging when families, languages and communities are scattered across the globe? People who leave their countries through work, war, migration or economic pressure may carry a memory of home that cannot be measured by national income. A place can grow wealthier while its residents feel less secure or less connected.

A different future requires more than patience. To say that time will answer everything is to risk allowing the problem to become permanent. The work may begin with a cleaner street, a fair contract, a local business or an honest question asked in public. Constructive action can be firm without being violent.

Do we act now to improve a world we actually inhabit, or do we wait for an imagined day when everything is suddenly better - a day that may never come?

TO PONDER

- Can a city measure prosperity through belonging and well-being, not money alone?
- What useful, peaceful action can be taken today?

THE URBAN PORTER INDUSTRY

A New Employment Sector for Public Hygiene, Commercial Maintenance, and Growing Cities



THE PROPOSAL

How about a new industry for ever-more-populated societies? Make on-site porter services mandatory for all businesses open to the public. This would create an industry of independent subcontractors responsible for maintaining hygienic standards in the close-quarter living conditions of cities and their suburbs.

The system could also incorporate commercial kitchen refrigerator inspectors, trained to identify accumulated dirt, insects, and contamination concealed within appliance paneling. Related services would include commercial ventilation hoods, grease traps, drainage systems, and other sanitation infrastructure.

The key is finding a way to make politicians "see the light"—that better public hygiene could create employment, support independent businesses, and improve urban living conditions.

1. A NEW INDUSTRY, NOT JUST ANOTHER CLEANING SERVICE

As metropolitan populations increase, maintaining sanitary commercial environments becomes more demanding. Restaurants, hotels, shopping centers, grocery stores, office buildings, transportation terminals, and neighborhood businesses all contribute to the conditions of shared urban life.

The proposed Urban Porter Service Industry would establish a professional category of workers and subcontracting businesses responsible for scheduled sanitation, preventive maintenance, and documented inspections.

Unlike ordinary janitorial work, urban porter companies would operate under standardized service requirements, with specialized training and defined responsibilities.

Large businesses might maintain dedicated on-site porter personnel throughout operating hours. Smaller businesses could contract with mobile porter teams serving several establishments along a neighborhood route. Every public-facing business would receive documented on-site service, but requirements would be proportional to its risks, occupancy, and activities.

2. THE HIDDEN DIRT INSIDE COMMERCIAL KITCHENS

An important component would be the inspection of commercial refrigeration systems.

Refrigerators and freezers can conceal accumulated organic debris, moisture, insect activity, and contaminated deposits around compressors, drain pans, ventilation openings, door seals, and removable equipment panels.

Routine wiping of visible surfaces cannot establish the cleanliness of these concealed spaces.

Specialized technicians could perform scheduled examinations, documenting contamination through photographs, maintenance records, and corrective actions. Refrigeration repairs or internal work involving electrical and refrigerant components would remain the responsibility of appropriately qualified personnel.

The same contracting network could coordinate:

- Kitchen exhaust hoods, fans, ducts, and grease removal
- Grease interceptor and drainage maintenance
- Refrigeration sanitation and pest-harborage inspections
- Waste storage, loading docks, restrooms, and shared public areas

Importantly, businesses would retain responsibility for their hygiene obligations, while independent public inspectors would oversee compliance rather than allowing contractors to certify their own work without oversight.

3. JOBS, SMALL BUSINESSES, AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The economic opportunity is larger than the individual porter.

Mandatory sanitation coverage could support independently operated neighborhood service companies, inspection technicians, equipment suppliers, training providers, refrigeration specialists, and waste-management contractors.

A city could develop service districts where one company maintains several neighboring businesses, reducing transportation costs and allowing smaller establishments to participate without employing full-time cleaning personnel.

This would create entry-level employment alongside higher-skilled technical careers. Apprenticeship programs could offer pathways into refrigeration maintenance, commercial ventilation, sanitation management, and inspection services.

The objective would be a competitive subcontracting industry—not an exclusive municipal franchise awarded to one politically connected contractor.

4. MAKING POLITICIANS SEE THE LIGHT

The political case should rest on three measurable benefits: public health protection, employment development, and preventive maintenance savings.

Many jurisdictions already regulate sanitation, pest control, commercial kitchen ventilation, and grease interceptors. The innovation would be to combine these responsibilities into a coordinated, documented service industry rather than introduce an entirely new collection of disconnected inspections.

Legislation could establish minimum sanitation coverage, standardized service records, licensing for specialized activities, and periodic independent audits. Small businesses should receive scaled requirements and reasonable implementation periods.

Before imposing a nationwide mandate, cities could conduct twelve-month pilot programs in dense commercial districts, measuring violations, pest complaints, maintenance incidents, business costs, and employment created.

The evidence would determine whether the system merits expansion.

5. AN INDUSTRY BUILT AROUND PREVENTION

Cities invest heavily in infrastructure but often address sanitation problems only after a complaint, equipment failure, or official inspection.

A structured porter industry could shift part of this work toward regular prevention.

The proposal is not merely to hire more cleaners. It is to recognize commercial hygiene as an organized urban service industry with professional standards, specialized contractors, independent oversight, and a dependable source of employment.

The central political argument is simple: a cleaner city can also be a city that creates jobs, supports small contractors, and protects its shared infrastructure.

Electrolips LLC — Preliminary Industrial Development and Public Policy Proposal, November 2026.

