



Director's Office

dpw@sfdpw.org | T. 628.271.3160 | 49 South Van Ness Ave. Suite 1600, San Francisco, CA 94103

San Francisco Public Works Launches Public Trash Can Prototype Testing

June 3, 2022

This summer, San Francisco Public Works will place prototypes of our next generation public trash cans on the street for real-life testing. Community members will have the opportunity to evaluate the cans and give input into the final selection.

During the 60-day test period, custom and off-the-shelf models will be placed in neighborhoods around the City. Each prototype can will have a QR code affixed to its exterior. The QR code will connect people to an online survey. Also, Public Works will be promoting the web address for the survey through social media and other communications outlets. In addition, staff from Public Works, nonprofit organizations and Recology who maintain, clean and empty the cans will be polled for their input. Public Works then will review and assess this information and land on a final design for the new City can.

After the design is set, a Request for Proposals will be developed to select the manufacturer for San Francisco's 3,000-plus public trash cans.

Design criteria for the new public trash can

The public trash cans on City sidewalks and in public plazas serve a vital role in combatting litter. Unfortunately, many have become easy targets of scavengers, who rummage through them and leave behind a mess. The current cans were designed more than 20 years ago when street conditions were different, and our population and number of visitors were considerably lower.

Finding the right public trash can to serve our needs and address our challenges at a reasonable cost have driven this design process. Though San Francisco is not unique in our desire for a high-quality and durable public trash can, we do have specific criteria for this next-generation can. All three custom cans meet the following design requirements:

- Rummage-resistant
 - The design must discourage tampering to keep the contents inside the can.
- Durable and easy to maintain
 - All aspects of the can must be made of sturdy materials that are difficult to damage or degrade. The can must be easy to clean and have graffiti-resistant coating.

- Tamper-proof
 - Locks and hinges need to be strong to keep people from breaking into the can to get the contents.
- Easy to service
 - Each can must hold a 32-gallon rolling toter that can be used seamlessly with the Recology trucks for dumping trash.
- Built-in capacity alerts
 - Each can must be outfitted with an electronic sensor that sends alerts when nearing trash capacity so it can be emptied before overflowing.
- Accommodate a recycling exchange
 - The design must include a compartment for a recycling exchange for glass bottles and cans.
- Aesthetically pleasing
 - The design must be a visual asset on the street and complement the design of the new JCDecaux public toilets (now in production), the BART canopies on Market Street and other new public amenities, like the café on Civic Center Plaza
- Cost
 - The target cost of the final mass-produced trash can is \$2,000 - \$3,000 apiece.

Summer 2022 prototype testing

Three custom designs and three off-the-shelf models will be part of the prototype testing in July and August. There will be five cans of each custom design and three to four cans each of the off-the-shelf models, for a total of 26 cans. These 26 cans will be dispersed across the City in a variety of places, including commercial corridors, busy intersections and bus stops. A map of locations will be available on a dedicated Public Works trash can webpage – to be launched in early July. The cans will be installed at the first set of locations for 30 days, then moved to 26 new locations to be tested for an additional 30 days.

Public Works will gather online comments through its trash can webpage and survey, as well as at neighborhood meetings and events, such as farmers’ markets and Sunday Streets.

History of the redesign project

In 2020, Public Works, in collaboration with Bay Area industrial designers at the Institute for Creative Integration (ICI), narrowed the design of the City’s new public trash cans to three final concepts. Most recently, APROE, a San Francisco-based product and manufacturing firm, has transformed these conceptual designs into 15 prototypes that can be tested on the street.

In September 2020, members of the public had the opportunity to weigh in on the three custom designs in advance of design presentations at the San Francisco Arts Commission’s Civic Design Review panel and the Historic Preservation Commission. More than 350 online surveys were collected, and the three custom designs were approved by the Arts Commission – greenlighting the next step in the process.

During the upcoming testing, the three custom designs will be augmented by three off-the-shelf models. These models were chosen by Public Works with consideration to the above design criteria, past experience on San Francisco streets and cost.

Custom cans



Salt & Pepper

Salt & Pepper's unique and elegant profile stands out from afar. The silhouette provides two separate refuse areas, with one space for cans and bottles and the other for litter. Steel fins welded to ribs give Salt & Pepper a durable frame, as well as provide visibility into the can for security and to deter graffiti. The snorkel-like opening on the litter portion makes it difficult to rummage in the can and grab discarded trash.

Slim Silhouette

Slim Silhouette's side profile allows more sidewalk space for pedestrians, while still allowing ample room to discard trash and recyclables. The single-sided access and the chute-shaped trash opening make rummaging more difficult. The stainless-steel pipe construction offers an easy-to-clean surface and less space for graffiti tags.

Soft Square

Soft Square offers a recognizable trash can silhouette with a modern aesthetic. Designed as a kit of parts, Soft Square is comprised of four curved panels, an adjustable base and a domed top. Separate openings for trash and recyclable bottles and cans are located behind the pull-down handle. The stainless-steel construction can be customized with different perforation patterns.

Off-the-shelf models



BearSaver



Ren Bin



Open Wire Mesh

BearSaver

The BearSaver can accommodate a custom-made vinyl graphic design on its four vertical sides. A recycling receptacle can be added to the side of the can.

Ren Bin

The Ren Bin is manufactured by Victor Stanley.

Open Wire Mesh

This can is manufactured by Global Industries.