

## Episode 16: Finish What You Start, SF

Welcome to Gilded Garbage Can, a podcast dedicated to defogging the image that is San Francisco.

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I'm back from my extended mic-off period. It didn't seem considerate to comment on the flaws of our city during a pandemic, especially since San Francisco really tried to get ahead of things. While the efforts seem to be keeping the majority of residents healthy, there are certainly some aspects of shelter-in-place that have not borne expected results.

Before getting to specifics, quick shout-out to the bots who, during my quiet period, have tried to leave comments on our home site, GildedGarbageCan.com, none of which are worth sharing and all of which made it safely to the spam bin.

Let's talk now about one of those "expected results" I mentioned. As shelter-in-place was enacted, the city boldly and proudly shared its plans to catch up on some much-needed roadwork – I was thrilled. It makes perfect sense...fewer cars...get the work done. Set up, wrap up and every phase in between is easier, so let's get to work and fill those potholes. No one is going to miss them.

I was particularly interested in what this would mean for Park Presidio Boulevard, specifically the southbound lanes just out of the MacArthur tunnel where, for at least 5 years, there has been patch of bad road that wheel alignment shops love. I could never figure out why the city left it there for so long – there was no avoiding it. Out of the tunnel and BAM, here's what an earthquake feels like if it were happening in your car.

Imagine my glee when I saw, on one of my weekly grocery runs, the crews set up on Park Presidio from Lake Street all the way up to Fulton and, presumably, beyond. For me, if they took care of that minefield patch of the road, it would be a major accomplishment for the city. I'd even argue that if all it took to get stuff fixed here was to stay at home, I'd advocate for shelter-in-place even without a virus.

Fast-forward 3 weeks: traffic is basically cut off from most of the boulevard – they MUST be getting work done. I see new blacktop, machines everywhere, cars at a standstill. The dream is becoming a reality – the city is going to fix a road in a truly reasonable amount of time. Side note: I haven't ventured anywhere near Van Ness, but my mind is filled with visions of that too - a completed roadway that looks just like the renderings give or take about 500 tents on the sidewalks. But I digress...

Right about that time, I needed to make a warehouse grocery run and headed north – into the fray of construction and stopped cars. As I approach the tunnel, I peer to my left to see...wait for it...the crappy piece of roadway is still there! Wow! What the hell is going on? The road that's being redone wasn't even that bad, yet the part that has been responsible for more front-end damage than driving on cobblestone, remains. "Maybe they're still getting to it," I mutter, knowing in a week I'll have a chance to check again.

Week 4: I make that same trip, glance that same direction and see that the asphalt has been ripped from most of the roadway coming out of the tunnel. I'm not sure if that has solved the problem but will find out upon my return. Two hours later I discover, the potholes are gone. What an amazing end to this story....

But wait, I'm not finished...because this story isn't really about those damn potholes; it's about how, no matter how optimal the circumstances, the city simply never finishes anything it starts.

You see, we are now in week 8 and crews have left Park Presidio, this stretch of it anyway. So, you'd think the job is done, but it isn't. They have yet to (1) pave the cross section of road at California Street which, if you hit it too fast, feels like you've driven over a small cliff, and (2) paint the freaking lines on the road. Yes...the city just left those little post-it-looking things on a major thoroughfare that accommodates the same lousy SF drivers who can barely stay in their lane with lines. It's fun to see them drive with imaginary lines on the street...and quite perilous too.

I suspect if we all stayed in our homes for a year, the city still couldn't complete even the simplest infrastructure projects.

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