

## Episode 22: New Garbage Cans Coming to the Gilded Garbage Can

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

Thank you for tuning in on Apple Podcasts, Spotify, Radio Public, and everywhere else fine podcasts are available.

Listener shout-out this episode goes to...Jason, Jon, Jason, Matt, and Idoh. In addition to being supporters of this program, they're part of Thursday Night Magic – no, not pull-a-rabbit-out-of-my-hat-magic, but Magic the Gathering, the CCG that started it all. We've not gathered ourselves since the pandemic started but hope to get back to it when it's safe. Miss you guys...

If you're longing for something to do during the pandemic, why not take up shopping? Head over to the Gilded Garbage Can store, where you'll find GGC-branded t-shirts, notebooks, mousepads, and a whole lot more. Show your love for the podcast by sporting its swag. Get your stuff today: visit [zazzle.com](https://www.zazzle.com) and search for Gilded Garbage Can.

I want to thank Hoodline for inspiring the topic for today's episode. Hell, I'm basically going to just read an article and comment – one of those instances where the show notes really write themselves. The headline alone says it all really...here we go.

Dateline, September 14, San Francisco, by the illustrious Steven Bracco, "Public Works Announces 3 Finalists for SF's New Trash Can Design." Let's ponder that headline for a moment...do a quick 16-second square breathing exercising and let that headline sink in. Now that you've had time to digest that, let's reserve commentary and just dive right into the article.

Mister Bracco reports, "On Friday, SF Public Works [released three final design concepts](#) for the city's new trash cans — and is asking the public to help it select the winner. The new cans will eventually replace more than 3,000 of the current green trash cans around the city. As many locals know, the cans are often vandalized and broken into by scavengers, who then leave a mess in their wake. Public Works first announced an effort to replace the cans in 2017 but failed to produce a workable design for several years."

Let's translate that: SF Public Works, in an effort to make it look like they're doing something important, needs residents to vote on one of 3 garbage can designs as the city seeks to waste money replacing 3,000 existing cans that only serve as vandalism targets while no one uses them for refuse disposal anyway, because, face it, the city itself is a garbage can and it's easier to just throw crap onto the sidewalk, street or in the park. SFPW admits that it tried to do this 3 years ago but failed, as they typically do.

Back to the article: "Industrial designers at the Institute for Creative Integration worked with SF Public Works to narrow down the three finalists, which have been dubbed "Salt & Pepper," "Slim Silhouette," and "Soft Square."

Commentary: Who even knew there was such a place as the Institute for Creative Integration and why do people equate alliteration with creativity?

“All three can designs are silver, in contrast with the city's current fleet of green metal and concrete cans. The design is intended to echo the city's forthcoming fleet of new JCDecaux public toilets, the new BART entrance canopies on Market Street and the Bi-Rite Café at Civic Center Plaza.”

Translation: Even though we'll probably never get all those other things, let's plan to make everything match so the graffiti will really pop! And let's plug Bi-Rite while we're at it, because I'm sure they paid for the mention.

““All three contending designs meet our requirements conceptually: They are durable, hard to tamper with, easy to service and aesthetically pleasing,” acting Public Works director Alaric Degrafinried said in a statement.”

Translation: We still hold ourselves out there as some great design city, when in fact all we are is an expensive city that looks like it barely survived a ground war.

“Salt & Pepper is somewhat similar to the current green cans' design, with space for recyclables up top and refuse down below. The city says its single, "snorkel-like" upper opening is designed to be tamper-proof, and that its ribbed design will deter graffiti. The narrower Slim Silhouette is designed to promote more space on the sidewalk. It also visibly separates trash and recyclables, and its small entrance chutes are designed to prevent rummaging. Finally, Soft Square bears more of a resemblance to the privately funded Bigbelly cans that have proliferated around the city, with a mouth that can be opened via pulling a bar or by foot pedal. The interior has separate openings for trash and recyclables. All three can designs feature curved tops, to discourage people from leaving trash on them. Public Works has launched [a survey](#) to get the public's feedback on their favorite look.”

Translation and commentary: Let's hope “salt and pepper's” so-called recycling hole works better than the one on the old cans where you drop a can or bottle in, and it simply falls straight down and mixes with all the other trash. “Slim silhouette” is designed to allow for more sleeping space on the sidewalk while discouraging trash junkies from picking out cans and bottles to sell to recycling centers to supplement their income because the city is so damned expensive. Finally, “soft square” looks like a PowerMac from the old G5 days. Oh, and don't forget to take our survey because there's nothing better than involving people who don't really give a damn about trash cans in the decision-making process to pick out a new trash can.

“All three of the new cans will also offer a similar feature to the Bigbelly cans: sensors that send alerts when they are nearing capacity, so they can be emptied before they overflow. However, it's not clear if the sensors will actually be heeded. When the Castro/Upper Market Community Benefit District (Castro CBD) decided to remove their five Bigbelly trash cans earlier this year, executive director Andrea Aiello cited the sensors as ineffectual. ‘The Bigbelly trash cans have been on the same emptying schedule as all the rest of the trash cans,’ Aiello said in May.”

Translation: We want everyone to see how high-tech we are by putting in sensors that either won't work, or no one will pay attention to. We do this because we can.

“During the multi-year wait for a new can design, many of the city's community benefit districts (CBDs) turned to Bigbelly's rental cans, which they said are more capacious and less prone to tampering than the city cans. (The Tenderloin is the most recent CBD to have installed the Bigbelly cans, adding a

fleet of 63 in June.) Public Works' now-ousted director, Mohammed Nuru, had opposed expanding the Bigbelly cans citywide, arguing that their high costs (they can't be purchased, only rented) were a waste of money, and that they're susceptible to graffiti. But it appears another factor may have been at play: Nuru, who's been charged with fraud by the federal Department of Justice, awarded a \$5.2 million contract for the green metal cans to the son and daughter-in-law of local permit expeditor Walter Wong. In June, Wong plead guilty to federal charges of conspiracy to commit fraud and money laundering. He is alleged to have arranged expensive gifts for Nuru from a Chinese developer, who was seeking permits for a construction project at 555 Fulton St. (Wong's son and daughter-in-law have not been charged with any crimes.)”

Translation: San Francisco likes to pretend that its motives are always above reproach when in reality, this city is just as corrupt as Chicago was under the Daley regimes.

“[It's] a terrible garbage can — it's a joke, everyone in the town of San Francisco knows it," District 3 Supervisor Aaron Peskin said of the situation in February. Peskin, who held a hearing on the contract with Wong's family, said he believes it was the reason for Nuru's recalcitrance on replacing the cans.”

Commentary: Aaron Peskin, who should know better than to call San Francisco a “town,” is one of the worst Supervisors we’ve ever had in this city. He’s a member of the Denier Party, which is one of those unofficial affiliations I described last episode. He also loves to be quoted and appear on TV.

“On September 21, the three designs will go before the SF Arts Commission's civic design review board for approval. If it gives the green light, Public Works will manufacture five of each can, installing them around the city for real-life testing. The agency did not give a date for selecting the final can design but said the choice would be undertaken with feedback from residents, non-profit partners, Recology, merchants and Public Works crews.”

Translation: Let’s waste money on manufacturing at least 10 cans we will not use. Let’s be sure we test to see how well the graffiti sticks to the finish and, most importantly, let’s see how little people use these cans, just like they don’t use the green ones. We don’t want to commit to a date because we never hit our dates anyway, so why bother.

I’m going to post a photo of the finalists to our Instagram page, so be sure to check that out. Also, check out the show transcript, available at [www.gildedgarbagcan.com](http://www.gildedgarbagcan.com), to get the link to go vote for your favorite alliterative can. While you’re there, leave a comment. And, be sure to save your most important votes for November, when we have a chance to send a supervisor or two home.

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