

Pride 2020 cleanup ideas
(And a few more comments on 2019)

All of the following suggestions regarding trash boxes are proffered as a starting point for future discussion should our group wish to make changes to how we execute our cleanup. They are not an end in themselves. My observations deal exclusively with trash boxes as this is the only aspect of our cleanup that I have dealt with since we began our partnership with Pride. There may be other important issues to consider.

1. Concentrate on high trash areas

Instead of scattering boxes deep into the neighborhood as we now do we could instead concentrate on where I have always picked up the most full bags of trash.

One area would be along Sixth & Fifth Avenues. Our current placement map doesn't have us placing any boxes north of Olive Street. This is a mistake. On Parade day there is heavy foot traffic all along the norther part of Sixth & Fifth Avenues as people walk the parade route to and from Hillcrest. I've notice significant litter in this area on Sunday mornings. Much of this Hillcrest foot traffic disappears on Sunday as people drive to the Pride Festival instead of walk there with the parade. These Sunday festival attendees park mostly in mid and south Bankers Hill. This change in foot traffic behavior Sunday would allow us to remove all boxes north of Nutmeg Street along Sixth & Fifth on Sunday morning without affecting litter accumulation in north Bankers Hill. This would shift some cleanup activity to Sunday but would be worth doing as it would reduce the Monday morning workload. Final removal on Monday is the toughest work. Unsympathetic commute traffic starts early in the morning on Monday. Sunday morning traffic develops much later and is generally slower.

2. Fewer boxes better placed may work as well. (less is more)

An interesting mistake occurred this year. Normally we place boxes all along Laurel Street to First Avenue. Historically these have been some of the most used boxes. Especially the two boxes placed at the intersection of First & Laurel Streets. In the past these boxes have reliably filled as people discard trash while waiting for a bus or the traffic light to change at First. For whatever reason this year no boxes were placed along Laurel Street west of Fourth Ave. Surprisingly the missing boxes did not result in an increase in street litter along Laurel or at First Ave. I was surprised at how clean Laurel Street and the First Avenue intersection remained all weekend. I don't know what people did with their trash after they passed that last trash box placed at Fourth & Laurel but they didn't drop it in the street for us to pick up.

3. Organize box placement on a north-south axis instead of on east-west streets.

Place our boxes along Sixth, Fifth & Fourth Avenues only. Put most boxes on Sixth, especially between Nutmeg and Juniper Streets, then fewer boxes on Fifth, and fewer still on Fourth (placement recommendations below). These boxes can be supplemented with residential trash cans rolled out to the street and placed in front of driveways or along sidewalks by our Community Group members on the residential streets west of Fourth Avenue.

4. less is more.

15 boxes should be placed on Sixth from Hawthorn to Quince, an additional box should be placed on Sixth at the Spruce Street flashing crosswalk, another at the corner of Sixth & Upas, for a total of 17 boxes on Sixth. 12 boxes would be placed on Fifth from Ivy to Quince, and eight more along Fourth from Juniper to Nutmeg. This should be enough boxes to gather the majority of the Parade and Festival trash. That's a total of 37 placed boxes. Three of our forty box allotment would not be placed. They would be held back and used by our volunteers to replace stolen and water damaged boxes Sunday morning.

5. Separate recycle & trash boxes

Don't do this unless we have to. First of all Pride makes no distinction between recyclable materials and trash at the dumpsters we use. Everything ends up in the same Dumpster! Pride has dumpsters inside the Festival area. They may even be segregated recycle and trash dumpsters, but these have NEVER been accessible to us. If segregated dumpsters exist, they are within the festival area, locked overnight and not accessible to us when we need to use them.

Separate recycle and trash boxes may work within the festival area were access by scavengers is restricted. This will not be the case with our boxes. Scavengers routinely remove all high value recycle material prior to the start of pickup. I start trash pickup at 4:30am Sunday and around 5am Monday. Scavengers are finished before I start. For us to properly monitor two sets of boxes and then segregate these materials at disposal time would needlessly complicate our setup, monitoring, and cleanup. This year, over the course of the Pride weekend, I recorded twenty-eight miles of travel in my pickup truck, plus five-and-a-half additional miles on a bike. These numbers would increase exponentially with dual boxes and material separation. And all without any tangible benefit! Our neighborhood isn't going to be any cleaner, and no more material will get recycled with double boxes.

6. Pride picks up the boxes

This is a good idea. In past years some boxes have disappeared from Fourth & Fifth Avenues on Monday mornings prior to my removal. The one time I witnessed this happening it was a done by a City trash truck emptying City cans and picking up our boxes in the process. I doubt the presence of that truck on Monday morning was a coincidence. The special pickup may have been organized and paid for by Pride. Even if it was, and the drivers had instructions to pick our boxes, they didn't get them all. They only picked up the boxes that happened to be on the side of the street they were driving on as they drove down the block between the City's cans. This year no such activity occurred.

I think it would be easy for Pride to at least remove all our boxes placed along Sixth Avenue on Monday morning. They place similar boxes on the east side of the street and have their own cleanup crews working in Balboa Park to remove them. They could easily see and pick up boxes from the opposite side of the street. Even if Pride were to promise to pick up all our boxes and given a location map would their crews get them all? I doubt it. We'd still have to plan our own box pick up just to make sure. Even so that would be a far easier task than what we face now.

Within Balboa Park special staff is assigned to make sure that Pride cleans up everything. I've met and spoken with some of them when bringing trash into the Park for disposal. Cleanup inspections by Balboa

Park staff after the festival are frequent, thorough, and necessary to make sure Pride complies with its' contract. No such activity will occur in our neighborhood. A promise from Pride to pick up boxes in Banker Hill would be a big help but only if they follow through and actually do it.