

San Francisco Street & Sidewalk Standards



Prepared by

**OFFICE OF THE CONTROLLER
DIVISION**

Updated November 2024



About the Controller's Office

The Controller is the chief financial officer and auditor for the City and County of San Francisco. We produce regular reports on the City's financial condition, economic condition, and the performance of City government. We are also responsible for key aspects of the City's financial operations — from processing payroll for City employees to processing and monitoring the City's budget.

Our team includes financial, tech, accounting, analytical and other professionals who work hard to secure the City's financial integrity and promote efficient, effective, and accountable government. We strive to be a model for good government and to make the City a better place to live and work.

About the City Performance Division

The City Performance team is part of the City Services Auditor (CSA) within the Controller's Office. CSA's mandate, shared with the Audits Division, is to monitor and improve the overall performance and efficiency of City Government. The team works with City departments across a range of subject areas, including transportation, public health, human services, homelessness, capital planning, and public safety.

City Performance Goals:

- Support departments in making transparent, data-driven decisions in policy development and operational management.
- Guide departments in aligning programming with resources for greater efficiency and impact.

Provide departments with the tools they need to innovate, test, and learn.

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General Information

WHAT IS EVALUATED?

Subject	Short Description
Street Litter	Loose litter present in a street or gutter.
Sidewalk Litter	Loose litter present on the sidewalk.
Trash Receptacles	The number of overflowing trash receptacles.
Sidewalk Clearance	Sidewalk obstructed so that horizontal clearance is less than 4 feet wide or vertical clearance is less than 8 feet tall.
Sidewalk Pavement Condition	General condition of the sidewalk pavement.
Illegal Dumping	Large abandoned items and large debris along the street or sidewalk.
Glass	Broken glass present in the street, on the sidewalk, or immediately adjacent to the sidewalk.
Feces	Feces observed along the street and sidewalk.
Syringes	Syringes observed along the street and sidewalk.
Condoms	Used and opened condoms present on the street and sidewalk.
Dead Animals	Dead animals present on the street or sidewalk.
Odors	Presence of any strong, unpleasant, or offensive odor.
Graffiti	Illicit text, symbols and images marked on buildings, sidewalks, street pavement, trees, and other stationary assets.
Transit Shelters	The physical structure and space within and immediately adjacent to transit shelters.

Technical Criteria

STREET LITTER

Street litter includes loose litter present in a street or gutter. The street begins at the vertical wall of the curb on one side and ends at the vertical wall of the curb at the other side of the street. This includes medians and assets in the street. Evaluators select the category that best describes the amount and distribution of litter on the street.

Reporting Categories:

Evaluators use the scale below to rate the level of litter on the street.

Litter level	Litter description
1	None - the street is free of litter
2	A few traces - the street is predominantly free of litter except for a few small traces
3	More than a few traces but no accumulation - there are no piles of litter, and there are large gaps between pieces of litter
4	Distributed litter with some accumulation - there may either be large gaps between piles of litter or small gaps between pieces of litter
5	Widespread litter with significant accumulation

Street litter **excludes**: Litter located on the sidewalk; Large abandoned items (illegal dumping); Spillage (grime or inorganic debris); and Organic debris such as leaves, twigs, and grass clippings.

SIDEWALK LITTER

Sidewalk litter includes loose litter present on the sidewalk or immediately adjacent to the sidewalk. This includes litter located in tree wells, bushes, lawns, utility boxes, empty lots, parks, plazas, and most spaces within 6 feet of the sidewalk. The sidewalk begins at the vertical edge of the curb and extends to the fronting building or property line. Evaluators select the category that best describes the amount and distribution of litter on the sidewalk.

Reporting Categories:

Evaluators use the scale below to rate the level of litter on the sidewalk.

Litter level	Litter description
1	None - the sidewalk is free of litter
2	A few traces - the sidewalk is predominantly free of litter except for a few small traces
3	More than a few traces but no accumulation - there are no piles of litter, and there are large gaps between pieces of litter
4	Distributed litter with some accumulation - there may either be large gaps between piles of litter or small gaps between pieces of litter
5	Widespread litter with significant accumulation

Sidewalk litter **excludes**: Litter located in the street; Litter located on private property behind a physical barrier (such as a fence or gate); Broken glass (but include unbroken glass items); Large abandoned items (illegal dumping); Syringes, feces, used condoms, and dead animals (health hazards); Spillage (grime or inorganic debris); Organic debris such as leaves, twigs, and grass clippings.

TRASH RECEPTACLES

Fixed or semi-permanent waste bins along the public right of way, such as permanent cement, metal and mechanized receptacles. Evaluators do not distinguish between publicly and privately maintained trash receptacles. Evaluators count the number of trash receptacles that are full or overflowing.

In reporting, we describe trash receptacles in two ways:

- 1) The proportion of evaluated routes with trash receptacles present
- 2) If a trash receptacle was present on a route, what percent of receptacles were overflowing?

This category **excludes**: Personal waste bins, such as moveable plastic bins; Large industrial dumpsters, such as those used for commercial bulk disposal.

SIDEWALK CLEARANCE

Sidewalk clearance identifies if the sidewalk is obstructed by a narrow or missing path, or if any object obstructs the vertical clearance of the path. Evaluators check for insufficient clearance caused by temporary objects (such as waste bins), fixed objects (such as utility boxes), parked autos, improperly parked bikes and scooters, loose soil or debris, and sidewalk design (such as trees or pavement that ends abruptly).

In reporting, we describe the percent of routes that had sidewalk clearance issues. We also include more detailed questions about the type of obstruction.

The threshold for horizontal clearance is set at 4 feet to align with standards determined by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and standards adopted by San Francisco Public Work in other design and engineering requirements.

The threshold for vertical clearance is set at 8 feet to align with [San Francisco's Pruning Standards for Trees \(2006\)](#), though ADA regulation require a minimum of 80 inches (6' 8") vertical clearance.

Sidewalk clearance **excludes** pedestrian curb ramps.

SIDEWALK PAVEMENT CONDITION

Evaluators assess the condition of sidewalk pavement along an assigned route for (1) existing defects that have not been marked for repair and (2) defects that have been **marked** but that have not yet been repaired. Defects include:

- Missing pavement
- Raised/sunken/uneven pavement with a vertical displacement of **1/2 inch** or more from the abutting pavement or curb
- Voids, cracks, chips, holes, or gaps that are **1/2 inch** or more in width and/or depth from the abutting pavement or curb
- Missing sewer vent covers

Reporting Categories:

Evaluators use the scale below to rate sidewalk pavement conditions.

Pavement defect level	Description
1	Minor: Cracks, chips, and voids up to 1 inch exist but they are isolated. Alligator cracking may exist but there is no missing or unstable pavement. There is no raised/sunken/uneven pavement with a vertical displacement greater than 1/2 inch. There are no protrusions, no missing sewer vent covers, and no exposed steel curb facing.
2	Moderate: Cracks, chips, and voids larger than 1 inch exist but they are generally isolated. Alligator cracking exists with missing or sunken pavement. There is no raised/sunken/uneven pavement with a vertical displacement greater than 1 inch. Small protrusions may exist and there may be minor exposure of steel curb facing. One or more sewer vent covers are missing.
3	Severe: Large areas of missing or deteriorated pavement with widespread spalling. Pavement rocks or moves under traffic. Raised/sunken/uneven pavement exists with a vertical displacement greater than 1 inch. Large protrusions that may pose a tripping hazard are present. Steel curb facing is significantly damaged or exposed.

ILLEGAL DUMPING

Illegal dumping generally includes large abandoned items and large debris along the street or sidewalk such as construction debris, appliances, electronics, furniture, mattresses, automobile parts, and bags of garbage.

Generally, any litter or abandoned items that are too large or bulky to **properly fit into a covered waste receptacle** are included in this category. However, there may be instances in which smaller items could be counted as illegal dumping.

Evaluators count the number of large, abandoned items. All items contained in a box or bag count as one object.

Illegal dumping **excludes**: Items counted as Street Litter or Sidewalk Litter; Items marked or tagged for bulk pickup; Construction waste or debris contained within a construction site; Items that clearly appear to serve a purpose. (For example, exclude cones that notify people of hazards, but include cones that appear to be abandoned.)

GRAFFITI

Graffiti includes illicit text, symbols and images marked on buildings, sidewalks, street pavement, trees, and other stationary assets visible from the public right of way. Evaluators count the number of instances of graffiti present on the sidewalk, street, or other visible building or permanent object.

Evaluation questions

1. How many instances of graffiti are present on private property or on the sidewalk or non-painted curb immediately adjacent to private property?
2. How many instances of graffiti are present on SF gov property?
3. How many instances of graffiti are present on other property?
4. Does any graffiti include offensive language (e.g., racial slurs or profanity)?

Graffiti **includes**:

- Stickers;
- Markings with paint, pen, marker, acid and other permanent or semi-permanent materials used for writing (such as lipstick);
- Physical etchings on buildings, windows and objects that are clearly visible from the sidewalk or sanctioned path.

Graffiti **excludes**:

- Temporary or washable mediums such as chalk or dirt;
- Graffiti on mobile or temporary objects that can be removed easily by one person, such as personal waste bins (plastic totes), construction cones, litter and automobiles;
- Markings on large abandoned items that are counted as illegal dumping;
- Murals or other artwork apparently sanctioned by a property owner (see details below).
- Etchings or indentations in cement, asphalt or concrete that is part of the sidewalk, street or sanctioned path;
- Markings that identify sidewalk defects that must be repaired;
- Markings that identify underground utilities.

BROKEN GLASS

Broken glass includes any instances of broken glass present in the street, on the sidewalk, or immediately adjacent to the sidewalk (within 6 feet). We currently report glass in two different formats because they

provide complementing information: rating with categories tells us about the intensity of the problem, and counting tells us more about the distribution of broken glass along a street or sidewalk.

Broken glass distribution

Select the statement that best describes the amount and distribution of broken glass on the street and sidewalk.

Evaluators use the scale below to rate broken glass distribution.

Broken glass level	Broken Glass Distribution Description
1	None - the street and sidewalk are free of broken glass
2	A few traces - the street and sidewalk are predominantly free of broken glass except for a few small traces
3	More than a few traces but no concentration - there are no piles or lines of glass, and there are large gaps between pieces of glass
4	Glass is concentrated in a single line or spot - there may be small gaps between pieces of glass
5	Glass is concentrated in multiple lines or spots - if an area of broken glass is greater than 6 feet in diameter, consider it to be multiple spots

Broken glass counts

Evaluators also count the instances of broken glass so that we can report on averages.

HEALTH HAZARDS

Evaluators count the instances of the hazards below when observed on a street or sidewalk.

- **Feces:** Evaluators count the number of instances of feces observed along the street and sidewalk. This includes bags filled with feces that are not inside of a waste bin, and animal and human waste, but excludes bird droppings.
- **Syringes:** Evaluators count the number of syringes observed along the street and sidewalk. This includes syringe barrels and needles but excludes any plungers or caps found on their own or syringes being used.
- **Condoms:** Evaluators count the number of used and opened condoms present on the street and sidewalk.
- **Dead Animals:** Evaluators count the number of dead animals on a given route.

ODORS

Evaluators check for the presence of any strong, unpleasant or offensive odors. This includes odors such as urine, feces, sewage, and other foul spillage. This also includes odors emanating from drains, sewers, catch basins, and waste bins.

This category **excludes** strong odors from paint, cleaning solutions, and other chemical compounds as well as ambient odors from fires.

Evaluators count instances when an odor is detected.

TRANSIT SHELTERS

Evaluators check the physical structure and space within and immediately adjacent to transit shelters along an assigned route.

In reporting, we describe transit shelters in two ways:

- 1) The percent of evaluated routes with transit shelters present.
- 2) If a transit shelter was present on a route, what percent of transit shelters had any of the cleanliness issues listed below?

If a shelter is present along a route, evaluators check for the occurrence of:

- Litter
- Illegal dumping
- Broken glass
- Dead animal
- Feces
- Open/used condom
- Syringe
- Graffiti (non-etched)
- Grime
- Improperly parked scooter or bicycle