



**PUBLIC WORKS COMMISSION**  
CITY AND COUNTY OF SAN FRANCISCO

**London N. Breed, Mayor**

***Correspondence Log***

***May 6, 2024, through June 3, 2024***

<b>Date Received</b>	<b>From</b>	<b>Subject</b>
May 14, 2024	Danielle Baskin	Planter barricades are creating a war between neighbors
May 17, 2024	Scott Feeney	Love Our Neighborhoods – Public Works Commission followup

**From:** [Danielle Baskin](#)  
**To:** [DPW-Public Works Commission](#); [Short, Carla \(DPW\)](#)  
**Subject:** Planter barricades are creating a war between neighbors  
**Date:** Tuesday, May 14, 2024 11:17:48 PM  
**Attachments:** [image.png](#)  
[image.png](#)

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Dear Carla Short and the Public Works Commission,

I am an artist, business owner, and San Francisco resident of 8 years who lives and works in the Mission.

I share a common but polarizing view that my neighbors shouldn't be allowed to barricade off entire sidewalks. These barricades, often consisting of 5-30 planters, obstruct pedestrian access, particularly affecting accessibility and creating a hostile environment.

The situation has escalated to the point where neighbors are heavily monitoring their barricades and calling 911 on anyone who touches them. In some cases, individuals have been arrested for merely moving these planters a few feet out of way. This heavy-handed response is disproportionate and contributes to a climate of fear and distrust among neighbors.

Instead of fostering a sense of community, these barricades turn neighbors into enforcers, leading to a divisive atmosphere. As long as the planters remain, there will be hostility among residents.

I believe that our sidewalks have the potential to be transformed into welcoming and beautiful spaces. Instead of barricades, we should focus on revamping tree boxes with plants and flowers, adding benches for people to sit, and creating an environment that encourages community engagement and accessibility for all.

I urge SFDPW to address the issue of sidewalk barricades by removing existing ones—and enforcing consequences for anyone privately installing barricades. Many are glued or cemented down and weigh 1,200 lbs. They are installed by multiple private companies, including one called "SF Planters". They are clearly not potted plants and should be treated as obstructions.

I'd love to live in a city with inclusive and harmonious public spaces that everyone can enjoy. I believe addressing this issue will benefit our entire community.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,  
Danielle Baskin



Market Street between  
Octavia and Gough



Page Street near Gough

**From:** [Scott Feeney](#)  
**To:** [DPW-Public Works Commission; Short, Carla \(DPW\)](#)  
**Cc:** [Ronen, Hillary \(BOS\); Ferrigno, Jennifer \(BOS\)](#)  
**Subject:** Love Our Neighborhoods - Public Works Commission followup  
**Date:** Friday, May 17, 2024 2:07:59 PM

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This message is from outside the City email system. Do not open links or attachments from untrusted sources.

Hello Public Works Commissioners and Director Short,

I wanted to follow up with you on my comment Monday morning about the Love Our Neighborhoods program and the problem of sidewalk planters abused as barricades.

To recap, I showed you pictures of bulky metal troughs that block half the sidewalk on Van Ness, and almost all of the sidewalk on adjacent alleys, including Larch. These, I noted, are intended not as beautification or gardening but to block homeless people from camping; however, they now obstruct far more space on the sidewalks in that areas than tents ever did, while the encampments have simply shifted to other nearby areas in the city. This practice isn't healthy for our city. The abusive "planters" are creating blight, harming access and walkability, they are not a solution to homelessness or any other social problem, and they are not attractive. I have been organizing with a community group, Gardens Not Barricades, around this issue, and you can find more documentation and background on our website, [GardensNotBarricades.com](#).

We've been hopeful the new Love Our Neighborhoods guidelines would make it easier for good neighbors to put in attractive and welcoming garden projects that are a real amenity, while stopping bad-neighborly abuses such as in the photos I displayed. But now, I'm concerned the opposite may be happening. No meetings open to the public have sought input into the guidelines, and Department staff declined our group's offer to meet and collaborate with them. Meanwhile, enforcement of existing guidelines of [DPW order 179,231](#), under which the planters I showed you are already illegal, seems to have ground to a halt. While, back in February, several property owners with violating planter installations received Notices to Repair or Notices of Violation, we've now been told DPW has paused enforcement of most of those guidelines, and even the ones staff say they are enforcing (such as the ADA-violating sidewalk blockage on Larch alley, [reported here](#)) seem to get no follow-up if the warning notices are simply ignored by property owners.

This lack of enforcement has us extremely concerned as it suggests the intent may be for the new guidelines to give a blank check to extremely large or permanent planter installations that are rarely used for legitimate gardening. That would be a disaster. It would lead to an explosion of hostile planters across the city, and would create an even bigger and more expensive mess for the City to eventually have to clean up.

For context, sidewalk encroachments usually require applying for a permit and paying a permit fee. Since this can be prohibitively expensive for homeowners who just want to do a little gardening, the DPW order 179,231 allows placing small, movable planters without a permit subject to a series of guidelines. Under Love Our Neighborhoods, a "Tier 1" planter project would function the same way -- requiring a free registration process, but no permit fee,

approval process, or plans being drawn up. This is perfectly appropriate, provided it's only used for small, movable planters. It is not appropriate for extremely large troughs up and down an entire city block that are either cemented down or are so heavy they cannot be moved without specialized equipment (as though they were cemented down). Sometimes there are legitimate reasons to use larger or more permanent landscaping containers, but in that case, a full permit process is warranted, allowing for an evaluation of whether the change to public space is appropriate. That should be a "Tier 2" or "Tier 3" project.

Therefore, it's critical that the new guidelines require Tier 1 planter projects not to be over 36" in any dimension, and not to be fixed in place (meaning any condition that makes them immovable without specialized equipment).

Recent comments by Director Short and agency spokespeople have stressed that planters have to contain actual, living plants, allow a six-foot throughway zone on the sidewalk, and not block bus boarding zones. That is a great start. It's important for the new guidelines to contain those and other access and public space protections. It's also important that the planters that don't require full permits are required to be small and movable. The reality is that almost all planters that homeowners and business owners put out for actual gardening purposes comply with those rules, and almost all "planters" that do not comply are designed to take up space, with the plants as an afterthought. Instead of allowing people to abuse planters to barricade sidewalks, and then having City inspectors periodically nag them to tend to their so-called gardens, DPW should keep in place sensible rules that stop the abusive patterns in the first place. And since the guidelines of DPW order 179,231 are still law right now, they should also be enforced now until those new guidelines go into effect.

Please don't hesitate to contact me if I can be of any help following up on this issue.

Thanks,  
Scott Feeney  
[REDACTED] Shotwell St.