



Community Designation Resource Guide

Infrastructure

This guide provides information about one of 15 Clean California Community Designation criteria – 10 of which are needed to earn the designation. Infrastructure – including strategically placed trash cans, receptacles, and ash bins – is key in reducing litter in public spaces. For instance, the design and location of these containers can influence public behavior, leading to a significant decrease in environmental litter.

Research shows that the absence of trash receptacles increases the likelihood of littering. A container's visibility can remind people of the desired behavior. Installing trash capture devices in storm drains and waterways reduces litter flow and aids in cleanup. Cost-benefit analyses often show that the cost of installing and maintaining trash receptacles is outweighed by the savings in cleanup costs and the benefits of a cleaner, more attractive environment. The reduction in litter can also lead to fewer pest problems and lower costs associated with pest control.

Optimal Distance Between Containers

Littering increases as a person is further away from a container, typically at approximately 29 feet. The optimal distance between trash cans varies depending on the specific environment and the volume of foot traffic. However, some general recommendations include:

- **Urban Areas:** In high-traffic areas, trash cans should be placed approximately every 30 to 100 feet.
- **Parks and Recreational Areas:** Containers should be placed near entrances, exits, picnic areas, and popular trails.
- **Event Venues:** In places with large gatherings, temporary receptacles should be placed to accommodate the increased volume of waste.

Influence of Container Appearance

The appearance of trash cans and receptacles can influence whether people use them. Several factors play a role:

- **Visibility:** Containers should be placed along paths between a point of purchase and a transportation point and near areas where people may have waste to dispose of, such as near benches or tables.
- **Design:** Well-designed containers that are aesthetically pleasing and blend well with the environment can encourage proper use.
- **Signage:** Clear signage indicating the purpose of the container – e.g., trash, recycling, compost – helps reduce confusion and encourages correct disposal practices.

Check out these projects & resources!

- [Case Studies on Placing Recycling Bins](#), Busch Systems
- [Conduct a Windshield or Walking Survey of the Community](#), University of Kansas Community Tool Box
- [Littering in Context](#), Article by Wes Schultz, CSU San Marcos, et al
- [Installation of Ash Receptacles in Caltrans Rest Stops](#)

Additional resources are available at <https://keepcabeautiful.org/>.

