



Date: July 18, 2019

To: Patrick H. West, City Manager *T.H.W.*

From: *C.A.B.* Craig A. Beck, Director of Public Works

For: Mayor and Members of the City Council

Subject: **Update on Locking Bin Pilot Program**

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At its May 22, 2018 meeting, the City Council requested the Department of Public Works (Department) to initiate a Locking Bin Pilot Program (Program) in the East Village, which had been identified as an area subject to a large volume of illegal dumping and scavenging. This report provides an update on the effectiveness of the Program and next steps.

## **BACKGROUND**

The Program's boundaries are 4<sup>th</sup> Street to Ocean Boulevard, and Atlantic Avenue to Long Beach Boulevard. There are 51 bins in the pilot area, 32 serviced by private companies and 19 serviced by the City. To better understand the benefits of the Program, the Department collaborated with the City's Office of Civic Innovation team (i-Team) to develop evaluation tools to measure success.

### Observations Before Implementation

In August 2018, staff monitored the East Village Neighborhood and documented their observations regarding litter and illegal dumping. The observations took place several times per day, Monday through Friday. The following conditions were observed:

- A very high number of dumped items throughout the perimeter, along with high-foot traffic in the alleys;
- Scattered (small) trash or litter in the alleys;
- Some bins were overflowing with trash;
- Public health and environmental concerns caused by human waste, drug needles, and soiled, uncovered mattresses; and,
- Frequent homeless and/or transient individuals sleeping or loitering in the alleys.

Staff also interviewed 22 tenants and landlords in the East Village, and 9 private, commercial trash haulers. Many tenants interviewed had not been informed about how to properly dispose of large bulky items. Landlords agreed they could do a better job of informing tenants and agreed to partner with the City to provide educational materials to tenants. Staff also met with each of the private, commercial haulers that operate in the City to ensure their commitment to offering large, bulky item collection service to their accounts and to keep the area surrounding their dumpsters free of excess debris. It is important to note that most of the private hauler bins were already the locking type.

### Observations After Implementation

As a result of the August 2018 observations, staff identified locations where frequent illegal dumping was occurring. Locking bins were deployed in January 2019 and staff monitored the pilot area focusing on the target “hot spots” that experienced a high frequency of illegal dumping prior to implementation. In February 2019, staff began monitoring the newly installed locked bins and documented their findings. Staff observed that the hot spot areas were noticeably cleaner, residents were starting to properly set out bulky items, and bulky items were picked up by private haulers within a couple of days. Additionally, there appeared to be fewer people loitering in the alleyways and a reduction in the amount of trash scattered around the bins. However, in some cases, people placed trash on top or next to locked bins instead of unlocking and locking the lids.

The ways in which people dealt with the locked bins were mixed. One account demanded the lock be removed, or it would be broken off by the account holder. Another account, where frequent dumping previously occurred, changed drastically as the property owner fenced the area where the trash cans were located. In other places, City bin locks were broken and trash was scattered.

Staff conducted post-implementation interviews with tenants and landlords after several months of service to receive feedback on the Program. Reactions were mixed, but most people noticed that items were collected quicker than before. Many tenants were still unaware of the Program, despite outreach to landlords, and some residents felt that there had been no impact.

Along with utilizing locking bins and expediting bulky item collections for customers, the Clean Team regularly visited hot spots in the pilot area. Staff provided education for landlords and tenants while coordinating efforts with the private commercial haulers in an effort to improve the cleanliness of the neighborhood.

### Decals

As part of the Program, staff was asked to develop a decal that could be affixed to trash bins to provide residents with information regarding various City services. An image of the bin decal developed is attached (Attachment).

The decal visibly displays contact numbers for the following services:

- Animal Control
- Non-emergency hazardous material collection
- Graffiti removal
- Trash pick-up
- Domestic violence
- Homeless services at the Multi-Service Center
- Pest control

The decal also contains a QR code that redirects users to the ‘Who Do I Call’ page of the City’s website for additional information via mobile device.

### Fiscal Impact

Charging for locked bin service is a standard practice in the solid waste industry. Due to the increase in the amount of staff time and administrative costs to maintain the Program, a corresponding rate of \$5.11 was included in the most recent Refuse Fee adjustment approved by the City Council on February 5, 2019. There are also direct costs associated with the regular visits to hot spots by the Clean Team, which is included in the Refuse base rate. Staff estimates the cost for decals to be approximately \$2,000.

### **NEXT STEPS**

Staff is currently developing public education materials for landlords to offer new and existing tenants regarding such things as: (1) how to request a bulky item collection; (2) the consequences of illegal dumping; and, (3) how to report graffiti. Locking bins will be made available for a fee to accounts outside the pilot area approximately on October 1. Staff will also continue to work with private haulers that have been providing support to our efforts.

If you have any questions regarding this matter, please feel free to contact Diko Melkonian, Deputy Director and Manager of Environmental Services, at (562) 570-2856 or [Diko.Melkonian@longbeach.gov](mailto:Diko.Melkonian@longbeach.gov).

### ATTACHMENT

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