



CITY COUNCILMEMBER
RIGEL ROBINSON
 DISTRICT 7

28

CONSENT CALENDAR
 September 24, 2019

To: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council
 From: Councilmember Rigel Robinson
 Subject: Budget Referral: RFP for a Freestanding Public Restroom Facility

RECOMMENDATION

Refer to the budget process to set aside up to \$100,000 to issue an RFP for a freestanding, 24/7 public restroom facility in the Telegraph Business Improvement District.

BACKGROUND

Access to a public restroom is crucial for a livable, equitable city. A study by the National Coalition for the Homeless showed that 65 percent of unhoused individuals have been denied access to a restroom in a private business.¹ As homelessness continues to increase in Berkeley and throughout the Bay Area, cities must take action to protect the human dignity of their unhoused population.² Public restrooms also benefit those who are “restroom-challenged” as defined by the American Restroom Association, such as pregnant people, young children, and seniors.³

Furthermore, public restrooms serve as a boost for tourism and foot traffic. People are more likely to bike, walk, and explore a public space if they know that a restroom is available.⁴ Attracting visitors to Telegraph Avenue by providing restroom access is essential for supporting our small businesses and maintaining the vibrancy of our commercial districts.

Other cities are also recognizing the importance of 24/7 public restroom access. In April 2017, the Washington D.C. City Council passed the Public Restroom Facilities Installation and Promotion Act to identify up to ten sites for installing public restrooms.⁵ The City of Denver recently added two new mobile restroom facilities, which are used equally by tourists, downtown workers, and unhoused individuals, and have reduced complaints about human waste in the surrounding area.⁶ In August 2019, the San

¹ <https://pffcdc.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/DiscriminationReport2014.pdf>

² <https://www.berkeleyside.com/2019/07/23/berkeleys-homeless-population-jumped-13-in-past-two-years>

³ <https://pffcdc.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/The-restroom-challenged.pdf>

⁴ <https://consumerist.com/2017/09/05/the-future-of-tourism-is-public-toilets/>

⁵ <http://lms.dccouncil.us/Download/37807/B22-0223-Introduction.pdf>

⁶ https://www.huffpost.com/entry/cities-look-to-public-restrooms-to-clean-up-downtowns_b_59aea6b3e4b0c50640cd61d2

Francisco Department of Public Works rolled out a pilot program to keep three of their busiest public toilet locations open for 24/7 use.

One notable example of a public restroom is the Portland Loo, which was originally developed in partnership with Portland city officials, police, fire, and park staff. It is designed to address the problems cities encounter with such facilities, such as vandalism, drug use, and upkeep. Emeryville, Davis, Seattle, Salinas, Monterey, Charleston, and Waterloo are among the cities that have installed Portland Loos. The City of Berkeley should follow in these cities' footsteps in providing restroom access as a basic human right.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The developer of the Enclave is contributing \$83,428 and a grant from the UC Berkeley Chancellor's office is contributing \$10,000, bringing total outside funding to \$93,428. This budget referral is intended to fund the remaining amount, including ongoing maintenance costs and staff time to create and review RFP applications.

ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

Human waste can be a major environmental pollutant when it enters our waterways. Increasing the availability of public restrooms will reduce the volume of human waste that ends up in our watershed and eventually the Bay.

CONTACT PERSON

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