

The Need for **Public Bathrooms**

An analysis of public bathrooms in New York and abroad. Best practices, design typologies, guidelines, and how we can build more of them in our cities.



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DRAFT

About this Booklet

Forefront Fellowship

The work inside this booklet was produced by Julie Chou, Kevin A. Gurley, and Boyeong Hong as part of our work as Fellows in the 2018-2019 Forefront Fellowship at the Urban Design Forum.

The topic of the Forefront Fellowship was on homelessness in New York City. The material inside this booklet focuses on public bathrooms in the public realm and their importance in improving public health and human rights. This booklet attempts to summarize the research compiled over the course of a year from our readings, interviews, meetings, and analysis related to public bathrooms in cities.

We hope this booklet may serve as a resource for citizens, advocates, architects, urban planners, elected officials, government agencies, local business owners, and others, to learn more about public bathrooms and understand their benefits in the hope that we can increase the number of publicly available bathrooms in our cities.

We hope to keep the conversation of public bathrooms alive. Please feel free to contact us at:

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I. Background

The Need for Public Bathrooms

In a city as large, dense and diverse as New York, there is a significant need for easily accessible, clean and safe public bathrooms. Like housing, public bathrooms is a basic need along with being a public health concern, a human rights concern, and a quality of life concern. This project proposes more public bathrooms in New York through legislative action spearheaded by the City of New York, and more creative funding and management strategies.

Public bathrooms are not a new issue in New York. Four city administrations and homeless and non-homeless advocacy groups, including Urban Justice Center and more recently Picture the Homeless, have been trying to provide more public bathrooms. New Yorkers seem to understand that there is a need for public bathrooms, however, past initiatives have proven unsuccessful. Why have these not worked, and what are the barriers hindering this process?

Public Bathrooms are an Integral Part of the Public Realm

Generally, the public realm is defined as “the space around, between and within buildings that are publicly accessible, including streets, squares, parks and open spaces”. These spaces are usually connected to each other through urban systems such as transportation, environment, and human life. As these areas support and facilitate urban dynamics, social interaction, and public life, the public realm plays a significant role in the health and livability of the city. In the public realm, public amenities offer various functions for the general public to support their public urban life.

According to the Center for Inclusive Design and Environmental Access of State University of New York (Buffalo), public amenities are resources, facilities, or benefits continuously offered to the general public for their use and/or enjoyment. Examples of these are public bathrooms, street furniture, and drinking water fountains. These considerations of public amenities have focused dominantly on recreational amenities or aesthetic amenities, and bathrooms are often forgotten or not even considered. There has been an insufficient consideration for public amenities addressing the most basic of needs- the public bathroom.

In 2018, Picture the Homeless, a New York-based advocacy organization, began the "Free to Pee" campaign to push the City of New York to install the fifteen automatic public toilets the city has had in storage since 2006.



Historical Background

Historically, “public” bathrooms referred only to restrooms created in noncommercial, public spaces for the use of people who did not yet have a toilet in their home (Colker 2017). One of the earliest public bathrooms in the United States was one built in Astor Place in New York City in 1869 (Braverman 2009). It would be one of the first in a fast-growing immigrant city where access to a toilet in residences was then considered a luxury. More public bathrooms sprung up around the city as the city population grew.

By the 1930s, Robert Moses took over the city’s park system, and public bathrooms began to be built in city parks and recreation facilities. Under Moses, the city increased the number of public bathrooms, and also built up an impressive network of public pools and showers for public usage. In 1934 alone, 145 city comfort stations were renovated. Many of these facilities, such as the public pools and showers at city beaches are still open today and enjoyed by a lot of New Yorkers and visitors annually. Many other public bathrooms, however, suffered closures in the decades following World War II, particularly in the 1970s through 1990s.

Privatization of public responsibilities began to increase around this time, and the responsibility of maintaining public bathrooms began to increasingly fall on local businesses and property owners than the city. Department of City Planning asked that developers provide public bathrooms as part of the Privately Owned Public Space Program (POPS) during the 1980s and around 14 public bathrooms were created during this time.

The 1970-1980s were also a particular challenging time for the City of New York as it faced significant budget shortfalls, narrowly avoiding bankruptcy in the 1970s. This crisis required the city to make harsh budget cuts, and public bathrooms were one of the victims. Many public bathrooms were closed in this period for budgetary reasons, but also due to the increasing maintenance and security costs as some public bathrooms became magnets for crime, vandalism, sexual activity, and drug use (Braverman 2009). Public perception around public bathrooms also began to change, and they were no longer seen as desired amenities.

In 1990, a group of homeless people sued the City of New York and the Metropolitan Transportation Authority for lack of access to public bathrooms. “The suit charges that the plaintiffs are ‘forced to endure continual embarrassment, humiliation, physical injury and hazardous conditions resulting from defendants’ violations.’ It said the plaintiffs, three men and a woman, were harassed because of their need to relieve themselves in public and were subjected to physical pain because of inability to relieve themselves promptly.” A year later, in 1991, the Public Toilets Working Group was formed. The Committee included Doug Lasdon who represented the homeless individuals in the lawsuit, city officials and civic associations. They met with Decaux and reviewed their automated public toilets. In the 27 years since, there were numerous attempts under mayors Dinkins, Giuliani and Bloomberg, and De Blasio. To date, twenty automated public toilets have been purchased and only five of these toilets have been installed.

The availability of public bathrooms has not increased significantly since the 1970s crisis years. We believe the city has not truly recovered from this era, both in stigma around public bathrooms, but also in its commitment to truly rebuild the large network of public bathrooms it once had. Despite city population growth, economic growth, and millions of tourists visiting the city annually, bathroom conditions have changed very little.



“I usually go to Penn Station and Madison Square Park for the bathrooms. It’s all about the service. I used to go there and relax. I have been to drop-in centers, including Main Change and the NYC rescue mission, but it feels safer on the street than in a shelter.”

(Interview with someone living on the street near Penn Station, December 2018.)

Under Robert Moses, the City of New York increased the number of public bathrooms significantly. In 1934 alone, 145 comfort stations around the city were renovated.

II. Design Typologies

We have developed a methodology of the following design typologies. These are the range of public bathroom typologies currently present in New York and other major cities. We hope that by analyzing and comparing these typologies, you can use this as a menu of options to decide on the appropriate bathroom type for diverse sites around the city.

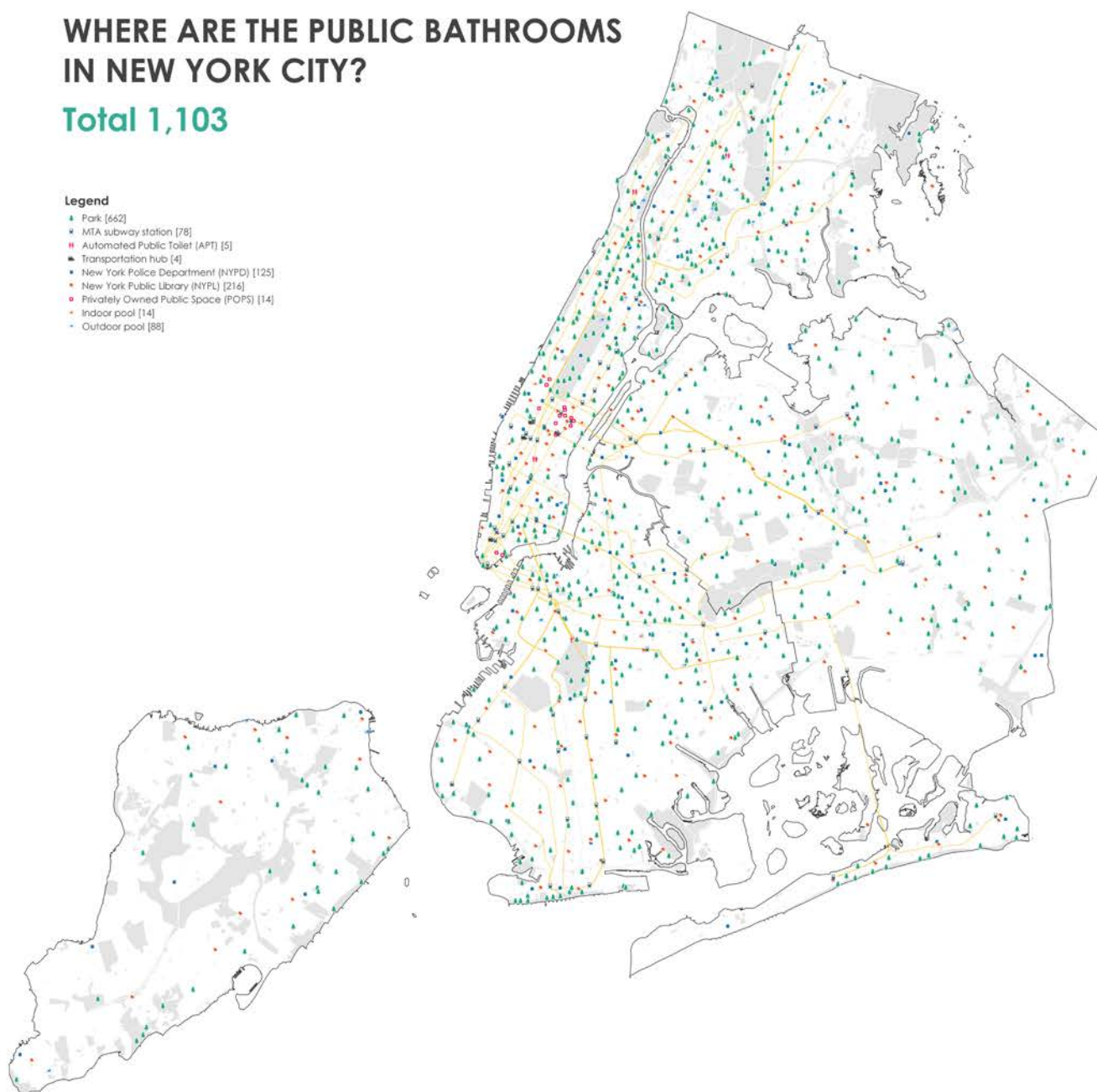
As of 2019, there are 1,103 public bathrooms around New York City. However, only two of these are open 24/7, creating a serious problem for anyone looking for a bathroom late nights.

WHERE ARE THE PUBLIC BATHROOMS IN NEW YORK CITY?

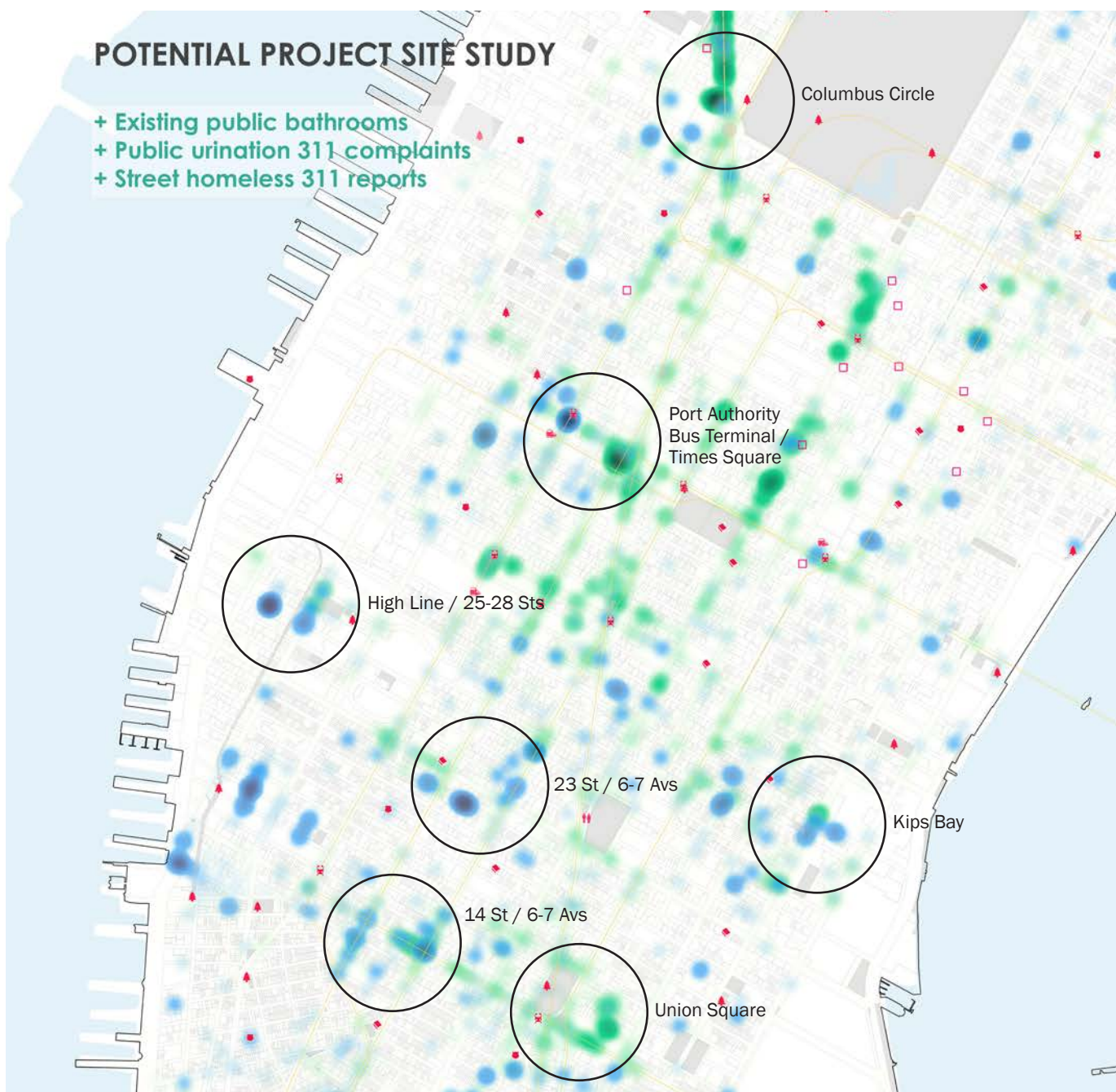
Total 1,103

Legend

- Park [662]
- MTA subway station [78]
- Automated Public Toilet (APT) [5]
- Transportation hub [4]
- New York Police Department (NYPD) [125]
- New York Public Library (NYPL) [216]
- Privately Owned Public Space (POPS) [14]
- Indoor pool [14]
- Outdoor pool [88]



As an example area, we look at potential project sites in Midtown around clusters of need. This maps 311 reports of public urination and street homeless population, as well as existing public bathrooms.



Comfort Stations



Locations

662 parks around the city



Hours

Parks:
Sunrise-1am
Playgrounds:
8am-Dusk



Ownership

NYC Department
of Parks and
Recreation



Cleanliness: Fair

Generally fairly clean
and fairly maintained



Usage: High

Usage varies,
but parks are
popular city
amenities



Costs: High

\$2k-\$5k/sq.ft for
construction

Description

Services:

- Comfort stations are incorporated into existing parks and recreation facilities and are a popular option for public bathrooms in New York.

Hours:

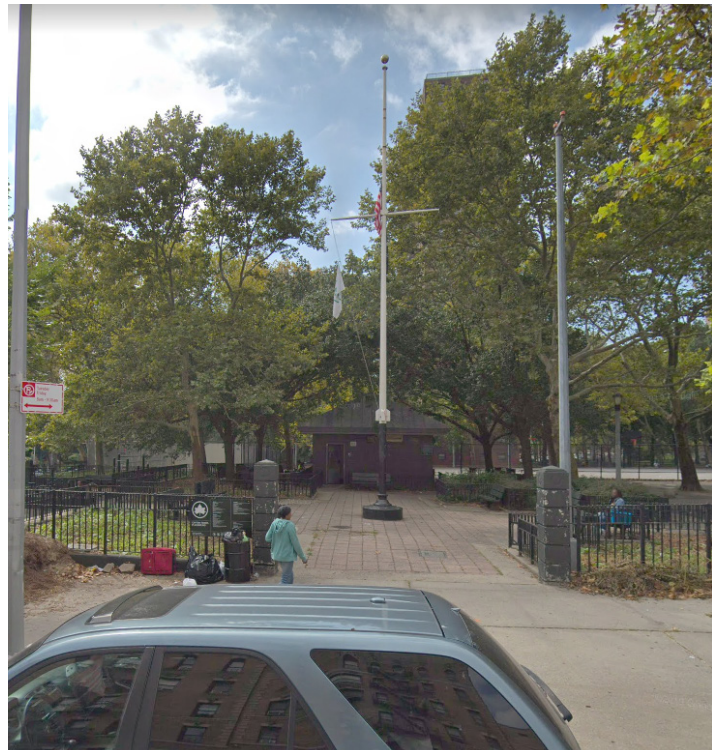
- Hours are limited depending on the usage. Playgrounds have limited hours during daytime periods only and have restrictive usage for adults without children. Bathrooms in or near playgrounds may create challenges for some.

What We Propose

We propose that NYC Parks and Recreation consider keeping some comfort stations open extended hours to increase the number of public bathrooms available night. Currently, there is a very limited number of public bathrooms beyond midnight.

We propose that extended hours comfort stations be considered for those in areas with the most demonstrated need, near streets and foot traffic, and not located deep inside a park. Any extended hours comfort station should also be well illuminated to help ensure patrons' safety and wellbeing.

We propose the City consider public-private partnerships for comfort stations to lower costs for construction and maintenance.



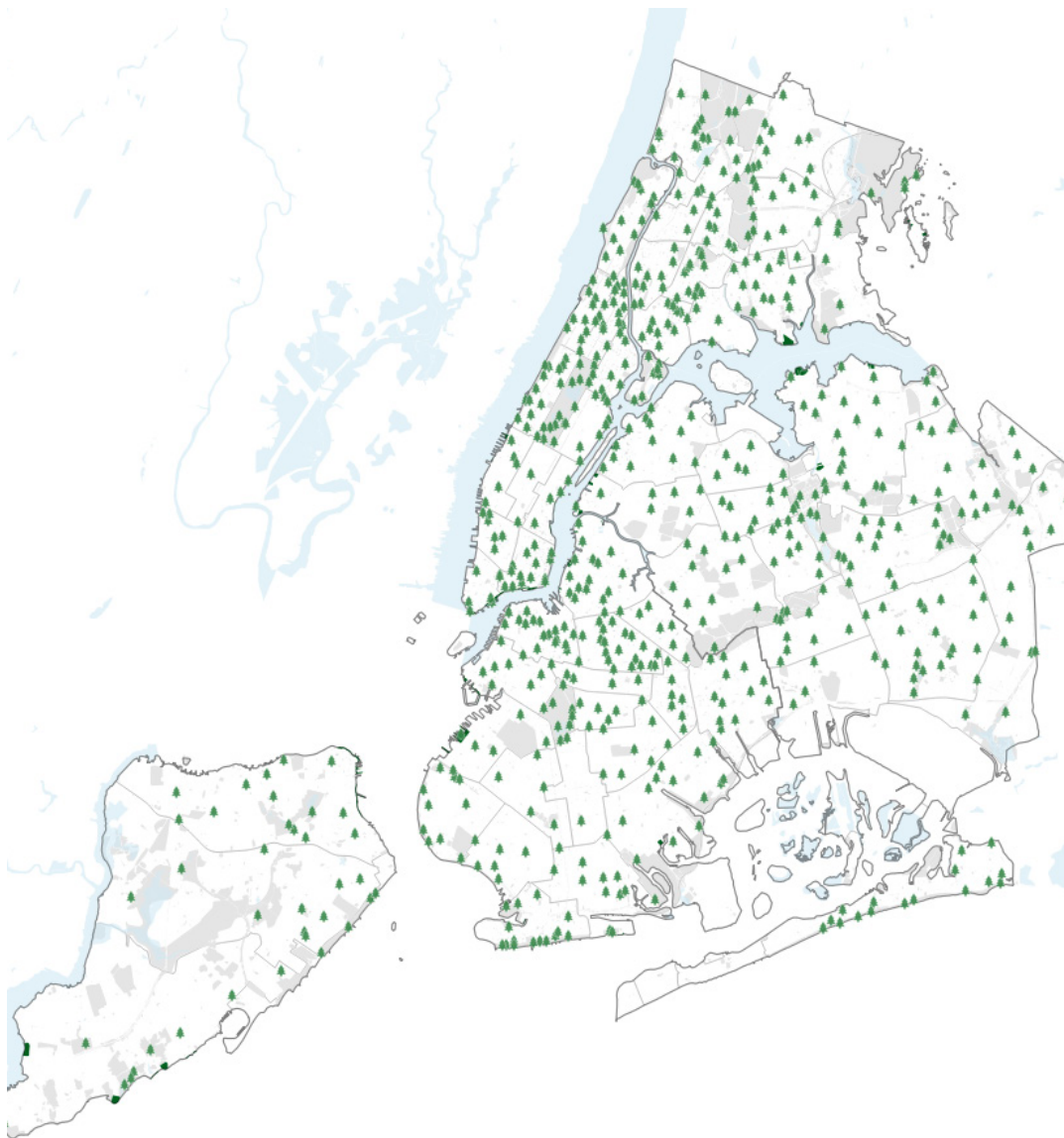
Captain Manuel Rivera Playground, Bronx

Bathrooms are open all year. Playgrounds include fitness equipment, which is a popular feature.



Fox Playground, Bronx

This new comfort station took 22 months to open from design start to construction end, with funding of between \$1-3 million by the City Council.



Locations

New York has over 1,700 public parks. 662 of these features public bathrooms, known as comfort stations.

Comfort stations are distributed throughout the five boroughs.



Strengths

Locations:

- Comfort stations are distributed equally throughout the city, making them a very accessible resource.

Cleanliness:

- Generally, comfort stations are cleaner than other public bathrooms such as subway station bathrooms. This helps make them a more dignified option.

Design:

- Architects selected by NYC's Design Excellence Program have designed bathrooms that have won many awards.



Weaknesses

Access and Safety:

- Public bathrooms in playgrounds may have restrictions for adults with no children.
- Some bathrooms are located deep inside the park with limited lighting.
- Not open 24/7 and some are not open year-round.

Bathroom condition:

- Bathrooms with urinals tend to have trash accumulated causing water overflows.
- Broken sink faucets and broken handles on paper towel dispensers.
- Some comfort stations experience significant vandalism. The presence of bathroom attendants could dissuade vandalism.

MTA Subway Stations



Locations

78 stations out of 472 total subway stations



Hours

5 am-midnight



Ownership

MTA New York City Transit



Cleanliness: Low

Most are poorly maintained and not very clean



Usage: Varies

Usage varies. Some are very busy, others unused



Costs: Fair

Costs include repair costs, cleaning, and station staffing



Times Sq-42 St station, Manhattan

Built and maintained through a public-private partnership. They are clean, well maintained by attendants full-time, and are popular with locals and tourists.

Description

Locations:

- Subway station bathrooms are distributed fairly well throughout the city. They form an important part of the city's public bathroom network.

Cleanliness/Maintenance:

- They are sometimes regarded as unsafe and undesirable spaces, but there are examples of successful, clean, and safe bathrooms in stations such as at 34 St-Hudson Yards, Times Sq-42 St, Fulton St, and the Second Avenue Line stations in the Upper East Side.

Hours:

- Hours are limited to daytime hours only, generally from 5am to midnight despite 24/7 subway service.

What We Propose

We propose that MTA New York City Transit (NYCT) consider opening formerly closed station bathrooms. Recent projects like the Enhanced Station Initiative project, which renovated stations throughout the subway system, serve as a good example of how station bathrooms could be rebuilt, renovated, and reopen.

We propose that MTA NYCT consider public-private partnerships such as the bathroom at Times Sq to fund and maintain new bathrooms. New construction could consider Transit Bonuses in exchange for bathrooms.



Church Av station (F G lines), Brooklyn

This station bathroom features a fairly standard bathroom design for the subway. This is not a major transfer point, so the bathroom is more lightly used.



Locations

As of 2019, there are 78 subway stations with public bathrooms. There are 472 total subway stations and many of these once had public bathrooms and remain closed to public use.



Strengths

Locations:

- Subway station bathrooms are dispersed throughout the city, creating a well balanced network of public bathrooms.

Potential for growth:

- Many subway stations have closed bathrooms that could be rebuilt, renovated, and reopened for public use. The subway is the veins of New York, and the impact of having public bathrooms in more subway stations is significant.



Weaknesses

Access and Safety:

- Although many station bathrooms are heavily used, some are located in quiet, less transited areas of stations, which create a sense of unsafety.
- Some bathrooms may be magnets for crime and greater surveillance may be needed.

Cleanliness and maintenance:

- Many bathrooms are poorly maintained and dirty.
- Many bathrooms lack basic amenities such as soap and toilet paper, creating an undesirable condition.

Automatic Public Toilets (APT)



Locations

Five plazas and sidewalk areas in four boroughs



Hours

Year-round
8am-8pm



Ownership

NYC Department of Transportation



Cleanliness: High

Self cleaning. Single user use keeps usage low



Usage: Low

Not well known by the public



Costs: Fair

\$175k-500k to install
\$40k/year to maintain

Description

Siting:

- Footprint: 6'7" x 11'.
- Required 8 ft clearance in front and 5 ft on other three sides. Required to be 10 ft from fire hydrants.
- Challenges for siting have included finding potential sites with required sidewalk clearances and utility connections as well as approvals from community boards and the Public Design Commission

Weight limitations:

- To close doors, the toilet has a weight sensor of a maximum of 550 pounds and a minimum of 45 pounds. The minimum is to protect children from getting trapped.

Usage costs:

- 25 cents for 15-minute period of privacy before the doors pop open. A warning light and alarm go off when there are only three minutes left.

Cleaning:

- Automatic, 90-second self-cleaning process after each user. A sweeping arm sprays water with disinfectant over the toilet before it blows heat to dry it.
- Maintenance worker cleans and locks the toilet every night.

What We Propose

We propose that APTs be kept open 24/7.

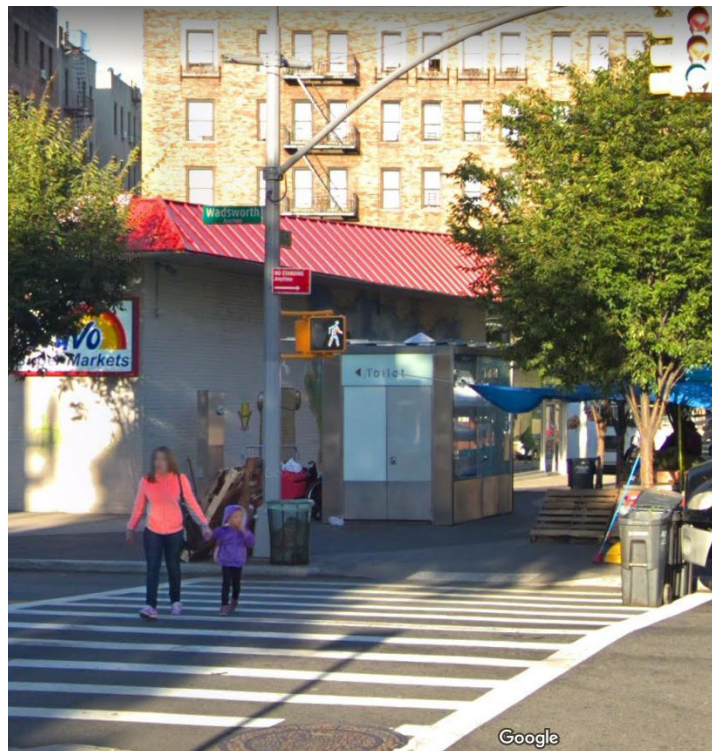
We propose that APTs be included in future NYC Department of Transportation plaza redesigns as part of the Plaza Program.



Corona Plaza APT, Queens

Zone: R6B/C1-4, Opened: 2008

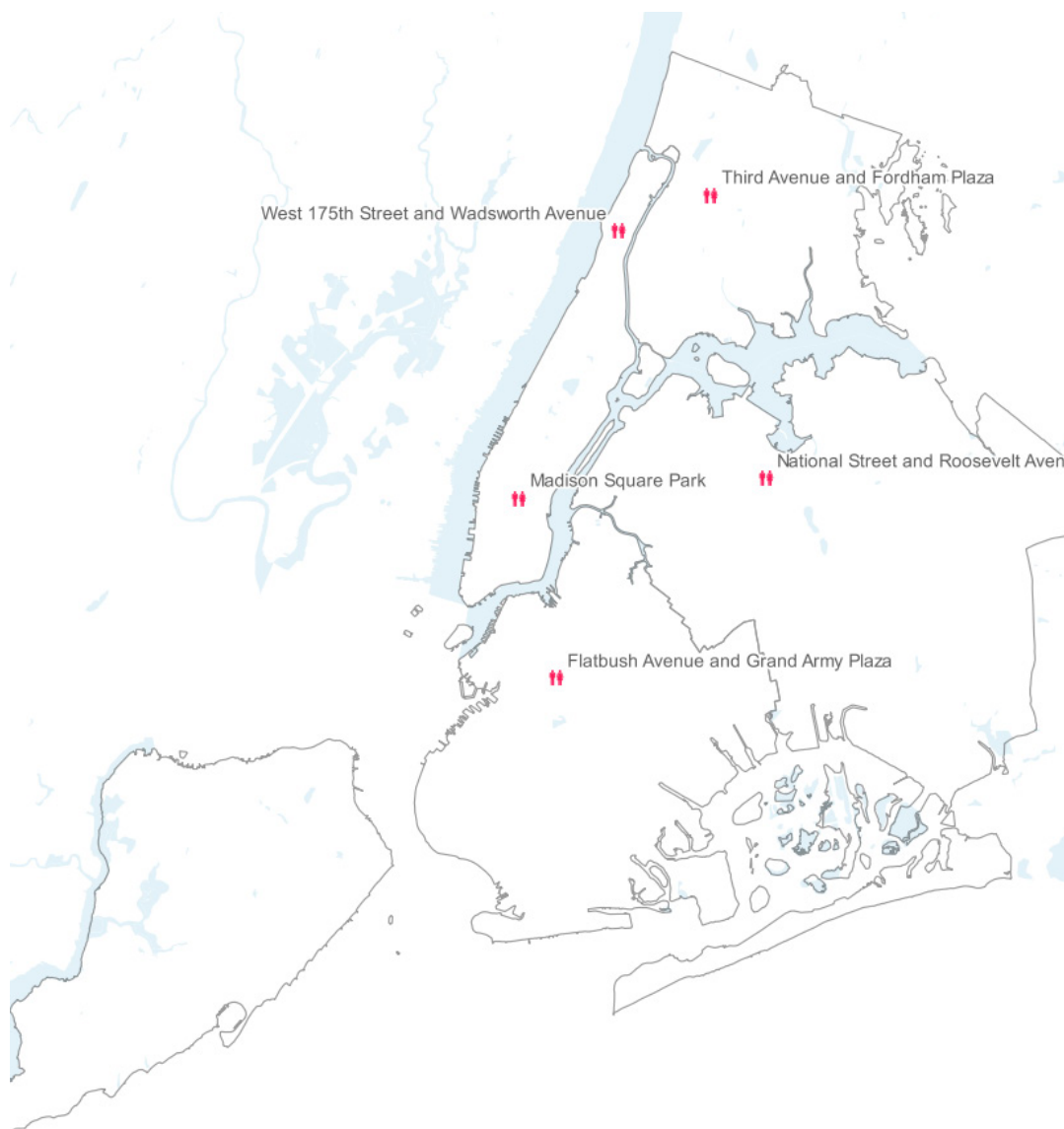
Inside the public plaza adjacent to the 7 Line. Used 7,771 times a year (average of 21 per day)



Plaza de las Américas, Manhattan

Zone: C8-3, Opened: 2016

Part of OneNYC Plaza Equity Program. Next to popular grocery store and farmer's market.



Locations

Five plazas and sidewalks in the Bronx, Brooklyn, Manhattan, and Queens.

Case Study

In 2006, the City of New York signed a \$1.4 billion deal with Spanish advertising company, Cemusa to provide 3,500 bus-stop shelters, 330 newsstands and 20 public toilets. In exchange, Cemusa collects advertising revenue from them for 20 years. The city benefits from \$100 million of capital investments, \$200 million worth of maintenance of the street furniture and control of 22.5% of the advertising space. As of 2019, five APTs have been installed. 15 are still in storage.



Strengths

Access:

- Located in public plazas- conveniently located and pedestrian friendly.
- Fully ADA accessible.

Operations:

- Heated in the winter.
- Relatively cost effective to maintain.



Weaknesses

Design:

- Some neighborhoods have stated the toilets do not match the surrounding building style.

Operations:

- Toilets can be clogged and as bathroom is only maintained once daily, it can deter use for much of the day.
- Automated functions can cause it to breakdown and be out of order for extended periods of time.

Privately-Owned Public Spaces (POPS)



Locations

14 POPS in Manhattan



Hours

Varies, but usually day-time hours only



Ownership

Private land owners and management companies



Cleanliness: High

Generally fairly clean and well maintained



Usage: High

Many are well known and used by the public



Costs: Fair

Costs covered by developer for development rights or bonuses



Trump Tower (725 Fifth Avenue), Manhattan

Built: 1983, Total square footage: 15,528

Includes two restrooms with full-time attendants, full ADA access, and are known to be very clean.

Description

Background:

- POPS program started in 1961 to provide more public space in the city.
- New York as of 2019 has 3.8 million s.f. of POPS.

Locations:

- Only fourteen out of 550 POPS have a public bathroom, and most of these were built in the 1980s as part of large, high-rise construction projects.

Amenities:

- Security guard on site is required as part of the POPS program. This makes them feel safe.
- Plazas greater than 10,000 s.f. must provide food service as an amenity. This helps bring more foot traffic to the bathrooms and increases their visibility.



875 Third Avenue, Manhattan

Built: 1980, Total square footage: 28,620 s.f.

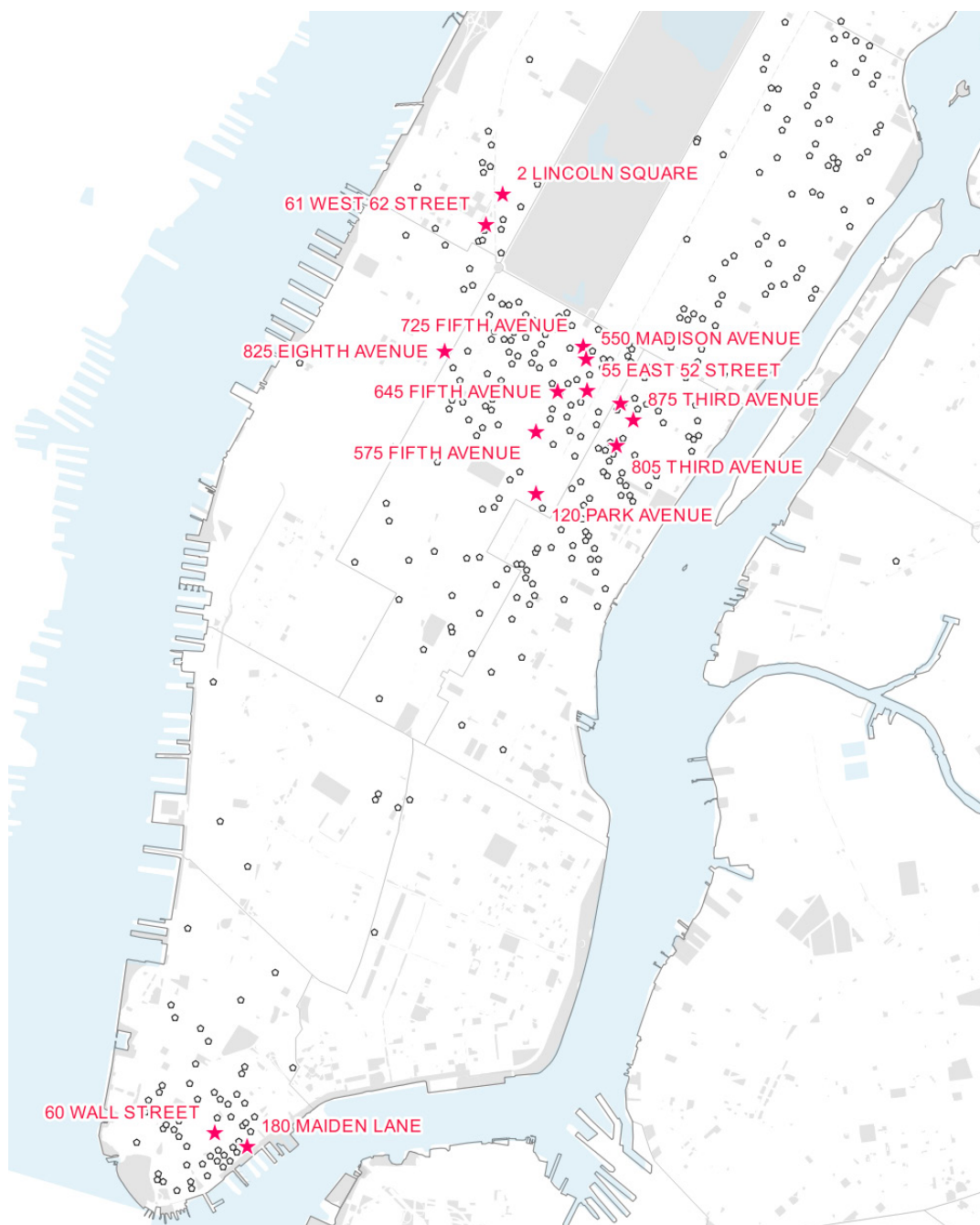
Includes two restrooms and a security guard. Not ADA accessible and in poor condition. Needs repair.

What We Propose

We propose that public bathrooms be required in all POPS that are greater than 10,000 s.f. Currently, POPS this large are required to provide food amenities, public bathrooms are a logical complement to this use and the general, public use of the development.

We propose that NYC Department of City Planning provide incentives, such as additional floor area, to developers providing public bathrooms.

We propose that signage outside bathrooms be required indicating they are open to the public.



Locations

Located within fourteen POPS out of 550 total POPS in the city. All fourteen of these are in high density, high wealth areas of Manhattan, in Midtown and the Financial District.



Strengths

Access and Safety:

- Open year-round.
- Most are attractive and feel safe. POPS are required to have security guards.

Operations:

- Developers cover cost of construction, cleaning, and maintenance.
- Most are well maintained and nicely designed.



Weaknesses

Siting:

- Most POPS are located in the central business districts of Manhattan, and not in the outer boroughs, limiting its potential outside Manhattan.
- The POPS program relies on new tower construction.

Access:

- Some bathrooms are locked and need a security guard to open them.

Public Pools and Showers



Locations

88 outdoor and 14 indoor pools around the city



Hours

M-S 11-19h
Outdoor pools open only in the Summer



Ownership

NYC Department of Parks and Recreation



Cleanliness: High

Generally fairly clean and well maintained



Usage: High

Well known and used by city residents



Costs: Low

Existing facilities with institutional maintenance costs

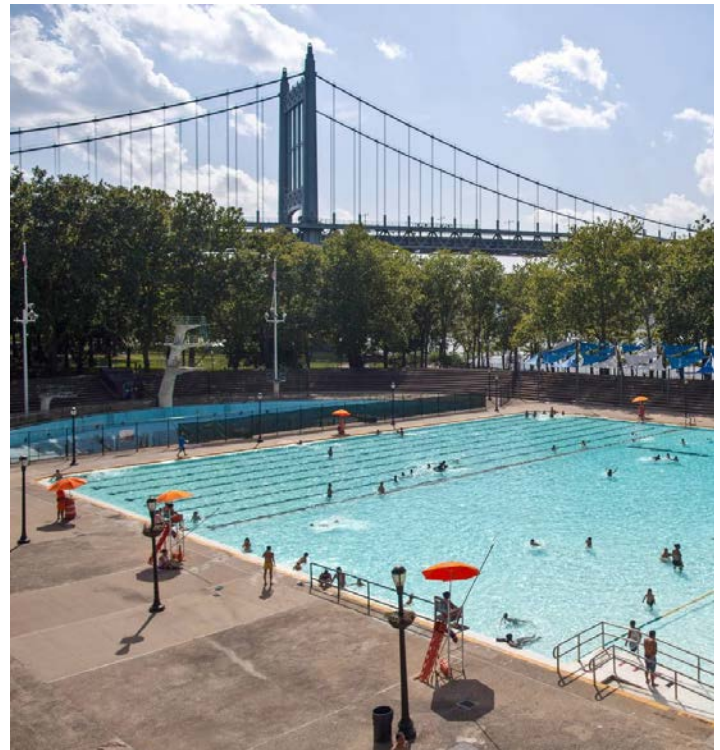
Description

Access:

- Great resource for all in the city.
- Provides safe and clean showers and bathing spaces.
- "Free for New Yorkers".

Existing Infrastructure:

- Pools are an existing infrastructure that people already use for free during the summer season. Opening the pool facilities for the general public to use the public bathrooms and showers is a big benefit for those living on the streets.
- The NYC Department of Parks and Recreation Capital Program, with a budget of about \$12 million, strengthens the city's infrastructure by developing and improving public pools and recreational facilities.



Astoria Park Pool, Queens

Opened: 1936

In Summer 2015, more than 182,000 people used Astoria Park Pool and its facilities.



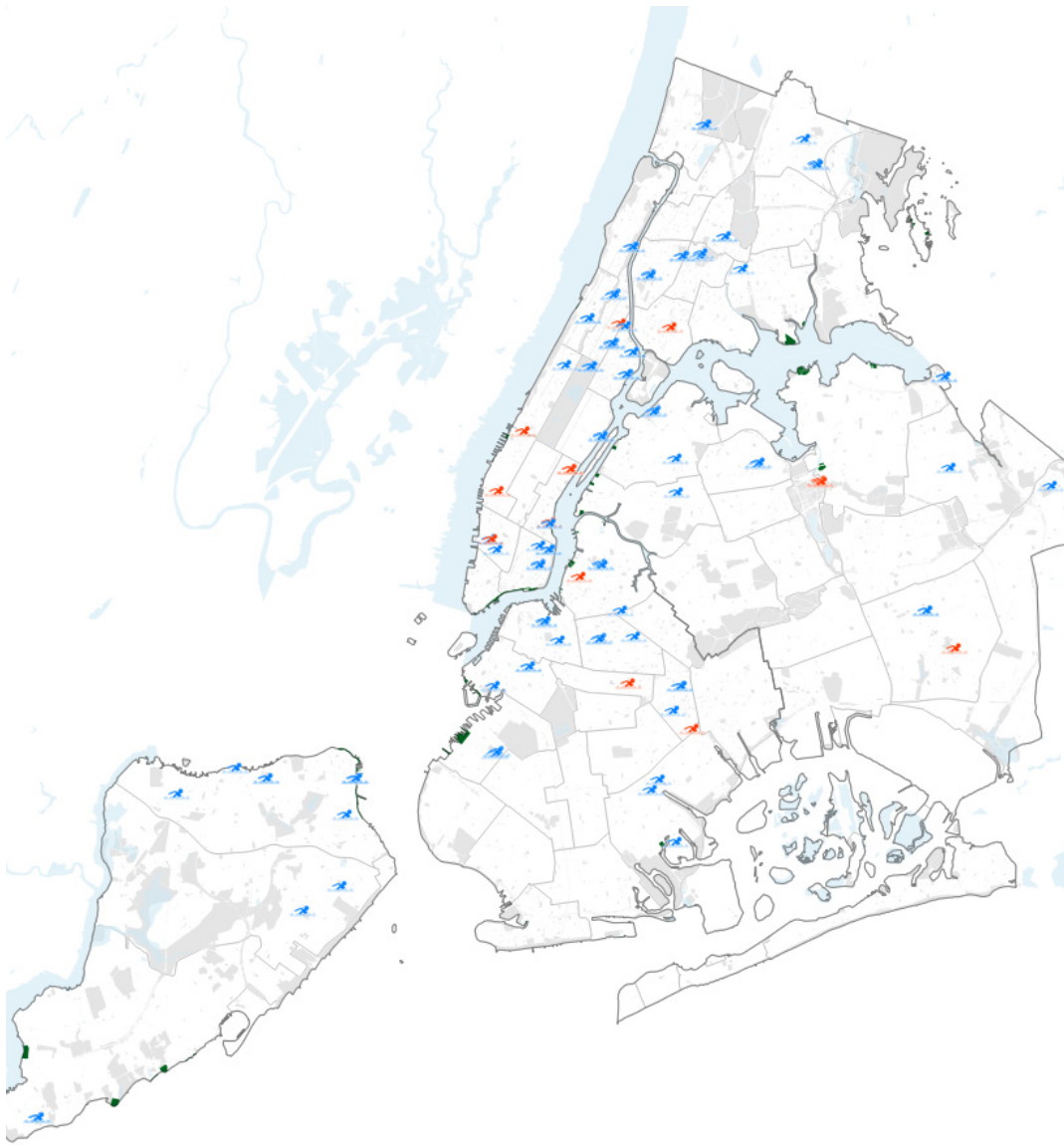
Crotona Park Pool, Bronx

Opened: 1936

Located in the center of the Bronx, Crotona Park Pool is very popular in the summertime.

What We Propose

We propose the city encourage the use of public pool facilities for showering and toilet usage. This increases the network of available public bathrooms, and most especially, bathing spaces. Shower facilities at pools sites could be opened outside of the summer season for public shower usage.



Locations

In New York, there are currently 88 outdoor pools and 14 indoor pools. All pools feature public bathrooms and public showers. The pools are open to all in the city.



Strengths

Access:

- Free access to showers, a rarity in the city.

Design:

- Attractive design of Cool Pools NYC programs feature wall art, lounge chairs, umbrellas, and plantings.

Maintenance:

- High standard and regulated inspections.
- Facilities are actively maintained and monitored daily ensuring a safe and clean environment.



Weaknesses

Limited open dates:

- Free, outdoor pool facilities are only operated during the summer season.

Security:

- Facilities provide locker space, but no sturdy lock.
- Those living on the street may feel reluctant to use the pool facilities due to social stigma. Relevant policies and advertising of the pool facilities as open to all may be needed to increase public patronage for bathroom and shower usage.

Drop-In Centers



Locations

5 in New York-
MN 2, BK 1,
BX 1, and SI 1



Hours

24/7
or
7:30-20:30



Ownership

NYC Department of
Homeless
Services and
nonprofits



Cleanliness: Fair

Generally fairly clean
and well maintained



Usage: High

Some facilities
are very busy
and well used



Costs: Fair

Existing facilities
but overall high
operational
expenses

Description

Services:

- Drop-in centers offer many services including hot meals, showers, bathrooms, laundry facilities, clothing, medical care, recreational space, employment referrals, and other social services.

Hours:

- Mainchance (Manhattan) and The Living Room (Bronx) are open 24/7, while Olivieri Center (Manhattan), The Gathering Place (Brooklyn), and Project Hospitality (Staten Island) have limited hours of operations.



The Living Room, Bronx

Near the 6 train at Hunt's Point Avenue, this is a busy location in the Bronx that features public bathrooms and showers and is open 24/7.



The Living Room, Bronx

Inside The Living Room, there is a front desk which directs patrons to the showers and bathrooms.

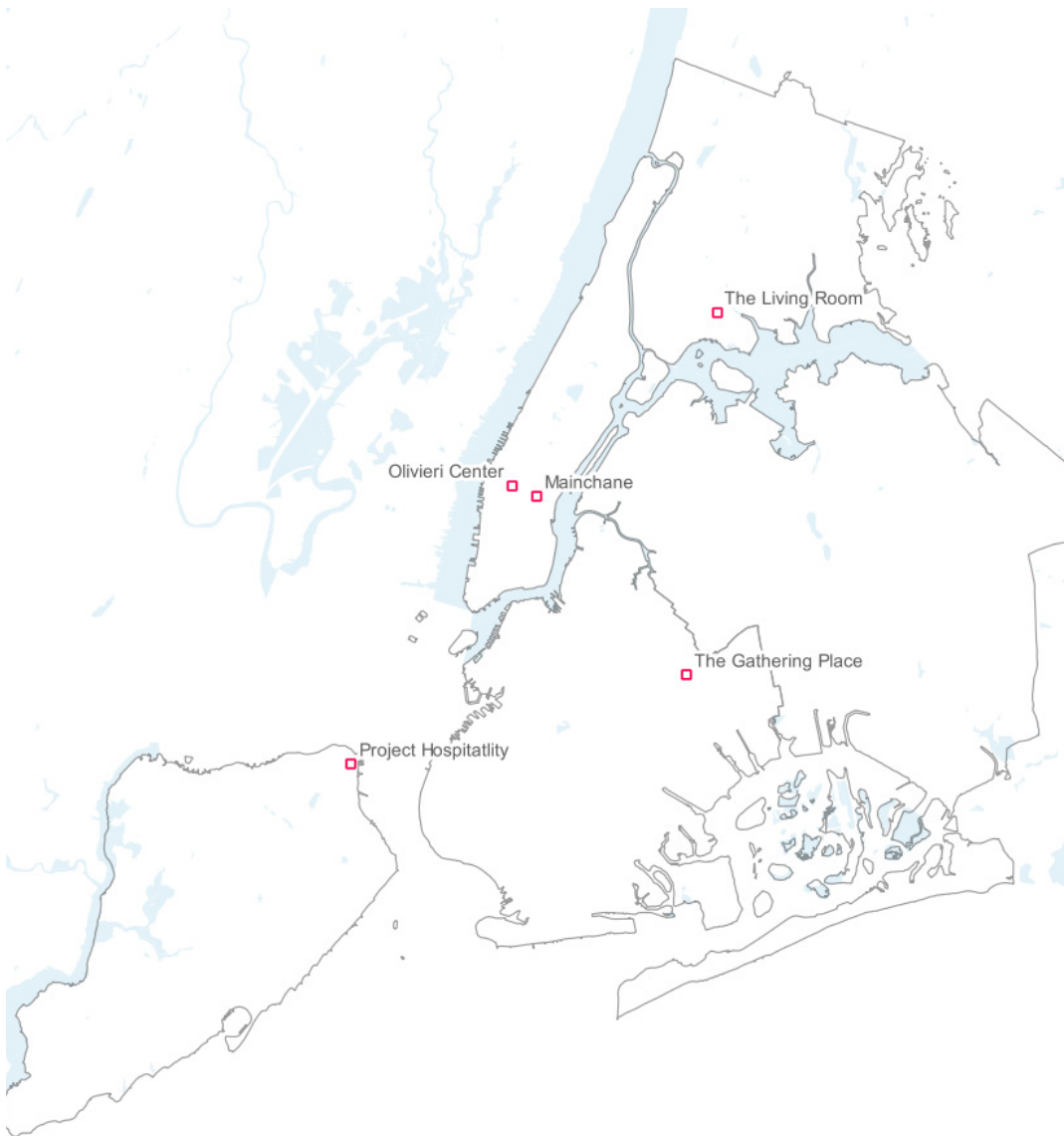
What We Propose

We propose that all drop-in centers have 24/7 bathrooms with signage outside indicating that a free public bathroom is available inside.



Locations

The city has five drop-in centers, and they are located in all five boroughs of the city. Two are open 24/7, one in Manhattan and the site in the Bronx, and three have limited hours of operations.



Strengths

Cleanliness:

- Drop-in centers are staffed and regularly maintained. Staff are available for assisting those who come in, as well as for operations and maintenance of bathrooms and showers.

Safety and Security:

- There is no front door requirement to screen out people regardless of their housing history. However, sites are staffed with security personnel.



Weaknesses

Limited hours:

- Only two drop-in centers are open 24/7, which reduces the number of available bathrooms at night.

Costs:

- High staffing needs which increase operations costs.

Unattractiveness:

- Due to the institutional atmosphere and environment, people feel hesitant to walk in, particularly for bathroom and shower purposes.

Business Improvement Districts (BID)



Locations

Primarily in Manhattan, mostly Midtown



Hours

Daytime hours only



Ownership

Local property owners



Cleanliness: High

Generally fairly clean and well maintained



Usage: High

Well known and used by city residents



Costs: Varies



Description

Bryant Park Corporation

Funding and Partnership:

- \$7 million annual budget. City-owned park is supported entirely through private revenue from a variety of sources, including corporate sponsorships.
- 315 sq.ft. Beaux Arts style comfort station.
- Designated a landmark.

Costs:

- \$300,000 renovation (\$889/sf) in 2017. The renovation took three months to complete.
- Maintenance is \$271,000 annually and includes: \$27,000 for a lot of single-ply toilet paper, \$14,160 for fresh flowers, and \$25-\$30k in annual salaries.

Public Usage:

- 1.2 million visitors in 2016, and 3,266 visitors daily.
- The demand for this bathroom is high as lines can grow to 40 people or more, with the wait on the women's side stretching to 15 to 20 minutes.



What We Propose

We propose that the city look into providing more public bathrooms with attendants, as BIDs have found that they increase the use of the bathrooms and are reasonable in costs.

We propose that NYC SBS work with BIDs in training of security and maintenance personnel to aid in staff sensibilities to the street homeless population in their districts.

Bryant Park Corporation, Manhattan

Opened: 1934, renovated in 1988 and 2017

The bathrooms at Bryant Park are extremely popular, clean, and loved by residents and visitors.

34th Street Partnership

Siting:

- Two Automatic Public Toilets (APT) were installed in 2001 in both Herald and Greeley squares. However, they were both subsequently closed in 2008. These were replaced with standard bathrooms with attendants, which are in service as of 2019.

Public Usage:

- 28,000 visits in the first year (2001), but this dropped to to fewer than half that by 2007.
- The APTs were replaced with "a quality deluxe manual restroom experience".

Staffing and Costs:

- Having attendants at bathrooms was cited as making people feel safe.
- The bathrooms were staffed by attendants paid between \$8.50 to \$12.70 an hour. Attendant costs were cited as being similar to maintenance costs with APTs.

Maintenance:

- The bathrooms were inspected, mopped and scrubbed about 15 to 25 times a day by bathroom staff.



Public bathroom in Greeley Square, Manhattan

Opened: 2001 and then closed in 2008

This Greeley Square toilet open in 2001, but was later closed and replaced by a bathroom with a full-time attendant.



Strengths

Maintenance and Cleanliness:

- Full-time attendant in most BID bathrooms.
- Most BID bathrooms are fully staffed and are therefore usually safe, well maintained, and cleaned regularly, making them an attractive bathroom.

Design:

- Automatic faucets, soap dispensers, and dryers.
- Self-flushing toilets with automatic toilet seat covers.
- Large porcelain tiles are used in the Bryant Park bathroom and these have proven to be more durable and with the reduction of grout area, are easier to keep clean. This bathroom also features attractive interior ceilings, art, flower bouquets, and classical music, which make it an attractive and unique experience.



Weaknesses

Limited hours:

- All are currently only open during daytime hours.

Limited funding:

- Many BIDs may not be able to build, fund, and maintain public bathrooms in their districts because of their limited budgets.

Retail and Private Businesses



Locations

Retail and private businesses



Hours

Usually during business hours



Ownership

Private businesses



Cleanliness: High

Generally fairly clean and well maintained



Usage: Fair

Those living on the streets may feel unwelcome from entering



Costs: Low

Increased cleaning costs offset by public subsidies

Description

- London, UK has "The Community Toilet Scheme", a program that pays retailers an annual stipend to open up their bathrooms to the public.
- The Mayor of London has encouraged every London borough to sign up to the scheme, stating, "it is a common sense and cost effective solution to the lack of public toilets in London."
- The Council pays each partner £600 plus VAT and maintains public liability insurance.
- There is a dedicated member of staff at the Council to co-ordinate the scheme.
- The scheme costs around £65,000, which is about £20,000 cheaper than the leasing arrangement for the five automatic public toilets that it replaced.
- In the London Borough of Richmond upon Thames:
 - There are 69 participating partners in the borough including bars, restaurants, cafés, community centers, retail stores, and markets.
 - 22 bathrooms have baby-change facilities.
 - 34 are accessible to those disabled.
 - Hours of Operation: 28 are available in the morning, 67 in the afternoon, and 52 in the evening, some until after midnight.



Community Toilet Scheme in London, UK

Launched: 2009

Since its launch by Mayor Boris Johnson, there are now dozens of public bathrooms around the city.



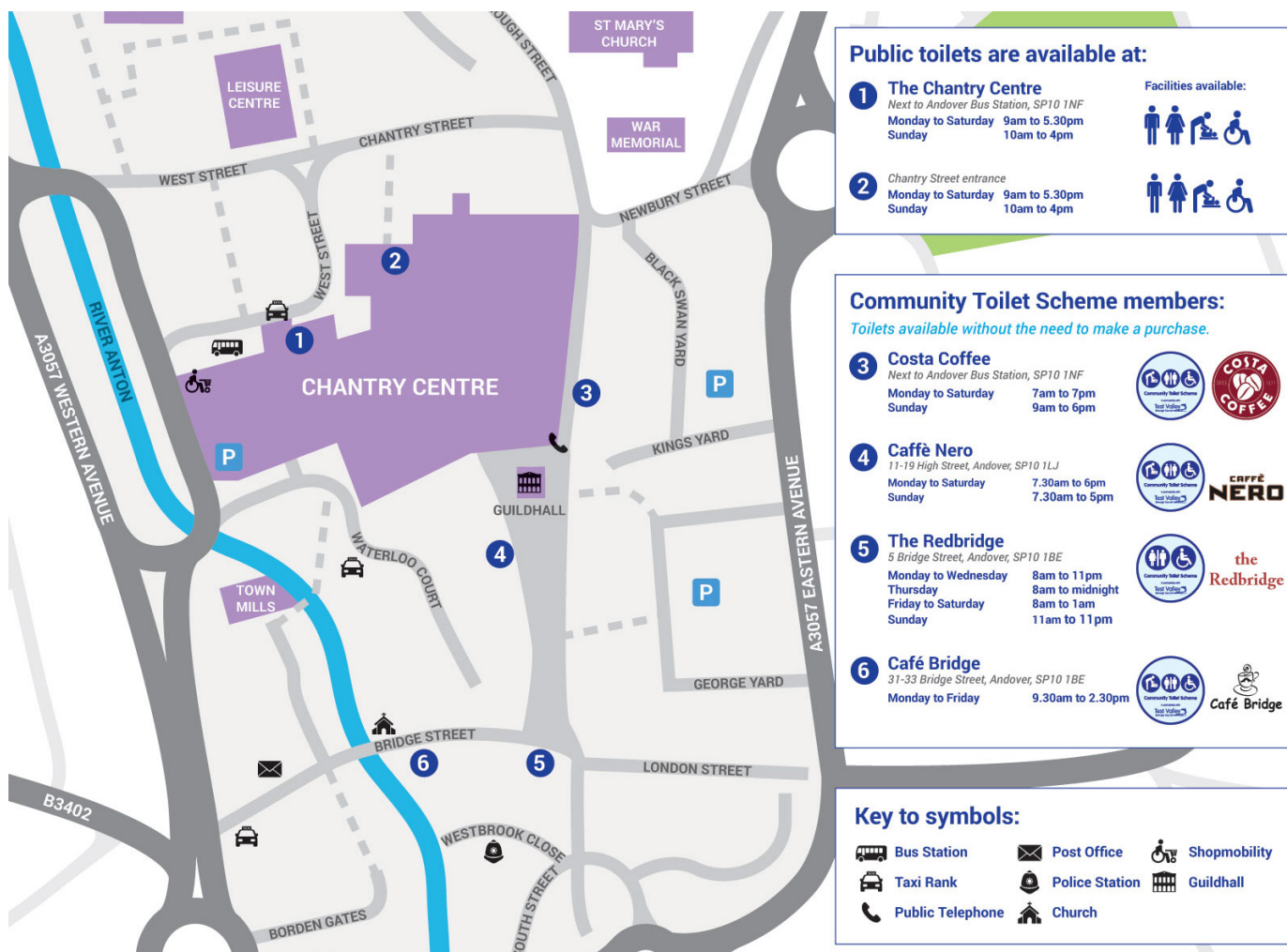
Community Toilet Scheme in Test Valley, UK

Launched: 2017

As of 2019, there are five private businesses participating in this initiative.

What We Propose

We propose that NYC Department of Small Business Services study this program and work with business improvement districts around the city to offer a similar program to local retailers.



Community Toilet Scheme in Andover, England, UK

The town center of Andover features six public bathrooms inside private businesses.



Strengths

- Far more public bathrooms are open to the public through this initiative, at less cost to the local government.
- Some people may not like to be seen directly entering a bathroom in a public place, but are more comfortable using bathrooms in shops or cafés.
- The scheme involves local businesses in the local area and the public bathrooms are 'locally owned'.
- In the UK, the pub chain J.D.Wetherspoon stated their increased profit in 2002 was partly the result of winning the 2001 Loo of the Year trophy. This might imply that there is demonstrable evidence that participating in such schemes can lead to an increase in popularity.



Weaknesses

- Facilities are open only when the business is open.
- "The Service Provider/Proprietor retains the right in exceptional circumstances to refuse a member of the general public admission to their premises and/or use of their toilet facilities." This means that the toilets are not public in the same sense that municipal toilets are public.
- Older people may not always feel comfortable going into bars and restaurants and may prefer anonymity when using public bathrooms.
- Not appropriate everywhere and may provide only a partial solution to the adequate provision of public bathrooms.

III. Design Guidelines

Cost Effectiveness (CE)

1. Economies of scale - Public bathrooms can be generated as part of large scale developments or made public in existing infrastructure.
2. Public bathrooms can be built and maintained by local business improvement districts interested in bringing more visitors to an area.
3. Advertisements on side of public bathrooms can be used to generate income.
4. The city can charge for use of automated toilets.
5. Job creation for the maintenance of public restrooms can benefit local neighborhoods.
6. Local organizations can create a volunteer system to make sure public bathrooms are properly maintained.
7. Public bathrooms can be mapped and rated through an app similar to Yelp.

Ease of Maintenance/Cleanliness (MC)

1. Use unisex stalls so individual toilets can be cleaned or repaired without closing facility.
2. Choose vandal-resistant hardware and tamper proof screws.
3. Install a tap and floor drain for power washing and provide maintenance closet that includes a hose for cleaning.
4. Establish a monitoring and evaluation plan for maintenance. Bathrooms should be cleaned frequently depending on how often it is used. Minimum daily cleaning should be provided.
5. If attendants are not feasible, provide a two way communication button that people can report issues to a central location.
6. Use materials such as stainless steel for doors and fixtures, that are hard to break and can be cleaned if tagged with graffiti.
7. Provide waste basket next to toilet so people don't throw things into the toilet.
8. Some installations have been fitted with a sharps disposal option primarily in areas with high transient activity due to increased drug activity. The sharps disposal is a hole above the hand rail marked with the biohazard symbol.
9. Provide hands-free faucets, soap dispensers and driers and self-flushing toilets with automatic toilet seat covers.
10. Replace ceramic tiles with more durable porcelain tiles.



CE #5



MC #3

Safety (SF)

1. Protect users, especially children, from inappropriate contact with strangers in “gang toilets” by providing individual direct entry stalls.
2. Design doors to ensure privacy with safety: full length with a 1.5 – 2” gap at the bottom and a lock that authorities can open from the outside in emergency.
3. Activate surrounding area with retail, information kiosks, food carts, street performers, bus stops, or parking pay stations.
4. Use blue light to make it difficult for intravenous drug users to find a vein.
5. Provide attendants if possible. They create a feeling of safety, maintain cleanliness, assist people if needed, and create a personal experience.
6. If attendants are not possible, look into using virtual attendants that can observe use with overhead cameras outside restroom doors. They can dispense toilet tissue remotely and control the amount of time a user stays inside. In case of an emergency, sensors can detect no movement inside and can call for help.
7. Provide emergency buttons: one waist-high, the other toward the floor, in case someone falls. Provide a yellow button to reach an operator.
8. Automated public toilets have floor sensors that have weight allowances of both a maximum (about 550 pounds) and minimum (45 pounds). If not, the doors will not close. The minimum weight allowance is to prevent small children from getting trapped inside.
9. Use translucent panels and glazing so that bathrooms can light up the street at night and act as a lantern to a dark area.



SF #3

Design (DS)

1. Focus on bathrooms as positive attractors, incorporating historical artifacts, artwork and text in design. Get the community and/or local artists involved in the design.
2. Create a bathroom of the year award to raise the bar on the design of bathrooms. Bathroom winners have also been known to have an increase in business.
3. Use materials like stone tiles for wall and floor finishes that are attractive, durable and long lasting. Provide sealer on stone that is vandal resistant.
4. Make the bathroom a destination. Provide music or fresh flowers.
5. Spaces should be well lit. Provide natural light whenever possible.
6. Make the flow of users more efficient by using unisex stalls.
7. Plan for bathrooms that can function year round and 24 hours a day, seven days a week.
8. Use directional signage to bathrooms, and signs on the facilities listing hours and number to call for maintenance. Provide print and web-based information to complement signs.
9. Use larger tiles to reduce the amount of grout between them and the scrubbing needed to keep them clean.
10. Sustainability - Use LED fixtures and low flow faucets and fixtures.
11. Accessibility - Provide clearances and access for people with mobility, hearing and vision impairment.



DS #1

New Technologies (NT)

1. Increasing the number of automated functions within a bathroom can increase its cleanliness and reduce wear and tear.
2. Automated functions can include, for example: automated flushing, automatic soap dispensers, automatic door opening and closing, automatic faucet water flow, and automatic hot air dryers.
3. Including advertisement within public bathrooms can increase revenue that can offset maintenance costs. For example, screens with advertisements can be installed on top of urinals, hand dryers, or in front of toilets.
4. A successful public bathroom has constant maintenance and staffing for safety and cleanliness. This can be expensive however. Costs can be reduced by have a centralized security surveillance system by installing cameras outside of bathroom entrances. This could help monitor the flow of people in and out of the bathroom, and discourage vandalism, crime, or acts of violence.
5. Cleanliness is very important, and public bathrooms could be installed with intercoms and buttons for bathroom users to notify a centralized maintenance facility of needed cleaning or replacement of items such as toilet paper or soap.



EC #3



MC #1



NT #3



MC #6



MC #9



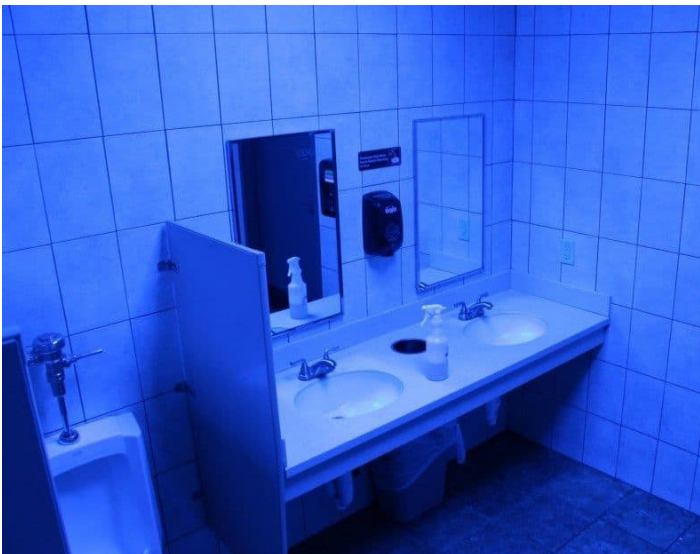
SF #5



SF #2



SF #6



SF #4



SF #9

IV. Conclusion

We ask that the City of New York form an interagency effort to study and address the need of public bathrooms in a multi-prong effort using various public bathroom types. We also call on our local city representatives to protect our rights to public restrooms so that all new yorkers have access to clean and safe public bathrooms. Occupational Safety and Health Act (OSHA) by federal law requires employers to provide their employees with bathroom facilities so that they will not suffer the adverse health effects that can result if bathrooms are not available. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, however, provides no such protection for the general public. We want to change this and want our legislative bodies to know that public bathrooms are a need and not an option.

“While not enforced against certain non-customers, “For Customers Only” signs, which are posted in many of these businesses, are more strictly applied to homeless people who have nowhere else to go.”

“Refusing people bathroom access remains a remarkably effective form of social exclusion. Consequently, public bathrooms have become potent means for marginalizing social untouchables. Urban geographer Mike Davis observed that public bathrooms have become “the real frontline in the city’s war on the homeless”. Another such “untouchable” group is the physically disabled.”

“The fact that I can’t find anyplace to relieve myself in New York causes me lots of problems and pain”

“I have never been able to find bathrooms in the subways. They are always locked and unavailable. The bathrooms in the parks are in terrible condition and dangerous.”

“When you gotta go you gotta go.”

“Unfortunately, businesses don’t want you using their restroom unless you’re a customer”, testified one homeless man.

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V. Acknowledgments and References

Acknowledgements

Thank you immensely to the following for your help, your conversations, and for sharing your knowledge:

- Daniel McPhee, George Piazza, Andrew Charles Pasquier, and Guillermo Gómez, Urban Design Forum
- Nikita Price, Charmel Lucas, Eric Goldfischer, Gemma Duffee, Jarquay Abdullah, Picture the Homeless
- Lindsey Davis and Jacquelyn Simone, Coalition for the Homeless
- Charlene Chai, Davis Brody Bond
- Frank Ruchala, NYC Department of City Planning
- Tom Harris and Billy Richling, Times Square Alliance
- Josh Dean, Human.NYC
- Dr. Andrea Silverman, New York University
- MTA New York City Transit
- NYC Department of Parks and Recreation
- Yuan Lai, New York University
- Carol McCreary, Phlush
- Margaret Jankowsky, Stella Kim, and Madison Loew, Urban Design Forum
- The entire 2018-2019 Forefront Fellowship Class
- And to anyone else we may have missed, we apologize and thank you.

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