

Kendall Sawyer

Subject: Public Comment March 13, 2023

From: Don Forman
Sent: Monday, March 13, 2023 9:21 AM
To: -- City Clerk <CityClerk@cityofpetaluma.org>
Cc: Don Forman
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Most of you (Mayor, City Council Members, City Manager, Parks & Rec.) have received emails from me going back to 2020 about the lack of bathrooms in downtown Petaluma. The downtown area needs decent public bathrooms and good signage directing people to them.

Add bathrooms to the Capitol Improvement Project 23/24.....

The map at the Visitor's Center show public bathrooms that are not available or closed. The map online <https://www.petalumadowntown.com/downtown-map>

The restrooms in Theater Square are for customers only and you need to get a key from a merchant. The bathrooms by the Theater Square parking structure are locked and for the building occupants only. The bathrooms at Putnam Plaza are no longer public. One is used by Petaluma Pie employees only and the other is inoperable. That leaves the Visitor's Center and Walnut Park the only true public bathrooms. They are too far away for most people to access.

When the Theater District was built there must have been an agreement with Basin Street Properties for public bathrooms because they were open to anyone to use years ago. What exactly happened, why are they no longer public??

There also was previously an agreement with Jonas' Starbucks/Petaluma Pie property where the two bathrooms were once public. I spoke with Jonas and he said the agreement was canceled by the city after several years because of maintenance issues and vandalism. Why did the city cancel the agreement and why weren't they replaced??

There is a port-o-potty in the Keller Street garage, it is not handicap accessible and Is this the image the city wants for our visitors and tourists? How would anyone even know about this bathroom?

Maintenance on the bathrooms at the Visitors Center are somewhat of an issue too. Like Smart does not want to help.

Petaluma has committed to being an age friendly city. And the city is also promoting using public transit, biking, walking and not driving. Bathrooms are a big part of making our city more inviting for our local community to bike and walk in the area and for visitors and tourists to our city. Public bathrooms would also make it easier for families, the elderly and people with medical issues to be able to enjoy our downtown area without the worry of trying to find a nearby bathroom.

I have seen the top 10 goals for the city of Petaluma and public bathrooms are not on the list. We need to make downtown public bathrooms a priority.

With all of the current proposed building projects for the city why not assess a fee that is specifically earmarked for public bathrooms for downtown. Near Putnam Plaza or near the footbridge would be a good area. The Walnut Park bathrooms should be refurbished also, the toilets do not even have seats.

Dave Alden with Urban Chat has submitted Goal Setting 2023 and Kris Rebillot submitted Petaluma Age-Friendly Needs Assessment to the city. Both of those have bathrooms as needed.

I made a short youtube video about the bathroom experience in Petaluma, Petaluma's lack of public bathroom's downtown
<https://youtu.be/9V5vIEznGMI>

Brian Cochran has responded before with short, medium and long term goals about the bathrooms before. See below.

Aug 11, 2022
Hi Don,

Thanks for the question and I can definitely appreciate your concerns. I am meeting with staff next week to discuss this issue and I hope that we will have some actions to improve the situation coming out of that discussion. What I can share now is that there are likely some things we can do in the short, medium and long term.

Short term – As I mentioned in my email to Mike Healy that you copied below, the City has been and continues to pay for 3-4 porta potty locations around town. While those were initially deployed in response to sanitation concerns related to our unsheltered community, they have also proved to be an attractive nuisance in certain instances. Staff will be working, in conjunction with the Downtown Association, to see if there are other locations, more strategically placed, that can be accessed by the public. In terms of the route that you walk, in case you were not aware, one of the units that we maintain is in the Keller Street Garage. All of the units that we maintain are serviced 5 days per week, so they should stay relatively clean. When we finalize some new locations, I can let you know where those will be.

Medium Term – Staff are discussing and researching the possibility of renovating and possibly re-opening the restroom next to Petaluma Pie Company / Starbucks. There are some complications, since it is contained within a privately-owned building and we no longer have a public access agreement as we did a number of years ago. Additionally, I hear from staff that the plumbing is sub-par in those restrooms and some renovations would be needed. We also need to work out a cleaning schedule and try to minimize nuisance issues and unsanitary / unsafe conditions.

Long Term – While not currently budgeted in our capital improvement program, we could look at installing units such as those from www.exeloo.com or www.portlandloo.com. I know from my time over in Napa, which installed some Exeloo units, they are not cheap – about \$300,000 to purchase, set up, plumb and install each restroom unit, plus the cost of operating and resupplying. The funding could likely be identified (whether from TOT or another source), but just knowing the overall time it takes to execute capital projects such as this, plus the existing highly ambitious capital improvement program that our Engineering team already has on its plate, this is why I have identified it as a longer term solution.

I will reach back out after we are able to meet as a team next week and let you know any additional solutions we can identify.

Thanks again,

Brian Cochran

Assistant City Manager
City of Petaluma | City Manager's Office

Thank you, Don Forman

