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Budget, Education & City Services

October 2023, Budget, Education & City Services Committee



Resolution in Support of New York City Council Public Restroom legislation

At the regularly scheduled monthly Community Board Five meeting on Thursday, October 12, 2023, the following resolution passed with a vote of 35 in favor; 0 opposed; 0 abstaining:

WHEREAS, Community Board 5 (CB5) recognizes the urgent need to improve access to safe, clean and accessible public bathrooms in our district and throughout the City of New York (NYC) to enable residents, workers, and visitors to manage a basic human need; and

WHEREAS, The ongoing pandemic has underscored the critical need for public bathrooms as we grapple with a public health crisis; and

WHEREAS, Public bathrooms are not just necessary for residents but also essential for a diverse range of individuals who contribute to the functioning of our city, including workers who deliver food, packages, groceries, street vendors, taxi and app-based drivers, and more; and

WHEREAS, NYC is dedicated to improving the cleanliness of our public spaces, as evidenced by the appointment of a public realm officer and a rat czar; and

WHEREAS, To truly achieve the goal of a cleaner and safer public realm, a thoughtful and well-planned public bathroom system is imperative; and

WHEREAS, We support the three public bathroom bills introduced this year in the City Council; and

WHEREAS, Intro 1076 would require the City to open A.D.A. accessible bathrooms in publicly owned buildings across the City with appropriate settings; and

WHEREAS, These bathrooms would be cost-effective as they already have maintenance staff associated with them; and

WHEREAS, Intro 1077 would require the City to develop a capital funding plan for bathrooms identified in each zip code as part of Intro 258/Local Law 114 of 2022; and

WHEREAS, The city would need to report on how they will find funding and where they will spend the money to create bathrooms; and

WHEREAS, Intro 1154 would amend the NYC charter and mandate public bathrooms to be included in the strategic planning report provided by the Department of City Planning (DCP) for housing, climate, commercial growth, etc., to establish and maintain a citywide public bathroom network, with the goal of providing one toilet per 2,000 residents by 2035 and thereafter; and

WHEREAS, This planning process would ensure that bathrooms are strategically located, aesthetically designed, and distributed equitably across our neighborhoods; and

WHEREAS, We believe public bathrooms are not a one-size-fits-all solution and encourage the city to explore a wide variety of solutions, including opening existing bathrooms in municipal and commercial buildings, retail and restaurants to the public, subsidizing or incentivizing private property owners, and

installing different kinds of sidewalk toilets and innovative structures in parks that are sustainable and resilient; and

WHEREAS, Accessibility for a wide range of users needs to be considered for various types of bathrooms, signage, online maps, and apps, including serving people who are visually and hearing impaired; and

WHEREAS, We emphasize the importance of maintaining the quality of the public bathroom system and recommend the implementation of a robust maintenance and sanitation program for free-standing public bathrooms, including full-time attendants where possible; and

WHEREAS, We also suggest creating a bathroom grading system to implement maintenance protocols and ensure that bathrooms undergo regular inspections to minimize risks and protect against potential liabilities; and

WHEREAS, We advocate that all adopted public bathroom plans fully address any legal implications and/or liabilities that arise from providing public bathroom access; and

WHEREAS, We recognize the necessity of designating a central department, such as the Department of City Planning (DCP), and the Public Realm Officer for orchestrating necessary interagency collaboration; and

WHEREAS, This coordination is vital to guarantee the effectiveness of our future public bathroom system, ensuring they are opened and accessible, appropriately located, well-designed, properly maintained, and that all relevant information is collected and updated in a data-rich map accessible to residents, workers, and tourists, and there is enforcement for future programs, etc; and therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that Manhattan Community Board Five endorses Intro 1076, Intro 1077 and Intro 1154 and urges the City Council to not only pass these provisions but also to support our public bathroom recommendations.



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