

Public Restrooms Working Group Minutes July 22nd, 2021

Conversation with Monica Ray, Executive Director, Congress Heights Community Training & Development Corporation (CHCTDC)

- Monica mentioned:
 - The Congress Heights Main Street
 - Trying to bridge the gap by providing fresh produce
 - Housing development for tenants and for community gathering
 - Public engagement interacts between government and community stakeholders so that negative impacts can be mitigated
- CHCTDC serves 200 adults annually in job training programs
- CHCTDC hosts Arts All Night festival which is also a public restroom fiasco. 16,000 residents came to the event in 2019. Most profound side effect is there was 96 hours of violence free activity from the set-up time at noon on Friday until Sunday night there were no violent act. Positive activity in at-risk neighborhoods can have a huge impact to transform the lives of residents.
- Question from David Ross: Can you speak to homeless issues that may be occurring in your Ward and how a public restroom could benefit and impact quality of life for those experiencing homelessness and other residents?
- Monica said that there are homeless persons challenges particularly around shelter opening and closing times and the park. Many of the impacts people perceive as homeless issues are really not. People perceive that the men in the park are homeless and they are not. They are residents of the community who find solace hanging out with their friends in the park. But the impact looks the same. There may be illegal activity (ie public drunkenness), but that's not just people experiencing homelessness. In the park there is no restroom. So if someone spends 2-3 hours there and no restroom certain activities will take place. A public restroom would be ideal. If there is a restroom clean, maintain, and safe. They need to be well lit and secured. Shelter near Magnolia St not just a public restroom, but a bathroom for men to shower and prepare for work.
- David mentioned that highlighting that people experiencing homelessness having jobs is important for economic recovery.

- Ciana mentioned the security component and the legislation and that details like lighting are items the working group will have to consider.
- Ciana asked about community engagement in particular about the organization serving as a liaison between community members and government. Ciana asked if they have engaged with another working group and follow-up thereafter.
- Monica said government shows up too often at the beginning and then when it's done. Community engagement requires constant contact and thinking of impacts before they happen. Monica recommended diverse focus groups to get the actual opinion and to go beyond the usual vocal suspects. Create ample opportunity for stakeholders to be involved in increase the amount of ways they can be involved.
- They just launched engage.soulofthecity.org where polls, guest books, and other dialogue can take place especially for those who cannot attend an ANC meeting.
- Olivia asked if there is more of a homeless population in the constituency or a general need because sometimes public restrooms is considered just for one population, but it can be for a broader audience and she is unsure if the group has a pulse on who the restrooms could serve.
- Monica said it is a general need especially in Ward 8 where there is not the same restaurant corridor as there are in other parts of the city.
- David mentioned that it would be helpful for Monica to share views and feedback from those who are heavily involved in this space already to get a better understanding for a safe facility and a deterrent from drug use and something that is beneficial instead of negative.

General Announcements

- Ciana mentioned the draft executive summary she started to write as an example of possible formatting going forward as well as precedent from other jurisdictions and stakeholder input.
- Ciana emphasized public engagement and stakeholder input to be a key portion of the report.
- Meeting logistics for the working group as well as subgroups.

- Olivia gave an update on implementation. She said she is working to identify a construction and facility staff members for daily maintenance of the facility. Cleaning frequency, lighting, security, budget, and more will be discussed going forward.
- Olivia asked Ella if the group could get updates from DPR on the Portland Loo and considerations on proximity to water, sewer, etc.
- Ella agreed to use the facilities group as a case study. Ella highlighted the work on public restrooms not just nationally, but internationally. Tokyo example of restrooms that people can see inside before they enter. Looking at design and infrastructure needs including placement is important. DPR installs restrooms on park land so there is already infrastructure. But if there is a restroom near a bus terminal or roadside, infrastructure needs like water and sewer could get expensive. To compare other urban jurisdictions as well.
- Ella mentioned that sadly people have overdosed in some of the DPR restrooms. Additionally, with the gun violence people are running into restrooms trying to hide. There will be some security element.
- Ella mentioned in some jurisdictions BIDs installed restrooms instead of governments.