

Part Two: PUBLIC TOILET PLANNING AND ACTION

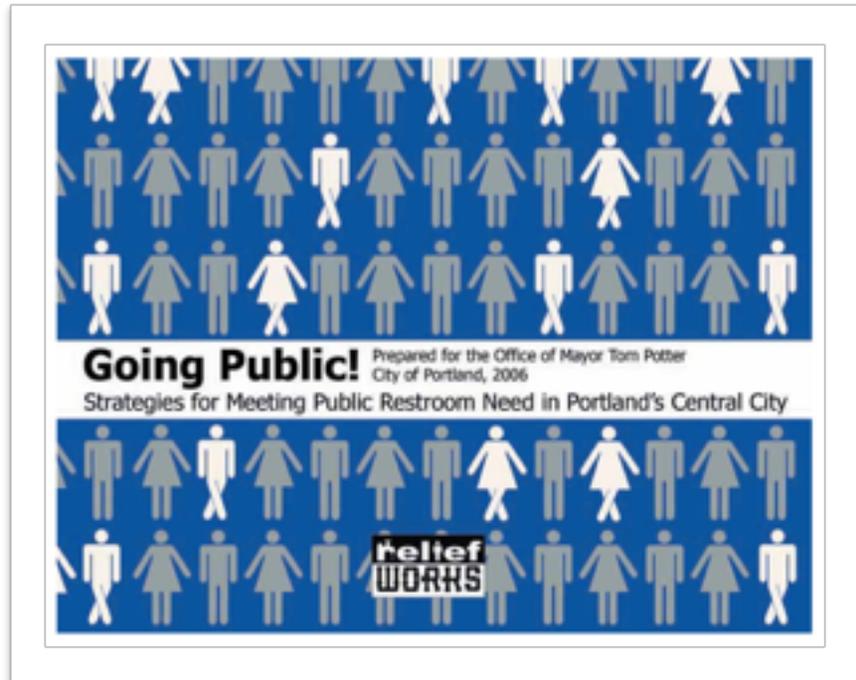
5. Gather information: Walkabouts, Maps, Surveys

You'll probably start your advocacy research¹ by demonstrating the need for public restrooms. To do so, we recommend the following steps:

- Determine the area of study.
- Visit all facilities that are open, collect basic data, and photograph them (and the areas around them).
- Inquire about facilities that are closed and request a visit.
- Make a restroom map or use pre-existing maps to identify where there are service gaps.
- Talk informally to toilet users, neighbors and passersby to get their impressions.
- Assess the data, list remaining questions and figure out how to answer them.
- Prioritize topics for further study, decide whom to interview and divide work among team members.
- To solicit the views of residents and business owners in the area, develop questionnaires and surveys with both open ended and forced choice questions.
- Invite respondents to share contact information and receive updates.

PHLUSH was founded by six people who raised their hands at a community meeting and agreed to research the neighborhood restroom situation and make recommendations. The information in the 34-page *Public Toilets for Old Town Chinatown: A Report to the Community*² was compiled over a 6-month period and was presented

in a well-attended public forum held at an art gallery. Press coverage was positive.



After working with grassroots activists, a graduate student team partnered with the Office of the Mayor to produce *Going Public*. The study won a national award.

Immediately following the community meeting, a group of seven graduate students in Urban and Regional Planning at Portland State University validated the work of PHLUSH neighborhood activists and

¹ "Conducting Advocacy Research," Chapter 31. Community Tool Box. Work Group for Community Health and Development. University of Kansas. <http://ctb.ku.edu/en/table-of-contents/advocacy/advocacy-research>, accessed October 12, 2015.

² PHLUSH. "Public Toilets for Old Town Chinatown: A Report to the Community," Feb 2006, <http://www.phlush.org/wp-content/uploads/2009/02/PHLUSH-Public-Restrooms-for-Old-Town-Chinatown.pdf>, accessed October 12, 2015.

illuminated the issues in *Going Public: Strategies for Meeting Public Restroom Need in Portland's Central City*.³ This report, conducted for the Office of Mayor Tom Potter, went on to win the 2007 American Planning Association Contemporary Issue Student Project Award.⁴

Both studies documented needs and proposed a number of options for policy makers and neighborhood activists to pursue. Both studies were done by volunteers, not by consultants hired by the city. Recommendations from each were incorporated into city strategy.

Case Story: Restroom advocates do their homework before taking demands to local officials.

People for Fairness Coalition (PFC) is doing their homework before asking the District of Columbia Government to install and maintain clean, safe, public restrooms available 24/7 in key areas of need in the US capital city. The Downtown Washington DC Public Restroom Initiative has identified lessons from successful experiences in toilet provision elsewhere and carried out a Restroom Inventory. To find out whether pedestrians and individuals lacking housing have toilets available, they visited 85 restrooms in five downtown areas and used their data to document the magnitude of the problem.

With research in hand, they are pursuing three objectives: 1) to build awareness through education and outreach of the importance of having downtown public restrooms that are clean, safe, and available 24/7; 2) to obtain signatures petitioning the DC Council to support their initiative with funding; and 3) to engage other organizations and individuals to join them in lobbying government officials.

Source: PFC Public Restroom Committee communication.

This Toolkit is designed for people like you: community volunteers with the ability to get the ball rolling by making actionable proposals to local officials and shepherding their follow through.

You can create a similar report. It can be short (1-2 pages) or extensive (30+). Here's a simple format you might consider.

- Section One: Make "The Case for Public Toilets." Document the benefits for your particular location. Here you may include your research on available facilities. Create a simple map of your neighborhood using Google Maps showing available public toilets or insert an existing map. If statistics are available, consider mapping open defecation. San Francisco's (Human) Wasteland⁵ map documents calls for clean up across the city and Miami's Downtown Development Authority created a similar "scatological atlas."⁶
- Section Two: Outline several "Types of Facilities" or "Options for Public Toilets." Here you include research on toilet facilities that might work in your community.
- Section Three: Propose "Next Steps" and outline a plan for moving forward.

A short initial concept paper can also be used to help you engage community members before you draft a fuller report. As you undertake your investigation, you'll generate additional questions and need to reach out. Request short meetings with individuals to share your concerns and request their help with unanswered questions. Your report will grow after you reach out to neighborhood groups. There will be even more information to incorporate once you start to plan with a larger circle of community members using Tools 6 and 7.

³ Relief Works. "Going Public: Strategies for Meeting Public Restroom Need in Portland's Central City," prepared for the Office of Mayor Tom Potter, June 2006, http://www.americanrestroom.org/us/portland/psu_gopubliccvt3.pdf, accessed October 12, 2015.

⁴ American Planning Association. "National Planning Awards 20087." <https://www.planning.org/awards/2007/>. Accessed October 23, 2015.

⁵ Jennifer Wong, "(Human) Wasteland," MochiMachine, <http://mochimachine.org/web/wasteland>, accessed October 9, 2015.

⁶ David Smiley, "Feud over Miami homeless leads to creation of 'poop map'," *Miami Herald*, May 14, 2015, <http://www.miamiherald.com/news/local/community/miami-dade/article21040056.html>, accessed October 9, 2015.