

2. Recognize Good Restroom Design

Faced with an extreme toilet shortage in their historic Portland, Oregon neighborhood, six volunteers studied the situation for six months and issued *Public Toilets for Old Town Chinatown: A Report to the Community*.¹ Next, a group of Portland State University graduate students in Urban and Regional Planning formed Relief Works, partnered with the Office of the Mayor, and recommended policy and practice in their national award-winning *Going Public! Strategies for Meeting Public Restroom Need in Portland's Central City*.²

The result was that PHLUSH participated on the Mayor's Public Restroom Taskforce and invited San Diego restroom designer Mary Coakley to meet with city officials and to comment on proposed public toilet designs. In response to shortcomings in these proposals and inquiries from urban planners and architects, PHLUSH issued a simple set of design principles. The neighborhood association then adopted the document as official neighborhood policy in 2008. PHLUSH Co-Founder Barbara Lescher was invited to present them at the 2009 World Toilet Summit in Singapore.³

The PHLUSH Design Principles for Public Restrooms identify seven essential characteristics of successful facilities and specify the design elements required to meet each. They build on a variety of sources⁴ and are aligned with the needs of diverse users and the realities of contemporary urban life.

¹ PHLUSH, "Public Toilets for Old Town Chinatown: A Report to the Community," February 7, 2006, <http://www.phlush.org/wp-content/uploads/2009/02/PHLUSH-Public-Restrooms-for-Old-Town-Chinatown.pdf>, accessed September 23, 2015,

² 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_gopubliccvr3.pdf, accessed September 23, 2015.

³ "Barb Lescher presents the PHLUSH Design Principles," PHLUSH, December 4, 2009, <http://www.phlush.org/2009/12/04/barb-lescher-presents-the-phlush-design-principles/>, accessed October 16, 2015.

⁴ Clara Greed, *Inclusive Urban Design: Public Toilets*, Architectural Press, 2003, La Jolla Shores Kellogg Park Comfort Station, Nomination document for APWA award winning restroom by designer Mary Coakley, 2006, accessed September 23, 2015, <http://www.americanrestroom.org/us/lajolla/index.htm>

Design Principles for Public Restrooms

Working Goal Cost effective public restrooms that provide maximum function in minimum space and are safe, accessible, available, attractive and easy to maintain.

Cost Effectiveness

- The high cost of not having public toilets can balance the cost of providing good ones.

Maximum Function in Minimum Space

- Save space with single door direct entry stalls rather than "gang toilets".
- Increase capacity and solve gender parity issues by making stalls unisex.
- Think public comfort station, i.e., a place where the public feels comfortable making short stops rather than an interior room for rest.

Safety

- Site restrooms to benefit from natural surveillance by the community.
- Apply Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED) in location, layout, lighting, surface, materials, fixtures and hardware.

- Protect users, especially children, from inappropriate contact with strangers in “gang toilets” by providing individual direct entry stalls.
- 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.
- Activate surrounding area with retail, information kiosks, food carts, street performers, bus stops, or parking pay stations.

Accessibility

- Adhere to standards of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).
- Choose unisex stalls to accommodate families and opposite sex caregivers.

Availability

- Place sinks outside of stalls so users do not tie up toilets while hand washing.
- Make the flow of users more efficient by using unisex stalls.
- Plan for restrooms that can function year round and 24/7.
- Use directional signage to restrooms, signs on facility listing hours, number to call for maintenance, etc. and print and web-based information to complement signs.

Attractiveness

- Focus on restrooms as positive attractors, incorporating historical artifacts, artwork and text in design.
- Involve users in restroom design and aesthetics as well as function.
- Give the community the opportunity to take pride in and responsibility for restrooms.
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Ease of Maintenance

- Use unisex stalls so individual toilets can be cleaned or repaired without closing facility.
- Choose vandal-resistant hardware and make surfaces graffiti resistant.

- Lower the risk of in-stall vandalism by putting sink and trash bin outside in the open.
- Install a tap for power washing and a utility cupboard for supplies.
- Establish a monitoring and evaluation plan for maintenance.



The Portland Loo is a simple, high-quality sidewalk toilet that illustrates design criteria of maximum function in minimum space, safety, cost effectiveness, accessibility, availability, attractiveness and ease of maintenance.