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A MESSAGE FROM PORTLAND DOWNTOWN

April 11, 2024

Dear Downtown Stakeholder:

At Portland Downtown, Cruise Maine, and Visit Portland, one of the most common questions we receive is, “Where is the closest restroom?” Unfortunately for us all, there is a remarkable lack of public restroom access to meet the demand in our city’s downtown district.

This restroom shortage is an issue of public health, and, as such, should be treated as one.

We and our many partners, including the City of Portland, have worked diligently to address this issue for years, taking it so seriously that we hired the foremost thought-leader and author on the issue, [Lezlie Lowe](#), as our consultant. Lezlie is the author of [No Place to Go: How Our Public Infrastructure Fails Our Private Needs](#). She served as the facilitator of our February 2024 Public Restroom Forum and also as a contributor to the Public Restroom Master Plan for Downtown Portland that we are releasing today.

Throughout our efforts to pen this Master Plan, we have done our research, becoming familiar with the nation’s top restroom associations, reading several books (we have some recommendations, if you are looking!), and have followed public restroom stories from across the world to learn from our peers.

Our findings repeatedly tell us, while public restrooms are ample, they are just not always accessible to the entire community for free.

This brings us to the goal of not just this Master Plan, but of our 2024 Public Restroom Forum and our Portland Downtown Advocacy Committee: To move towards being a more welcoming, more equitable community; one with a culture of, “Yes, you can pee in Portland.” It may sound silly, but it is important.

We are committed to addressing this issue, investing our time and our treasure to find and fund a solution. But we cannot do it alone.

Here is where you can help: Tell your elected officials how important this issue is to you, your business, or someone you know; keep your eye out for how other communities are addressing the need for public restrooms and share any new or innovative ideas you may find; and, finally, be an engaged citizen. It will take all of us working together to make this happen.

That old chestnut “a goal without a plan is just a wish” might be a cliché, but that does not mean it is untrue. This effort — as our friend Lezlie would say — has to start somewhere. We are starting here with this Public Restroom Master Plan for Downtown Portland.

In service,

Cary Tyson
Executive Director
Portland Downtown