

Date: May 26, 2015

To: City Manager, Ms. Fran David

From: Marcy Timberman, World Toilet Day Group

Subject: Your Memorandum of May 22, 2015, and Reports attached to the Agenda of the May 26, 2015, City Council Meeting

Summary of Public Input Process;

- Despite the details presented, the subject of public bathrooms has never been discussed in a transparent and specific manner with either the general public or in the survey referred to. Most people I speak with are astounded to find that no public facilities are planned for such an ambitious project and assumed that if you have a park you would have a public bathroom.
- The 12/8 split against/for public bathrooms referred to is not an adequate representation of public opinion with which to make informed decisions for a city with 151,574 residents (2013 data). The public was not asked if they wanted public bathrooms and because they weren't, it was assumed they didn't want them.
- Our independent brief survey with downtown merchants this month revealed a desire to have public toilets in the newly planned park and to discuss public toilets in general. This is one underlying reason for the Planning Commission's recommendation. Another, is the lack of specific, topic discussion.
- Subsequently, an independent, random survey of 150+ individuals, including taxi drivers, restaurant and business owners, downtown visitors and consumers, workers, residents of nearby neighborhoods and members of the faith community revealed an almost unanimous affirmative response to include facilities in the planned park and to support public toilets.

Public Restrooms:

- Public toilets in the park were not included in the specifications. Restrooms can be designed to fit with the ambience of the park and done correctly, would not be a distraction. (Please note that the placement of the most public library bathrooms directly across from the planned children's section needs to be addressed. Currently, patrons are completely discouraged from using those near the children's section.)
- The cost estimate of \$600,000 is highly debatable. Using the existing current library infrastructure could greatly reduce this estimate.
- After testimony during the November 18, 2014, session of Council, the World Toilet Day Group was promised a work session on public toilets. Despite outreach, we had still waiting for information until we heard very recently that discussions would be rolled into yet another development plan.
- The proposed reopening of the Watkins Street Garage bathroom will be a predictable failure as none of the issues that caused its prior failure and closure have been addressed. It is a lockable, multi-gender bathroom for one that is unattended and out of view and this design is the most likely to have problems.

In closing, many of us understand how difficult it is to be in public without access to a bathroom for ourselves, our children and grandchildren, our elderly parents, and family and friends who are disabled and have health issues. People of all ages and abilities should be able to spend a comfortable and enjoyable time downtown. It doesn't happen without public bathrooms. In 1907, the Rotary Club of Chicago understood that to attract people downtown, they needed to build public bathrooms. And so they did.

So I respectfully ask you, Ms. David, Mayor Halliday, and the City Council to think deeply about our comments. Access to toilets, whether at home or in the public, is not a privilege but a basic human right. We want public restrooms in the Arboretum Park and an open discussion on public toilets. Thank you.