

MEMORANDUM Re: 2020 City of San Diego Budget Submittals – Balboa Park Comfort Stations Rehabilitation Analysis and Design Construction Document Creation



Poor public sanitation exacerbated the Hepatitis A outbreak. The City was sued because of the lack of ADA accessible public toilets in Balboa Park.

The toilets in Balboa Park, as can be seen above are unsanitary, a disgrace and unbecoming any form of public space. The 23 in Balboa Park are, by common agreement, among the worst in the City of San Diego Parks system of 191 “Comfort Stations”. They fail any reasonable test of effectiveness, efficiency, ADA compliance or just basic human dignity. Before another health disaster strikes or another lawsuit arises, now is the time to take effective action to replace and/or rehabilitate them.

Requests:

This is a two-part request: first, have City staff complete a detailed Balboa Park Comfort Station analysis and second, have City staff complete design construction documents for the replacement of the worst public toilets in Balboa Park.

1. Balboa Park Comfort Station Analysis

Request that the Public Works and Parks and Recreation Departments complete a comprehensive analysis to indicate how many public toilets are necessary for Balboa Park, what their configurations should be, where they should be located and how to plan for their replacement or rehabilitation and

operations and maintenance funding. The analysis should include a demonstration that rehabilitation costs versus complete replacement were considered. Also, outline the detailed contracting process such that various efficient and economical strategies such as Bid Sources, CMAS, Bidwell, etc. are identified and considered. Finally, such an analysis should include the planned steps and timing leading to the development of a public toilet strategy. Present the analysis results to the City Council with the final designs for standardized public toilets with local community options.

This analysis with cost estimates must provide the rationale for a comprehensive approach to solve a severe public health issue using a determined, consistent application of standard designs, cost beneficial construction procurement, and to result in enhanced human dignity and social justice.

The report is to be submitted to City Council before the Fiscal Year 2021 Budget Development Key Date for submittal of Councilmember CIP priorities due to staff, approximately mid-October, 2019. Further, it is strongly recommended that active members of the public be engaged early and consistently in the process definition and that their comments and considerations are included as part of the final report.

2. Design construction documents

By common agreement among the worst CS in the entire 191 P&R toilet inventory are in Balboa Park. Work should immediately commence on the creation of design construction documents to fast track replacement of the most egregious units. The City's investment in the Facilities Condition Assessments, the ADA transition plan, and Parks & Recreation experience provide the tools for selection of which units to replace first.

The City undertook an effort at CS standardization over the past several years. Those efforts are near completion with near-final discussions currently taking place. This funding request would provide the natural transition from the standardized design component and general layout direction to the actual, ready for award drawings.

Further, if done in concert with available contracting decisions such site-built units using California Multiple Award Schedule and/or BuyBoard or the purchase of prefabricated units through Sourcewell, the installation of these units through EzIQ contracting, procurement costs should ultimately be reduced. Further, such efforts may prove replicable thus expediting the public toilet rehabilitation/replacement planning that should result from the first funding request, above. When done in concert with that effort, this will provide the opportunity to develop a Plan of Action and Milestones for deciding where to approach Public Toilet replacement in each Council District. Finally, this will leverage the public toilet standardization effort.

The anticipated amount for this effort is \$200 – 250K.

Background.

The aged Comfort Stations [CS] in Balboa Park are an assault upon human dignity, social justice, and the well-being of its users. They also create a burden for the limited staff and resources of the parks & recreation department.

During the 1960s, Balboa Park witnessed the creation of many of the 23 existing, detached Comfort Stations [CS] present in the park. Fifty plus years on, the facilities are an embarrassment and blemish upon Balboa Park's status as a World Class entity. They are a partial refutation, in fact, of any such conception.

Some, because of their out of the way locations (notorious both for sex and drug trafficking) have been closed for years. Others have had their stall doors removed to prevent such activities.

They are just not places that anyone would choose to use. Several of them have open toilet stalls, separated by a minimalist partition. In some cases, one can look into the restrooms and see the booths from the outside sidewalk. In many other cases, there is not any remote likelihood of an individual with a severe physical disability using them. Often, the CSs are remote, poorly lighted, and pose a safety hazard. Finally, many of the CS locations have at times become homeless encampments.

They are worn and otherwise undesirable stand-alone concrete block, slab floor public toilet buildings, a model used extensively throughout the City's Park system. They assault the user from many vantage points: health, safety, ADA compliance, cost of operations but perhaps most importantly from a human dignity and social justice perspective.

The City embarked upon a program of standardization of Comfort Stations **before 9/11/2001**.¹ After 18 years of periodic attention and discussion, we are nearing a solution on standardized Comfort Stations. Nonetheless, we are still far from consensus on a Public Toilet Strategy. Other world-class destination cities such as Sydney, Australia² recognize the importance of such a strategy. Given the recent Hepatitis A outbreak, the continuing prevalence of homelessness, and public concern for health and sanitation now is the time to address these matters.

Let us address these unacceptable conditions. We only need to remember those who died during the most recent Hepatitis A outbreak to wonder whether conditions similar to those shown in the pictures aren't conducive to another such catastrophic event. And, one only needs to look at some of the photographs to wonder where someone with a wheelchair would go to use some of these public toilets.

¹ City of San Diego, Manager's Report, 02-069, Standardized Design and Community Review for Comfort Stations, March 27, 2002 [Note Comment re: CM Scott Peters June 2001 request] and City of San Diego, Manager's Report, 03-025, Standardized Design and Community Review for Comfort Stations, February 14, 2003

² https://www.cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au/data/assets/pdf_file/0007/199816/2013-460160-02-Policy-Attachment-C-Public-Toilet-Strategy-Adopted.pdf. See also Brisbane, Australia and Portland, OR.