

# Public toilet opens in TL

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at the Seventh and Market BART Station and the toilets closed at Tenderloin Health in summer 2009. The situation is dire, activists say.

"You have only to walk through the streets to know there's a need," said David Fernandez, TL Health's executive director.

The Hospitality House toilets have gotten 25 years of heavy use and have cost a bundle to keep fit, according to Program Director Jenny Wiley. Up to 300 people a day come in, half are homeless, most use the bathroom "or the phone and get a drink of water, or just to rest (in the lobby)."

The men's and women's bathrooms are open weekdays 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. Often waiting lines stretch outside. The women's bathroom has two stalls; men have one stall and a urinal. Several times a day they are closed for cleaning and Mondays, from 10 a.m. on, during daylong staff meetings.

"We have two or three toilet stoppages a month," Wiley says. "It's everything from swimsuits and diapers to syringes, surprising things. And it costs thousands of dollars a year."

Other free public toilets in the Tenderloin are in the Main Library, preferred over City Hall where people must first pass through mental detectors upstairs, and at Youth with a Mission on Ellis Street. YWM's unisex bathroom is open Monday through Thursday 9:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. and Friday 9:30 a.m. to noon. A visitor gets the key from the desk and has 10 minutes.

Boeddeker Park has a bathroom,

but it's open only when the park is. In recent years that's been greatly reduced for adults — weekdays 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.

The Tenderloin trend has been a shrinking number of public bathrooms. The Market and Seventh Street BART Station's facility was closed several years ago. Tenderloin Health's budget crisis forced closure of its Community Center and its three bathrooms at 187 Golden Gate Ave. in the summer of 2009, putting more strain on the Hospitality House facility.

George Salet Plumbing has handled Hospitality House's calls for at least five years. "We see a lot of drug paraphernalia down the toilet. People are pretty rough. Sometimes they just rip it apart."

Replacing a toilet costs \$700 to \$800, he said.

But if people are respectful of the Rescue Mission toilet, he added, "it's probably going to be okay. Otherwise, it's a crap shoot."

Salet estimates plumbing repairs will average \$300 to \$500 a week, given the location and who will be using it. But because there is a toilet tender, he said, "maybe that's high. But it will be at least once or twice a month they'll need a plumber."

The CBD's pilot is budgeted for \$1,299.80 a month. The toilet tender will get \$1,174.80 and record the sex of the user and the time occupied. Among the nine supply items is a thoughtful \$5 a month for air freshener. But there's nothing for plumbing or contingencies.

"The monitor will encourage people to treat the toilet with respect," Ladine said. ■

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## Does the neighborhood need this bathroom?

Asked along the 100 block of Turk Street



**Matt T., San Francisco**

Absolutely. Homeless people are drawn to this neighborhood, and they need a place to go to the bathroom. It's amazing how many people come here from other neighborhoods to hang out and drink, and there's just nowhere for them to go. We used to have 39 Fell (a homeless drop-in center), but when that closed, there's nowhere other than Glide and St. Anthony's. It's a quality-of-life thing.



**Teresita Williams, San Francisco**

Yes, if everyone can use it. If people can't find a bathroom, they use the street. It's definitely worth the money (it will cost to operate). It takes more money to hire an employee to clean up the street than it would to keep a public bathroom open.



**Bill S., San Francisco**

Yes. I see people urinating on the streets. They go into the local bar and don't even ask to go to the restroom — just go right in and use it. I think this bathroom is a good idea.



**Christine T., Oakland**

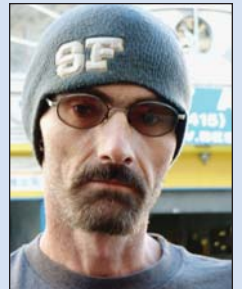
I don't think it's a good idea, because people will go in there and use drugs. That's what I used to do when I used drugs. If they have to go, they have shelters where they let you use the bathroom.

There are bathrooms everywhere — seriously! I think the bathroom (at Mission Rescue) is going to be misused. They could be using that money on something else.



**Christy G., San Francisco**

The neighborhood definitely needs this bathroom, because there are a lot of people who live on the sidewalks. I've been in that situation before — you're sick, you just have to go to the bathroom, and so you go (on the street). It's a bad feeling when you need to go to the bathroom and there's nowhere to go. And it can't be good for other people to be around urine and feces, especially a lot of people around here with compromised immune systems.



**Chris W., San Francisco**

Even if you're a customer at a restaurant they say you can't use the restroom. They'll say it's out of order — especially in the poorer neighborhoods. This neighborhood definitely needs more bathrooms.



**Tim, San Francisco**

People go to the bathroom on the street because of the lack of sanitary public restrooms. The few there are you don't even want to go into. When every store owner you ask says "No," you just gotta go where you gotta go. This is the first town I've ever been in where this is a problem. In other places, when you ask, they just let you go. I've walked down the street and seen people waving to me with their junk in their hands as they use the street for a restroom. I don't get angry; I understand — there's no where else to go.