

REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC SAFETY AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Voting Members:

Carol Fukunaga, Chair; Kymberly Marcos Pine, Vice-Chair
Ikaika Anderson, Stanley Chang, Breene Harimoto

Committee Meeting Held
January 14, 2014

Honorable Ernest Y. Martin
Chair, City Council
City and County of Honolulu

Mr. Chair:

Your Committee on Public Safety and Economic Development to which was referred Resolution 13-293 entitled:

“RESOLUTION REQUESTING THE CITY ADMINISTRATION TO IDENTIFY LOCATIONS IN THE DOWNTOWN/CHINATOWN AREAS AS POTENTIAL SITES FOR THE INSTALLATION OF PUBLIC RESTROOMS, AND TO MAKE RECOMMENDATIONS REGARDING SOLUTIONS TO MEET THE URGENT NEED FOR PUBLIC RESTROOMS”

reports as follows:

The purpose of this Resolution is to request the City Administration to identify locations in the Downtown/Chinatown areas as potential sites for provision of public restrooms and to make recommendations regarding solutions to meet the need for public restrooms in the Downtown/Chinatown areas.

The Director/Chief Engineer of the Department of Facility Maintenance (DFM) and a representative from Honolulu Police Department's District 1 offered comments. Catholic Charities Hawaii and Chinatown Business & Community Association supported the resolution. Four individuals provided comments and one individual testified in favor of the resolution. Your Committee also received written testimony in support of the resolution from eight individuals.

CITY COUNCIL
CITY AND COUNTY OF HONOLULU
HONOLULU, HAWAII

ADOPTED ON **JAN 29 2014**

COMMITTEE REPORT NO. **1**

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Catholic Charities Hawaii (CCH) submitted written testimony supporting the resolution and attesting to the long-standing need for public restrooms:

The Downtown/Chinatown area is rich in historical significance as well as relevance to today's business, government, and non-profit sectors. It is the gathering place for diverse communities including the most vulnerable, whom we endeavor to serve. This area needs continued attention and commitment from all stakeholders to revitalize and improve it. The lack of public bathrooms in the area is an ongoing problem and we are concerned about the health and safety of all people who frequent or visit the area and are affected.

In his testimony, the DFM Director raised concerns over the City's capability to provide and maintain public restrooms. Acknowledging the lack of public restrooms as a source of irritation for Downtown/Chinatown residents and visitors, he explained that a key factor is finding the right location. He also emphasized the need to work with owners of properties abutting public restrooms; and for the restrooms to be effective, the facilities should be in operation 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year.

The costs of keeping public restrooms open on a 24/7 basis was a major concern for the City administration because of high costs associated with replenishing supplies and providing daily cleaning. With respect to acts of vandalism that have occurred in City park restrooms or on other City property, he also noted concerns over the impact of repair and maintenance costs of constantly-vandalized restrooms on his department's operating budget. He pointed out that the only public restroom in Chinatown — which is located at the Honolulu Police Department's substation in the Dan Liu Building — is constantly vandalized in spite of its location in a law enforcement setting.

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A representative from the Honolulu Police Department explained that while the restroom at the Chinatown substation is open 24 hours a day, seven days a week, the restroom is often out-of-order due to maintenance problems, including clogged toilets. While some of the problems can be repaired by the department's cleaning crew, larger jobs must be handled by the Department of Facility Maintenance.

Your Committee received strong support testimony from the Chinatown Business & Community Association (CBCA), indicating that there was more than enough energy to tackle this long overdue "crying need in the community." CBCA previously conducted a 90-day pilot project involving portable toilets in Chinatown, and urged the City to be more creative in developing the means of defraying the costs, maintenance and prevention of vandalism of public restrooms in Chinatown.

Other Chinatown business owners and residents submitted written testimony in favor of the resolution, noting the negative effects resulting from the lack of public restrooms in the area. One individual testifying in support of the resolution reported on the easy availability/accessibility of public restrooms in many European cities.

The DFM Director also raised concerns that the timeframe to submit recommendations to the Council by January 30th is too short because it includes references to the homeless solutions plan. However, your Chair clarified that the purpose of the resolution is to identify what is needed to solve the problem of inadequate public restroom facilities in Chinatown, and to incorporate recommendations into the budgetary planning process within the State Legislature and City Council for the upcoming fiscal year. As such, the January 30 deadline for recommendations is intended to solicit community feedback on the most desirable alternatives before funding and implementation decisions are made.

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As part of the fact-finding and data-gathering conducted by your Committee, your Chair organized a walk-through of potential sites in the Downtown/Chinatown area on January 21st with representatives of the City Managing Director's office, the Departments of Facility Maintenance and Parks and Recreation, and with Chinatown community leaders and property owners.

The walk-through visited potential sites for a stand-alone facility on Kekaulike Mall (next to Lung Doo Benevolent Society), at the Maunakea Street parking lot, and on the Sun Yat Sen Mall, next to the Chinese Cultural Plaza between Beretania and Kukui Streets (adjacent to Nuuanu Stream). Participants noted the presence of a Department of Facility Maintenance 'clean team' facility at the mauka-ewa corner of River/Kukui Streets intersection, which could serve as a central base of operations to service stand-alone restroom facilities. Participants also reviewed materials identifying recent developments in stand-alone restroom facilities manufactured by *Portland Loo* and by *EUROmodul* as they examined various locations.

Other Downtown/Chinatown sites were identified as potential public-private partnership locations in which existing restroom facilities could be incentivized (for private owners/businesses) through City grants or property tax enhancements, or through combinations of services/facilities if they were city-owned sites. These included locations at the Dan Liu Building (HPD's Chinatown Substation, located at the corner of Hotel/Maunakea Streets), Hawaii Heritage Center (1040 Smith Street), Maunakea Marketplace (1120 Maunakea Street), City-owned parking facilities in Chinatown, or other privately-owned locations such as the former Macy's site on Fort Street Mall (1032 Fort Street Mall) and the Chinese Cultural Center (100 N. Beretania Street).

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Honolulu is not the only metropolitan city that has dealt with public restroom devices that must withstand potential vandalism, use for illegal purposes, or use as shower/restroom facilities by homeless individuals. Manufacturers of the *Portland Loo* and *EUROmodul* products have noted that a thorough evaluation should be conducted of the cost-benefits of self-cleaning facilities, as compared with those that are vandal-resistant but rely on traditional maintenance services for long-term effectiveness. The *Portland Loo* stand-alone product is designed to be durable, with a graffiti-resistant coating and louvers on the bottom for ventilation and to determine how many individuals are inside the facility. It is in use in Portland (Oregon), in Victoria (Canada), and in several California cities. The manufacturer of *EUROmodul* systems is reputed to be the leading street furniture, advertising equipment and containers manufacturer in Southeast Europe. It has a full range of stand-alone and vandal-resistant restroom products in use throughout European cities of, both with and without self-cleaning features. Your Committee encourages City agencies to fully evaluate both stand-alone and public-private initiatives to address the lack of public restrooms in Chinatown, particularly in light of the projected increase of Asia-Pacific visitors to Hawaii in 2014.

Hawaii Tourism Authority (HTA) has noted that the number of air seats from China is expected to increase from 42,903 (2013) to 120,616 seats in 2014 with the addition of Air China's inaugural service this month — an explosive gain of 181%. HTA expects the additional flights to help it meet its visitor targets of \$441.7 million in Chinese visitor spending and 182,078 arrivals, which could greatly benefit Downtown/Chinatown businesses and entertainment venues. It is therefore incumbent upon the City Administration and the Council to clean up Downtown/Chinatown so that residents and visitors can enjoy this unique part of Honolulu's cultural heritage.

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The provision of the public restrooms is a public health, safety, and well-being issue, and absolutely essential in keeping Honolulu sidewalks and other passageways clean and safe. Your Committee concurs with the statement made by CCH that:

"Together, we would like to work with the community to acknowledge the dignity of our brothers and sisters who suffer in homelessness and endure many indignities. Public restrooms would elevate the basic human dignity of life in such circumstances."

While the lack of public restrooms may disproportionately hurt the homeless, your Committee finds that all who reside, work, or visit the Downtown/Chinatown area are adversely affected by the lack of public restrooms, thus diminishing their enjoyment of the district's unique cultural, historic and arts/entertainment attractions.

Your Committee on Public Safety and Economic Development is in accord with the intent and purpose of Resolution 13-293 and recommends its adoption. (Ayes: Fukunaga, Anderson, Harimoto – 3; Noes: None; Excused: Chang, Pine – 2.)

Respectfully submitted,



Committee Chair

At the 1/29/14 Council meeting, the Resolution was amended and subsequently adopted in the form attached as Resolution 13-293, FD1.

CITY COUNCIL
CITY AND COUNTY OF HONOLULU
HONOLULU, HAWAII

ADOPTED ON JAN 29 2014

COMMITTEE REPORT NO. 1



RESOLUTION

REQUESTING THE CITY ADMINISTRATION TO IDENTIFY LOCATIONS IN THE DOWNTOWN/CHINATOWN AREAS AS POTENTIAL SITES FOR THE INSTALLATION OF PUBLIC RESTROOMS, AND TO MAKE RECOMMENDATIONS REGARDING SOLUTIONS TO MEET THE URGENT NEED FOR PUBLIC RESTROOMS.

WHEREAS, both Downtown/Chinatown Honolulu are special district areas that offer cultural, historic and artistic attractions and are also places where people live, work and visit; and

WHEREAS, the Downtown/Chinatown area, in addition to being the setting for residents, workers and tourists, also has a sizable population of unsheltered homeless persons; and

WHEREAS, homeless persons have relieved themselves on area sidewalks, streets, storefront stoops and other inappropriate public places; and

WHEREAS, in addition to creating serious public health concerns, this shortage of public toilets in the Downtown/Chinatown area prevents tourists and workers from visiting and patronizing area businesses, restaurants and stores, and results in reduced business revenue and a poor reputation for the neighborhood; and

WHEREAS, numerous studies and reports have documented the need for more public restrooms, the resulting impact upon the Downtown/Chinatown area, and made the following recommendations:

- "Rediscovering Chinatown Honolulu" (November 2006), prepared for the City, concluded that: 1) The current lack of public restrooms contributes to the problem of urine and defecation on the streets and alleyways; 2) To address cleanliness in Chinatown, one must resolve some of the basic issues at the core of the problem: homelessness and a lack of public restrooms; 3) There are no public restrooms in Chinatown. The nearest public restroom is in A'ala Park; and 4) Families with children or the elderly need access to restrooms. Without them, their visits have to be short. In order to lengthen visit times and provide convenience for Chinatown's customers, it is imperative that public restrooms be provided;
- The economic impacts analysis prepared for the City, entitled "Chinatown Riverwalk Revitalization and Downtown Connectivity Study" (June 2012), observed that: 1) The concentration of homeless and street people who



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do not have access to restroom facilities have turned the sidewalks, vacant doorways and any semi-public area into places to urinate and defecate. They, along with the general public who use these sidewalks, parks and plazas, need restroom facilities; and 2) Self-cleaning, fee-based restrooms should be maintained and manned at every block; and

- A City-initiated study on Downtown/Chinatown homelessness, "Neighborhood Planning in the Context of Homelessness" (September 2012), underscored earlier reports by stating: 1) Business owners have been overwhelmed by the daily cleaning activities required to remove urine and defecation left behind by unsheltered homeless residents. Unsanitary sidewalk conditions and loitering issues negatively affect street safety and public health. Merchants and residents noted the necessity of providing more public restrooms; and 2) Public toilets that are regularly cleaned [can be] paid through a community benefits district. Offering public toilets in Chinatown does make sense, but would be better served if it were managed through an existing non-profit or commercial establishment;

and

WHEREAS, the Council finds that the Downtown/Chinatown area is a cornerstone of Honolulu's economic vitality, and can contribute substantially to the arts, culture/entertainment and retail opportunities for visitors from Asia-Pacific countries; and public restrooms are urgently needed to address public health concerns, to improve the quality of the visitor experience for residents, workers and visitors, and to improve the economic health of this region; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED by the Council of the City and County of Honolulu that the City Administration is requested to identify locations in the Downtown/Chinatown areas as potential sites for provision of public restrooms through public, private or contracted non-profit service providers; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the City Administration provide recommendations for stand-alone and public-private restroom facilities to the Council regarding solutions involving public restrooms in the Downtown/Chinatown area by February 28, 2014, which could also be part of a homeless solutions action plan for the Downtown/Chinatown region; and

