



Rashi Kesarwani
Councilmember, District 1

CONSENT CALENDAR
March 12, 2024

TO: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council

FROM: Councilmember Rashi Kesarwani (Author), Councilmember Wengraf (Co-Sponsor), Councilmember Taplin (Co-Sponsor), Councilmember Wengraf (Co-Sponsor), Councilmember Humbert (Co-Sponsor),

SUBJECT: Budget Referral: Publicly Accessible Permanent Bathroom at James Kenney Park

RECOMMENDATION

Refer \$160,000 to the June FY 2024-25 budget process to renovate an existing bathroom at the James Kenney Community Center to make it ADA compliant and permanently accessible to members of the general public who visit the park.

CURRENT SITUATION AND ITS EFFECTS

The Portable Toilet Available to Park Users Is Poorly Maintained and Recently Burned Down. The portable toilet attracted hazardous waste, including used syringes, soiled materials and human waste in and around the facility. Additionally, despite the city's contract with the portable toilet company for daily cleaning,¹ the company has a record of missing service days and poor maintenance. According to the Director of the Parks and Recreation Department Scott Ferris, there have been at least five fires associated with the portable toilet at this location in the last 12 years; the last incident occurred on January 30, 2024 when it was burned to the ground.

James Kenney Park is a High-Use Park Without a Permanent ADA-Accessible Bathroom. Newly renovated in 2020, James Kenney Park is the sole recreational area in northwest Berkeley offering picnic areas; both 2-5 and 5-12 year old play areas; sports fields; tennis, pickleball and basketball courts, and a community center.

¹ The City contracts with United Site Services to maintain its many portable toilets in the parks. The City entered this contract in Spring 2014.

The community center has available bathrooms inside the building, accessible when the building is open from 12 to 8 p.m. Mondays through Fridays. Another bathroom exists with an exterior entrance behind a locked gate that is not publicly available. Despite the park's popularity, it has no publicly available restroom that remains open during the park's open hours, 6 a.m. to 10 p.m. daily. A new permanent restroom facility has recently been installed at Strawberry Creek Park and soon other parks such as Cesar Chavez Park, Harrison Skate Park, Ohlone Park and Tom Bates Sports Field will see new or renovated restrooms thanks to our Measure T1 infrastructure bond. Unfortunately, there were insufficient funds to allow for the installation of a permanent publicly available restroom at James Kenney Park via Measure T1.

For families with children visiting the park during Recreation Center off-hours, the only available sanitation facility is a portable toilet. The current portable toilet is located at the southeast corner of the park alongside the sports field. The City's Customer Service Team, the Parks Department and the District 1 Council office have all received numerous complaints about its poor condition.

Making Necessary Upgrades to the Existing Permanent Restroom at the James Kenney Recreation Center is Cost Effective. Installation of a new permanent ADA compliant bathroom costs roughly \$450,000.² If, however, the exterior fence to the community center courtyard were modified to allow complete access to the already existing restroom with an exterior entrance, the cost of providing a permanent, publicly accessible restroom at James Kenney Park would decrease dramatically. Immediately north of the playgrounds and the pollinator garden lies the James Kenney Community Center which also sits adjacent to the Bay Area Hispano Institute for Advancement, Inc. (BAHIA) School Age Program. Together, the buildings surround an open courtyard (see aerial view below). There is a single permanent bathroom accessible from that courtyard though it is situated behind a locked gate. This facility would need repairs to make it fully ADA compliant: the walkway between the curb on Eighth Street down to the gate would need to be made ADA compliant, the current wheelchair ramp needs to be updated, grab bars would need to be installed, and the sink would need reconfiguration to facilitate ease of access for all users. The estimated cost for these modifications and improvements (\$160,000) is dramatically less than purchasing and installing a brand new restroom facility and would increase the likelihood that park users would have a decent restroom much sooner. Neighbors have been requesting such a facility and improvements to the park for several years.

² This is the price quoted for the permanent restroom recently installed at Strawberry Creek Park.

Aerial view of James Kenney Community Center and BAHIA. Exterior access to permanent bathroom inside the yellow box.



FISCAL IMPACT

The Parks Department has provided a cost estimate of \$160,000 that covers: making the concrete pathway from the curb to the gate ADA compliant, modifying the perimeter gate, and updating the current restroom to make it fully ADA compliant.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

Eventual elimination of a portable toilet that attracts waste, illegal dumping, used syringes and debris would help maintain this open space environment for all users.

CONTACT

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