

## Portland Loo, City of Fort Wayne leaders discuss importance of new public restroom investment

By Meg Roessler

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FORT WAYNE, Ind. (WPTA) - On Tuesday, the Fort Wayne City Council approved the purchase of a downtown public restroom, called a "Portland Loo".

The total cost of the purchase and installation of the unit is not to exceed \$280,000, per the ordinance.

The Portland Loo includes standard facilities, blue lighting, and graffiti-proof, steel walls.

The approval comes as a quote for the Portland Loo was soon set to expire.

A statement from Fort Wayne Mayor Sharon Tucker's Office reads in part:

"We understand that cost is an important factor when considering public infrastructure projects, and we're encouraged to see our office work together with the Community Development Division and City Council to approve the purchase of one Portland Loo unit. Investing in our downtown is an investment in our local economy.

Providing well-maintained public amenities is a key part of making our downtown a destination where families and visitors feel comfortable spending time."

Kelly Lundberg with the City of Fort Wayne's Office of Housing and Neighborhood Services says a lot of research went into this decision.

"We want to make sure that whatever we install is going to make people feel comfortable to use it and feel safe and that it's going to be sanitary," said Lundberg.

She says she and other city leaders wanted to find a safe and accessible option for a downtown bathroom.

"The Portland loo seems to be by far the most popular option," said Lundberg.

Evan Madden, one of Portland Loo's founders, says the Portland Loos are built to last.

"It's just got a lot of strong, durable approach that's easy to clean," Madden.

Unlike a porta-potty, it connects to plumbing so users can flush.

"While it may be new to Indiana, the state, it's been very successful and popular elsewhere in a way that it's made a lot of improvements where it's been installed," said Madden.

Lundberg says this push came after concerns from business owners.

"They feel like they're the ones that end up having everyone coming in to use their restroom that aren't necessarily there for business purposes," said Lundberg. "And they felt strongly that they shouldn't be the ones that have to provide that service, and we agree."

But these bathrooms aren't cheap.

"I feel strongly that it's well worth the investment," says Lundberg.

An investment that could cost up to \$280,000 as the facility itself costs around \$155,000, on top of installation fees.

Lundberg says it's cheaper than building a fully enclosed restroom like those at Promenade Park. She says she knows there are people in the community who are against these restrooms.

"The people who don't think it's worth it, have not been downtown and really needed to use a restroom," Lundberg says.

Fort Wayne's first Portland Loo is set to be accessible by fall.