

Get to know Portland's famous toilet

Mar 20, 2025

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You may have seen one around town: a sleek stainless steel, cylindrical frame, open metal grating and navy blue "all-user" signage. But you also may have used this Portland-created restroom elsewhere, maybe even halfway around the world.

The big picture: Designed by the city of Portland, the Portland Loo is gaining traction far beyond Stumptown, offering dozens of other metropolitan areas a durable, low maintenance solution for public bathroom needs.

Why it matters: Everyone's got to go!

Accessible public restrooms are a persistent challenge for cities, as they're often scarce, expensive to maintain or misused for criminal activity.

Context: Since launching in 2008 as a way to discourage vandalism and drug use, the Portland Loo has been installed in more than 250 locations and counting, including Philadelphia, Vancouver, B.C. and even New Zealand.

What's inside: A toilet, of course, plus a hand washing station, mobility grab bars, a garbage can, a sharps disposal and blue lighting meant to discourage drug use, according to its website.

The horizontal metal slats at the top and bottom of the structure provide ventilation and visibility — in case law enforcement or emergency services are called — and an ADA-friendly door makes it wheelchair-accessible.

Interchangeable parts and add-on amenities (like baby changing tables and toilet covers) make for easy upkeep.

Plus: It's connected directly to a city's municipal water supply and sewage systems. Some even use solar power.

By the numbers: At \$100,000 per single unit, it's a steal considering the loo can last up to 100 years.