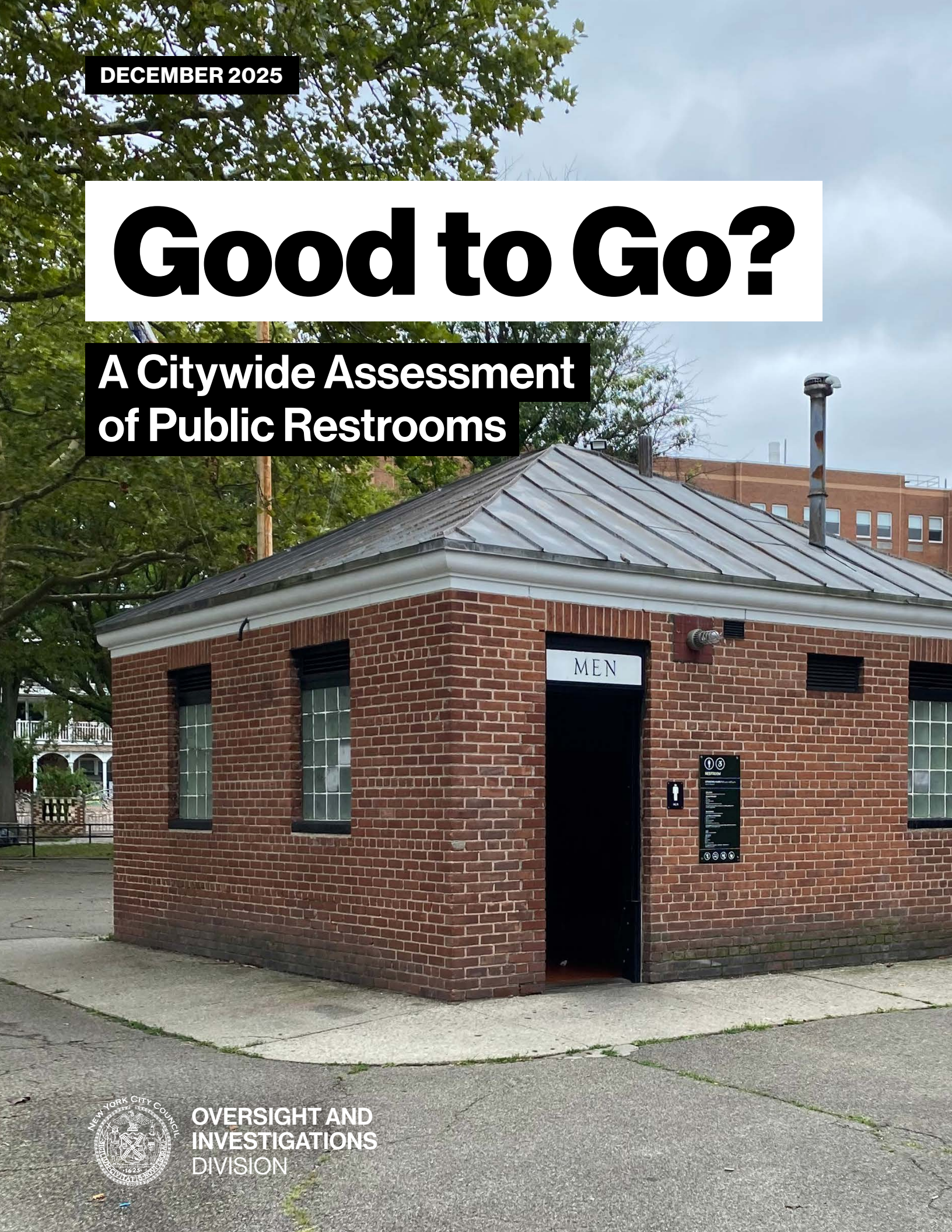


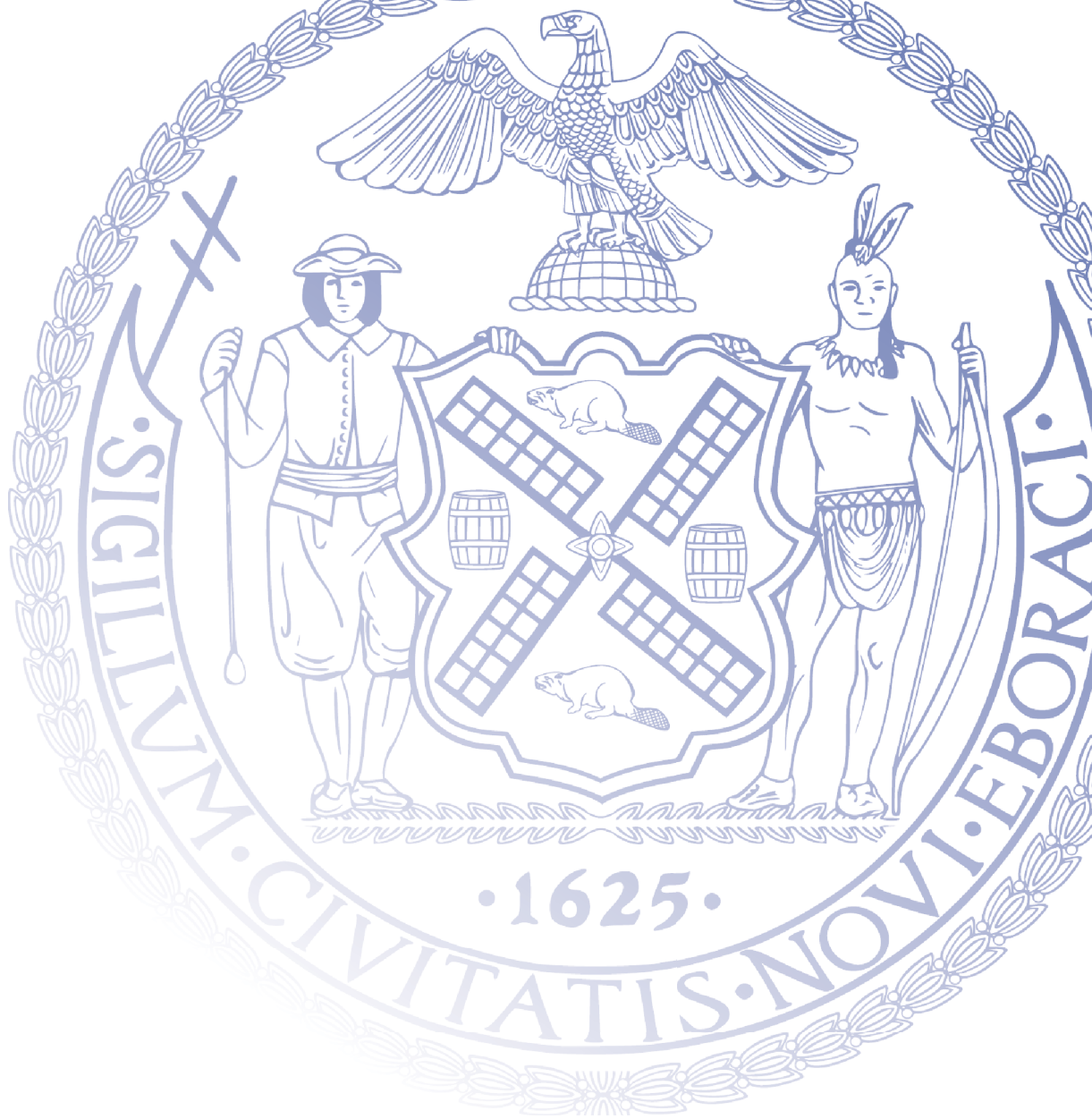
DECEMBER 2025

Good to Go?

A Citywide Assessment of Public Restrooms



OVERSIGHT AND
INVESTIGATIONS
DIVISION



ABOUT THE NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL OVERSIGHT AND INVESTIGATIONS DIVISION

The Oversight and Investigation Division (OID) is an interdisciplinary team of investigators, policy and data analysts, and attorneys dedicated to strengthening the City Council's oversight and legislative work. Through comprehensive, fact-based investigations, OID brings clarity to matters of public significance by identifying issues, presenting findings, and improving transparency in City government.

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Executive Summary

Public restrooms are essential amenities that provide access to basic sanitation, enhance the usability and comfort of public spaces, and promote public health.¹ In New York City, where millions of residents and visitors rely on and enjoy public spaces every day, the availability of clean, functional public restrooms plays a critical role in maintaining both health and dignity, particularly for people who are unhoused, elderly, disabled, or caring for children. Moreover, for the millions of visitors who come to NYC each year, access to well-functioning public restrooms is essential to maintaining the city's reputation as a world-renowned destination.

In 2024, the New York City Council's Oversight and Investigation Division (OID) released *Nature's Call: An Assessment of NYC Park Restrooms*,² which summarized OID's investigation and findings from inspections of restrooms in each Council District that consistently received low Parks Inspection Program (PIP) ratings or constituent complaints.³ The report highlighted deficiencies in cleanliness, accessibility, and amenities faced by visitors to NYC Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR or the Parks Department) public restrooms. Building on that work, this investigation expands the scope to assess public restrooms across the city, including those in parks, Privately Owned Public Spaces (POPS), and libraries.

To capture a more complete picture of restroom availability and conditions, OID worked with the Legislative Division's Data Team to select a representative, randomized sample of 172 public restroom sites across all five boroughs, ensuring that at least one site was located within each Council District. OID surveyed each individual restroom at the sites and found that quality varied drastically. Many restrooms were unexpectedly closed, unclean, lacked basic amenities such as soap, toilet paper, and garbage cans, had broken or non-functioning locks, or were not equipped for diaper changing or menstrual needs.

¹ See, e.g., G.A. Res. 64/292, The Human Right to Water and Sanitation (Jul. 28, 2010).

² See. N.Y.C. COUNCIL OVERSIGHT & INVESTIGATIONS DIV (OID), NATURE'S CALL: AN ASSESSMENT OF NYC PARK RESTROOMS (2024) (hereinafter NATURE'S CALL).

³ PIP is an audit conducted by the Department of Parks and Recreation's Operations and Management Planning (OMP) division that covers all New York City Parks, including restrooms. *Parks Inspection Program*, N.Y.C. DEP'T OF PARKS & REC., <https://www.nycgovparks.org/park-features/parks-inspection-program> (last visited Nov. 11, 2025).

FINDINGS

1. More than one in ten surveyed restrooms (36 of 337), all located in parks, were closed during posted operating hours. Nearly one in nine park restrooms (36 of 304) were closed during posted operating hours.
2. More than two in five surveyed restrooms (129 of 301) were missing at least one basic necessity (soap, toilet paper, a garbage can, or a method to dry your hands).
3. More than one in seven restroom stalls (81 of 555) lacked functioning locks.
4. More than a quarter of open restrooms (85 of 301) did not have a diaper changing table, and of those that did, more than one in five (46 of 216) had significant usability issues or were dirty.
5. Library restrooms were generally clean; only two library restrooms exhibited any cleanliness issues.
6. Public restrooms were not well-equipped for menstrual needs: About four in five stalls in women's restrooms did not have menstrual product disposal bins, and just four sites had menstrual product dispensers.
7. The two POPS surveyed did not include their restrooms on their Entrance or Information Plaques.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The Mayor's Office of Operations should ensure that the Public Restrooms Dataset and map accurately reflect open and available restrooms.⁴
2. Garbage cans should be provided in all restrooms to decrease the prevalence and amount of litter.
3. DPR should reevaluate their process for addressing maintenance issues, such as broken or missing locks on stalls, and should find ways to encourage the public to report these issues to 311.
4. DPR should ensure equitable distribution and maintenance of diaper changing tables across all park restrooms, regardless of gender.
5. DPR should provide a menstrual product disposal bin in each restroom stall and evaluate the cost and feasibility of installing menstrual product dispensers in every restroom, regardless of gender.
6. Ensure that if a POPS includes a restroom, the POPS Information Plaque indicates the availability, location, and operating hours of the restroom.

⁴Public Restrooms, N.Y.C. OPENDATA https://data.cityofnewyork.us/City-Government/Public-Restrooms/i7jb-7jku/about_data (last accessed Nov. 11, 2025) (dataset containing information on public restrooms in the city, that includes data such as name, location, and operator) (hereinafter Public Restrooms Dataset); Public Restrooms (Operational), N.Y.C. OPENDATA <https://data.cityofnewyork.us/City-Government/Public-Restrooms-Operational-vzrx-zg6z> (last accessed Nov. 11, 2025) (map layer based on the Public Restrooms Dataset showing only restrooms where with the status "operational") (hereinafter Operational Public Restrooms Map).

Introduction

Convenient and clean public restrooms are essential to the comfort and livability of a city for both residents and visitors alike. After many of New York City's public restrooms were closed or fell into disrepair in the 1970s,⁵ restoring access to public restrooms became a recurring priority for every mayoral administration from Dinkins to Adams.⁶ Despite these efforts, policy experts,⁷ members of the press,⁸ and New Yorkers⁹ continue to highlight the lack of access to restrooms. In June 2024, Mayor Adams launched the “Ur In Luck” initiative, introducing a Google Maps layer that displays the locations of public restrooms and a plan for the Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR or Parks Department) to renovate 36 restrooms and build 46 new ones within five years.¹⁰ Then, in June 2024, the New York City Council passed a local law requiring the establishment of at least 2,120 total public restrooms in the city by 2035.¹¹

In 2024, the New York City Council's Oversight and Investigation Division (OID) released *Nature's Call: An Assessment of NYC Park Restrooms*, which presented the findings of OID's inspection of park restrooms in every Council District.¹² The restrooms chosen for inspection consistently received low Parks Inspection Program (PIP) ratings or were the subject of constituent complaints. The report highlighted deficiencies in cleanliness, accessibility, and amenities faced by visitors to Parks Department public restrooms.¹³

⁵ See Peter C. Baldwin, *Pub. Privacy: Restrooms in American Cities, 1869-1932*, 48 J. OF SOC. HIST. 264, 281 (2014) <http://www.jstor.org/stable/43306014>.

⁶ See, e.g., Ceila W. Dugger, *Yes, N.Y.C. Plans Sidewalk Toilets*, N.Y. TIMES (Jun. 27, 1991) <https://www.nytimes.com/1991/06/27/nyregion/yes-new-york-city-plans-sidewalk-toilets.html> (discussing Mayor Dinkins approval of self-clean toilet kiosks); see also Clyde Haberman, *N.Y.C.; City Hall Can't Answer Nature's Call*, N.Y. TIMES (Feb. 11, 2000) <https://www.nytimes.com/2000/02/11/nyregion/nyc-city-hall-can-t-answer-nature-s-call.html> (discussing Mayor Giuliani's plan to expand toilet access falls through in 1997); Michael Gartland, *Bloomberg Falls Short on Public Restrooms*, N.Y. POST (Oct. 27, 2013 at 3:49 a.m. ET) <https://nypost.com/2013/10/27/bloomberg-falls-short-on-public-restrooms/> (discussing lack of progress for Mayor Bloomberg's plan to install 20 new public restrooms); Yoav Gonen, *Mayor Says Stop Flushing Money Down Drain For Park Bathrooms*, THE CITY (Apr. 5, 2019 at 4:00 a.m.) <https://www.thecity.nyc/2019/04/05/mayor-says-stop-flushing-money-down-drain-for-park-bathrooms/?ref=nygroove.nyc> (discussing Mayor de Blasio's reaction to increasing costs of installing public restrooms); N.Y.C. Mayor Eric Adams Announces Expansion To Restrooms In Public Parks, ABC 7 (Jun. 3, 2024) <https://abc7ny.com/post/nyc-mayor-adams-announces-82-new-public-restrooms-bathrooms/14906687/>.

⁷ See e.g., Julie Chou et al., *The Need For Public Bathrooms In N.Y.C.*, URB. DESIGN F. (Jul. 24, 2020) <https://urbandesignforum.org/the-need-for-public-bathrooms-in-new-york-city/>.

⁸ See e.g., Valeria Ricciulli, *N.Y. Needs A Place To Pee In Public So Bad*, CURBED (Dec. 3, 2020) <https://www.curbed.com/2020/12/nyc-public-bathrooms-locations-problem.html>; see also Reuven Blau, *N.Y.C.'s Promised Public Bathrooms Still doing the Waiting Dance*, THE CITY (Mar. 29, 2022 at 7:42 p.m.) <https://www.thecity.nyc/2022/03/29/nyc-promised-public-bathrooms-still-waiting/>.

⁹ See, e.g., Theodora Siegel, *Opinion, If N.Y. Is So Great, Why Isn't There Anywhere to Pee?*, N.Y. TIMES (Jan. 15, 2023) <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/01/15/opinion/new-york-public-toilets.html>.

¹⁰ *Mayor Adams Launches "Ur in Luck," New Effort To Make Public Restrooms More Accessible, Equitable*, N.Y.C. OFF. OF THE MAYOR (Jun. 3, 2024) <https://www.nyc.gov/mayors-office/news/2024/06/mayor-adams-launches-ur-luck-new-effort-make-nyc-public-restrooms-more-accessible#/0>.

¹¹ N.Y.C. LOCAL L. No. 58 (2025).

¹² See NATURE'S CALL, *supra* note 2.

¹³ PIP is an audit conducted by the Department of Parks and Recreation's Operations and Management Planning (OMP) division that covers all New York City Parks, including restrooms. See Parks Inspection Program, *supra* note 3.

However, park restrooms operated by DPR are only one part of the city's public restroom network. Parks concessionaires and conservancies, as well as Privately Owned Public Spaces (POPS), libraries, and the MTA also operate public restrooms.¹⁴ This report builds on *Nature's Call* to provide a more complete picture of restroom availability and conditions across New York City and to assess the broader state of the city's public restroom system.

Background

According to NYC OpenData's Public Restrooms dataset (the "Public Restrooms Dataset"), there are 1,063 public restrooms citywide, located in parks, libraries, Privately Owned Public Spaces (POPS), public plazas, and transit facilities.¹⁵ As seen in Figure 1, most are in parks (821) or libraries (216), while the remaining are in POPS (14), public plazas (7), and transit locations (5).¹⁶ Of the seven public plaza restrooms, only two are free of charge.¹⁷

The Public Restrooms Dataset and related Google Maps layer are maintained by the Mayor's Office of Operations.¹⁸ The data is provided by the Parks Department, Department of Transportation (DOT), Department of City Planning (DCP), Mayor's Office of Operations, New York Public Library (NYPL), Brooklyn Public Library (BPL), Queens Public Library (QPL), and the Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA).¹⁹ The dataset is intended to be "regularly updated twice per year, with additional updates provided as needed when restrooms change operational status."²⁰

¹⁴ See Public Restrooms Dataset, *supra* note 4.

¹⁵ *Id.*

¹⁶ *Id.*

¹⁷ *Id.* The remaining five public plaza restrooms cost 25 cents to use. *Id.*

¹⁸ *Id.*

¹⁹ *Id.*

²⁰ *Id.* Prior to an update to the metadata, which occurred on Nov. 5, 2025, the data was "regularly updated on a quarterly basis, with additional updates provided as needed when restrooms change operational status."

FIGURE 1

Public Restrooms by Operator

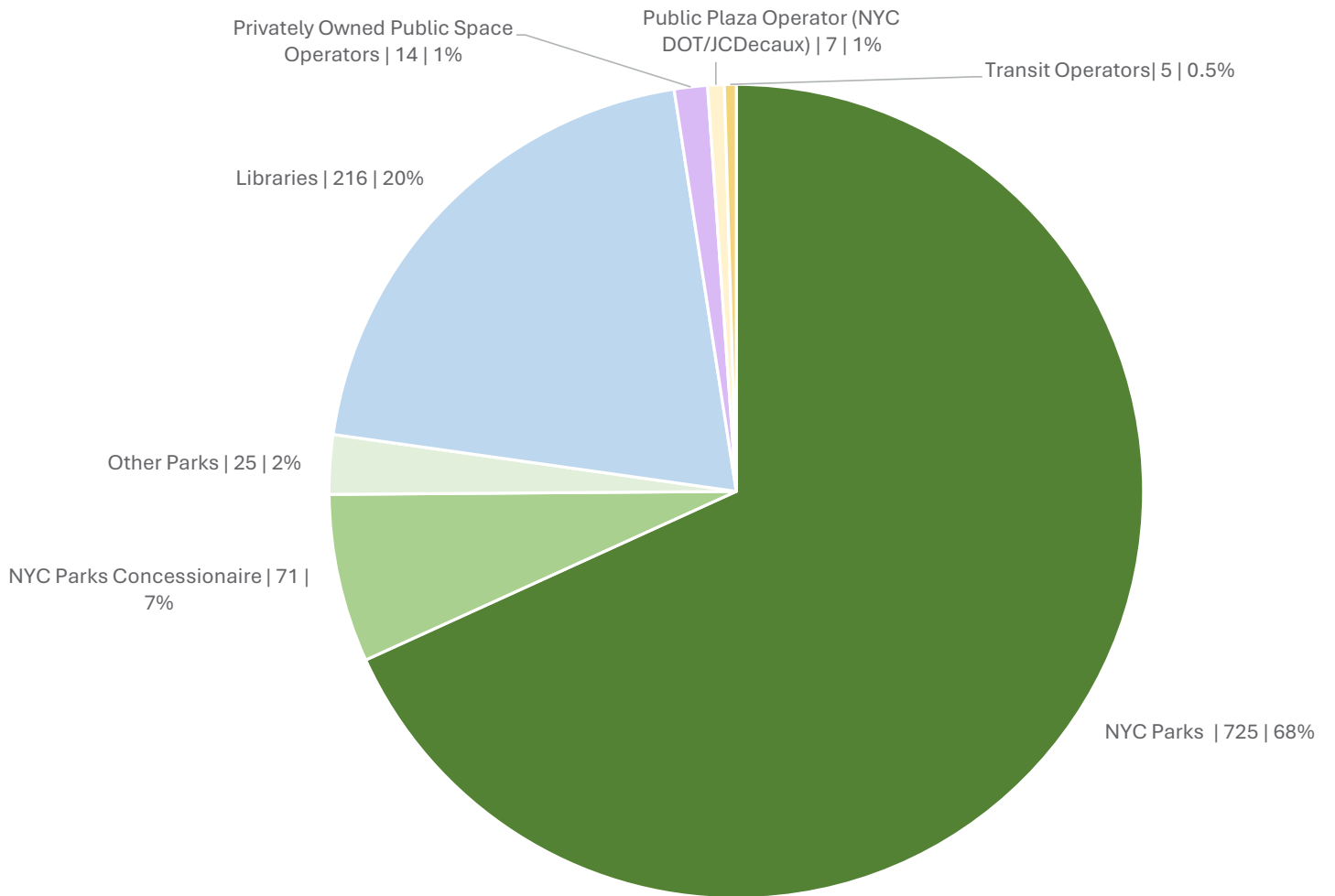




FIGURE 2

Photo of Men's Restroom at Douglaston Golf Course.



FIGURE 3

Photo of Men's Restroom at Alley Springfield Playground.

PARK RESTROOMS

Of the 821 restroom sites in city parks, 725 are operated directly by DPR. Of the remaining park restroom sites, concessionaires operate 71, such as the Douglaston Golf Course restroom seen in Figure 2, and 25 are operated by other groups including conservancies, business improvement districts, not-for-profits, public benefit corporations, and private entities.²¹

According to DPR testimony at City Council Parks and Recreation Committee hearings in 2019 and 2021, park staff perform daily service rounds checking restrooms for toilet paper and other supplies when they open and unlock and close and lock the restroom each day.²² Moreover, depending on the park, staff may be scheduled to clean and resupply the restrooms throughout the bathroom's operating hours.²³ Supervisors conduct monthly audits,²⁴ in addition to the PIP inspections, which are conducted two or three times a year.²⁵

²¹ *Id.*

²² N.Y.C. Council Comm. on Parks and Recreation, Transcript of Hearing Examining the Park's Dep't's Maint. Practices, 38-39 (Sep. 26, 2019) (hereinafter 2019 Park Maintenance Hearing).

²³ *Id.* The daily routes and cleaning schedules are predetermined, using a baseline standard that is then augmented by PIP results, DPR supervisor observations, and feedback from elected officials, community boards, and 311 complaints. N.Y.C. Council Comm. on Parks and Recreation, Transcript of Hearing on The Parks Inspection Program and Increasing Park Res., 51 (Nov. 19, 2021) (hereinafter 2021 PIP & Park Resources Hearing). The number of visits conducted by DPR staff is encompassed in a "service level agreement" for each park. *Id.* at 51-52.

²⁴ 2019 Park Maintenance Hearing, *supra* note 22 at 93.

²⁵ 2021 PIP & Park Resources Hearing, *supra* note 23 at 17.

PUBLIC LIBRARY RESTROOMS

The second largest group of public restroom sites in the city are located in public libraries, with 216 total restroom sites across the city's three public library systems.²⁶ Under the New York City Plumbing Code, libraries must provide restroom facilities to the public at each of their library buildings.²⁷



FIGURE 4

Photo of Inside of the Brooklyn Heights Library. Credit John McCarten/NYC Council Media Unit, 2022, Flickr

POPS RESTROOMS

Fourteen public restroom sites are POPS,²⁸ which are privately owned and operated spaces that are required to be open to the public in exchange for benefits like zoning waivers.²⁹

Some POPS include restrooms per their respective City Planning Commission agreements,³⁰ and all POPS are subject to a general inspection of the entire public space by the City at least once every three years.³¹ As pressure to increase the number of public restrooms in NYC has grown over the past several years, there have been calls for amending NYC's Zoning Resolution to specify restrooms among the list of qualifying or mandated amenities for POPS.³²

²⁶ See Public Restrooms Dataset, *supra* note 4.

²⁷ N.Y.C. PLUMBING CODE § 403.1.

²⁸ See Public Restrooms Dataset, *supra* note 4.

²⁹ N.Y.C. ADMIN. CODE § 25-114(a); *Privately Owned Public Spaces*, N.Y.C. DEP'T OF CITY PLAN., <https://www.nyc.gov/content/planning/pages/our-work/plans/citywide/privately-owned-public-spaces> (last accessed Nov. 5, 2025).

³⁰ See N.Y.C. DEP'T OF CITY PLAN., ANNUAL REPORT ON POPS 58 (Jul. 1, 2025).

³¹ N.Y.C. ADMIN. CODE § 25-114(f)(1).

³² See, e.g., JULIE CHOU ET AL., URB. DESIGN F., CITYWIDE BATHROOM STRATEGY (2024), https://urbandesignforum.org/wp-content/uploads/Citywide-Bathroom-Strategies_Small.pdf; Manhattan Cmty. Bd. 1 Res. Re: Pub. Restroom Text Amend. for Pub. Plazas (Jan. 24, 2023) <https://www.nyc.gov/assets/manhattancb1/downloads/pdf/resolutions/22-01-24.pdf>; Public Restroom Working Group, Manhattan Cmty. Bd. 5 <https://cb5.org/blog/project/public-restroom-working-group/> (last accessed Nov. 5, 2025).

PUBLIC PLAZA RESTROOMS

Seven public restroom sites are public plazas and operated by the DOT and their franchisee, JCDecaux.³³ Some of these locations include Madison Square Park, Corona Plaza, Fordham Plaza, and Grand Army Plaza.³⁴ The randomized sampling method did not result in the selection of any restrooms located in public plazas.

TRANSIT RESTROOMS

Only five restroom sites in transit stations are included in the Public Restrooms Dataset.³⁵ These five listed sites can be accessed without paying a fare.³⁶ Of these, only one is operated by New York City Transit, and the other four are operated by the Long Island Rail Road (one of them jointly with Metro North Railroad).³⁷ As with public plaza restroom sites, the randomized sampling method did not result in the selection of any transit restrooms.

Methodology

HOW WE SELECTED SITES

The City Council Legislative Division's Data Team (Data Team) employed a stratified and random sampling method to select 172 public restroom sites. The process first grouped all operational restroom sites by their location type: library, park, public plaza, transit, or POPS. The citywide proportions for each restroom site type were applied across each of New York City's 51 Council Districts, randomly selecting restroom sites of each type within a district.

The final sample of 172 sites reflects a citywide, near-proportional representation of restroom types.³⁸ With 973 total operational restroom sites, the final sample size of 172 yields a confidence level of 85% with a margin of error of 5%.

³³ *Coordinated Street Furniture*, N.Y.C. DEP'T OF TRANSP., <https://www.nyc.gov/html/dot/html/infrastructure/streeffurniture.shtml> (last visited Nov. 6, 2025).

³⁴ See Public Restrooms Dataset, *supra* note 4.

³⁵ *Id.*

³⁶ *Id.*

³⁷ *Id.*

³⁸ Data Team's initial target was to select a total of 232 restrooms, with the number from every type reflecting its citywide proportion. However, this process was constrained by the actual availability of restroom types in each district. Some districts lacked certain types entirely (example: POPS that include restrooms are almost exclusively located in Manhattan), making it impossible to hit the original target.

SELECTED SITES

The 172 selected sites contained a total of 337 women's, men's, or gender-neutral restrooms, each of which was evaluated separately.

Figure 5 below contains a breakdown of site and restroom types:

FIGURE 5

Restrooms Selected for Inspection

	MEN'S	WOMEN'S	GENDER NEUTRAL	TOTAL INDIVIDUAL RESTROOMS	TOTAL SITES
Library	1	1	28	30	14
Park	144	144	16	304	156
Privately Owned Public Space	1	1	1	3	2
Total	146	146	45	337	172

HOW WE CONDUCTED THE INSPECTIONS

Council staff visited 172 public restroom sites across parks, libraries, and POPS during August and September 2025, visiting a total of 337 individual restrooms.³⁹ Visits occurred on weekdays during listed hours of operation. Each inspection team consisted of two staff members, one comfortable inspecting a men's room and one comfortable inspecting a women's room. At each site, team members entered their respective restroom (and/or gender neutral or family restroom, if applicable), and completed a standardized form designed to assess the overall condition of the restroom. When restrooms or stalls were occupied, investigators waited for a reasonable amount of time (in most cases, 10 to 15 minutes) to conduct the inspection;⁴⁰ facilities that were closed or out of order were noted accordingly. The inspection form, reproduced in the Appendix, includes questions regarding cleanliness, safety, and accessibility, as well as the presence and functionality of fixtures and amenities, such as toilets, sinks, soap dispensers, paper towels, menstrual product disposal bins, and diaper changing stations.⁴¹ When appropriate, investigators photographed observed conditions.

³⁹ Due to a technical issue with survey submission, one men's restroom was reinspected in November 2025, and one women's restroom was reinspected in October 2025.

⁴⁰ In only four cases, investigators reported that they were unable to inspect an individual stall because it was occupied for an extended period. These stalls were excluded completely and did not contribute to missing amenity or fixture counts.

⁴¹ See Appendix.

By the Numbers



Tallies of sites, individual restrooms, and amenities visited and inspected during OID's investigation.

Findings

OID compiled the results of the 172 site inspections and identified the following key findings:

1. More than one in ten surveyed restrooms,⁴² all located in parks, were closed during posted operating hours. Nearly one in nine park restrooms were closed during posted operating hours.

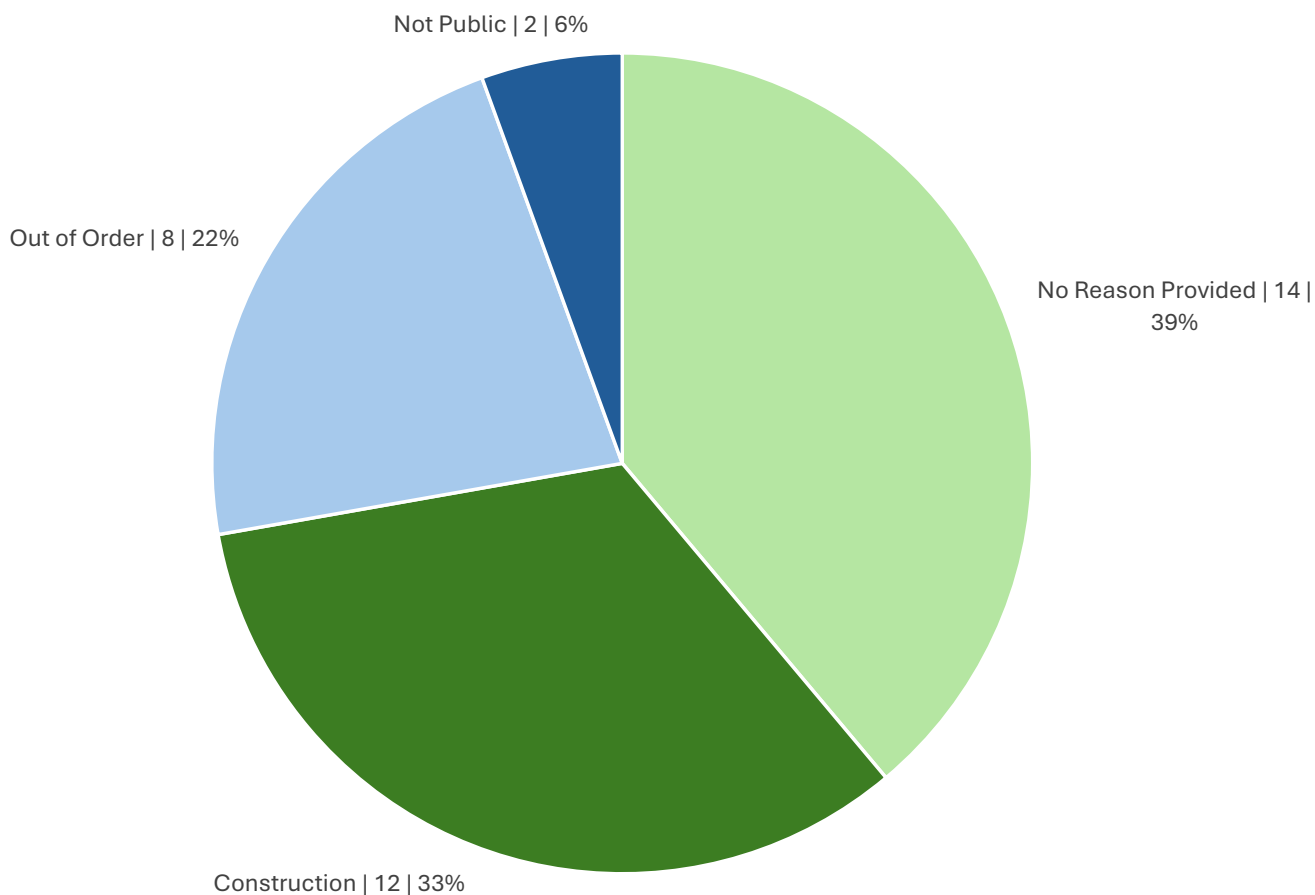
OID visited restrooms during times they were listed as “open” in the Public Restrooms Dataset. 36 out of 337 individual park restrooms were closed during the site’s listed operating hours, 31 of which were operated by the Parks Department and five of which were operated by concessionaires. These closures impacted men’s and women’s restrooms about equally, as usually the whole building or facility was closed.

As Figure 6 (on page 11) shows, a third of closed restrooms (12 out of 36) were unavailable due to construction. Even more (39%, or 14 out of 36) did not have a clear reason they were closed. Additionally, more than 20% of closed restrooms (8 of 36) were unavailable because they were out of order, and two restrooms were marked as not available for public use.

⁴² This number is more than the 9% of restrooms that OID found to be closed in their 2024 survey. The lack of improvement is somewhat surprising because the 2024 sample was specifically chosen for poor inspection performance, while in 2025 restrooms were selected randomly from the pool.

FIGURE 6

Reasons for Restroom Closures



These closures represent a lack of reliability for members of the public: Even if most park restrooms are open, uncertainty around operating hours or closures may lead the public to view park restrooms as a less viable option in general and contribute to the feeling of public restroom scarcity in the city.



FIGURE 7
Photo of Closed DPR Restroom at Alice Kornegay Triangle.

2. More than two in five surveyed restrooms were missing at least one basic necessity.⁴³

Investigators checked restrooms for basic necessities, including soap, toilet paper, functioning hand dryers or stocked paper towel dispensers, and garbage cans.

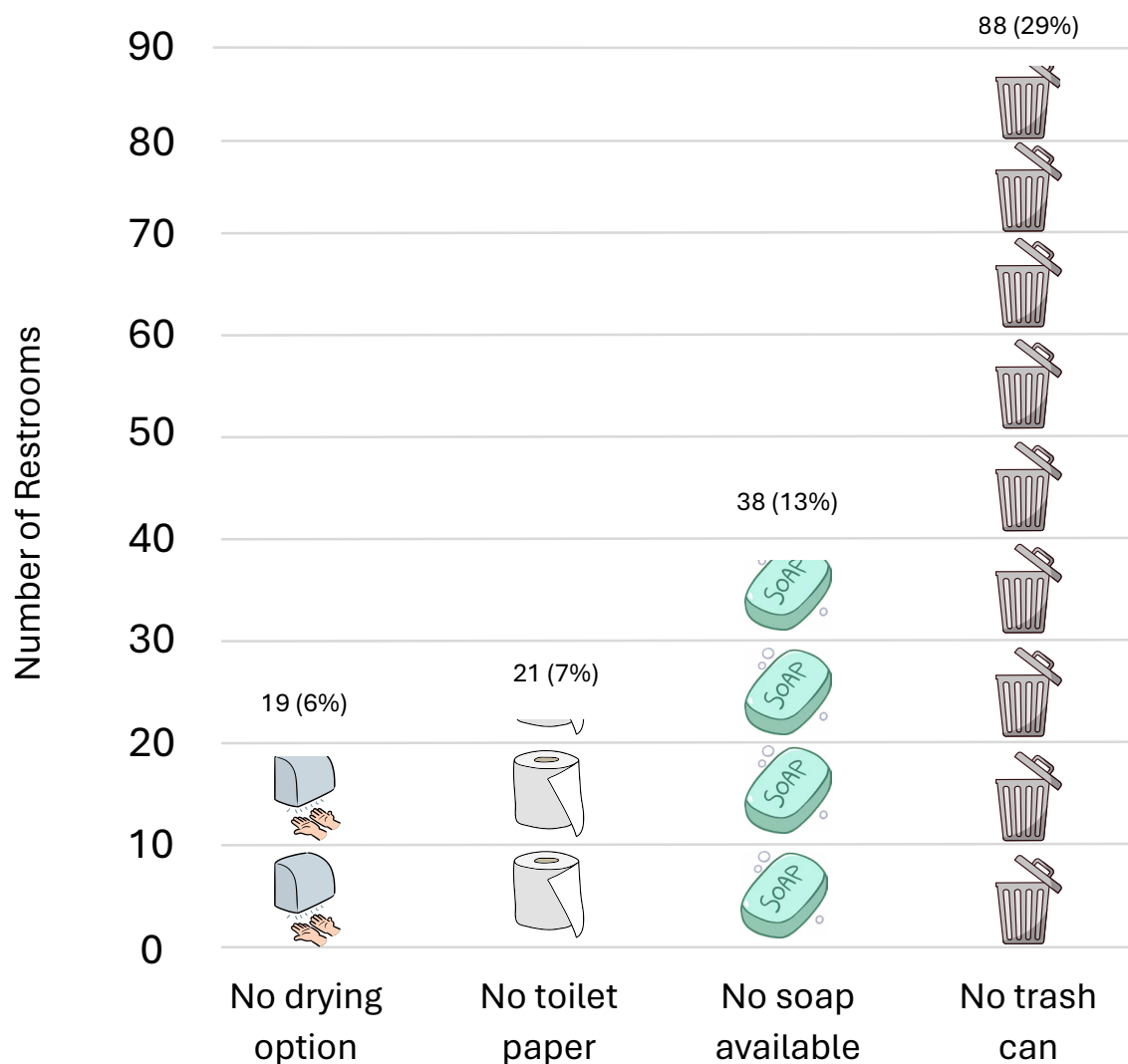
As illustrated in Figure 8 below, some of the more serious issues observed involved a lack of necessities like soap and toilet paper: About 13% of open restrooms (38 of 301) had no soap and 7% of open restrooms (21 of 301) had no toilet paper. Nearly all of the restrooms where gaps in key amenities were observed (127 of 129) were in parks.⁴⁴ About 6% of open restrooms (19 of 301) had no paper towels or functioning hand dryers.

⁴³ Basic necessities included soap, toilet paper, a garbage can, or a method to dry your hands (either paper towels or a functioning hand dryer).

⁴⁴ These 127 park restrooms include 122 operated by DPR, two operated by concessionaires, and three operated by conservancies or BIDs.

FIGURE 8

Missing Restroom Necessities

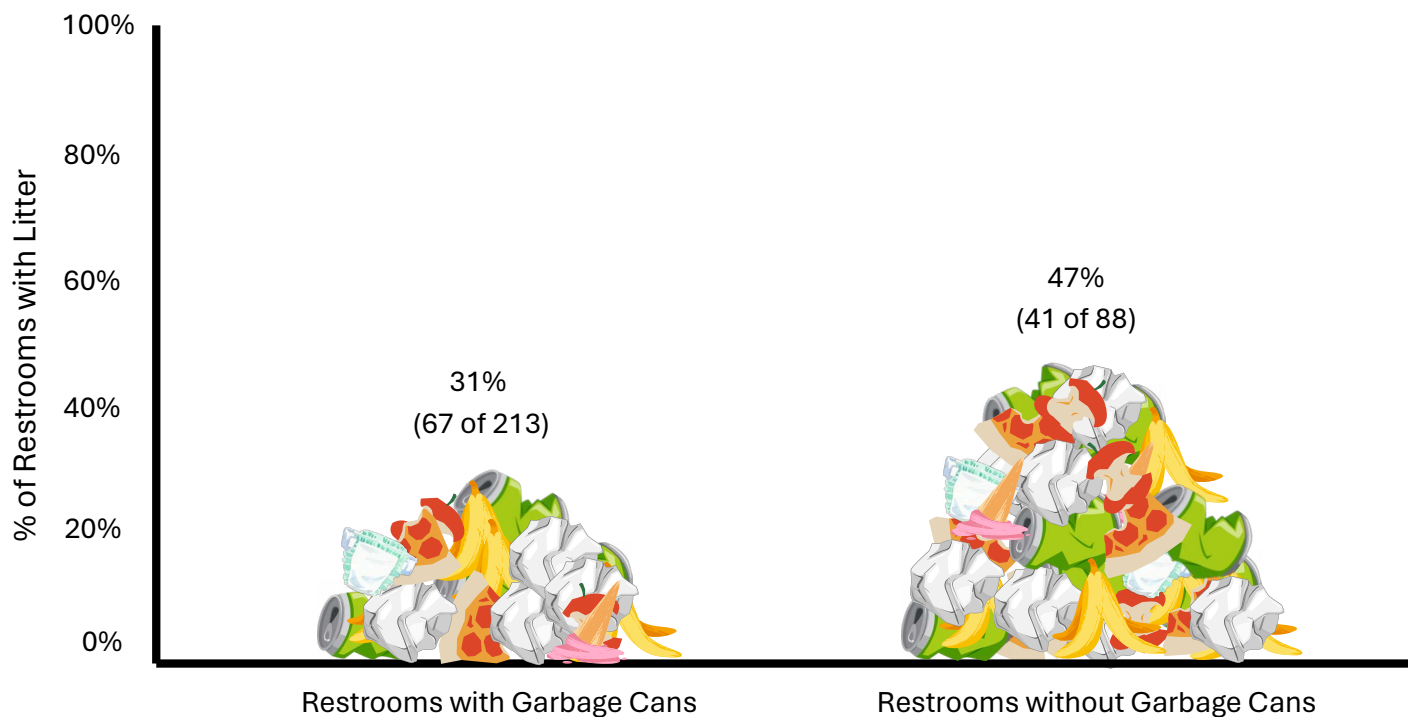


Moreover, more than a quarter of open restrooms (88 of 301) lacked a garbage can in or near the restroom. OID’s inspections showed a correlation between a lack of garbage cans and litter in restrooms. As seen in Figure 9 (on page 14) , investigators observed litter in almost half of restrooms (41 of 88) without a garbage can, compared to about a third of restrooms (67 of 213) where a garbage can was in or near the restroom.⁴⁵

⁴⁵ Nearby is defined here as inside the restroom and either propping open or directly outside the restroom entrance door.

FIGURE 9

Percentage of Restrooms with Litter



3. More than one in seven restroom stalls (81 of 555) lacked functioning locks.⁴⁶

Investigators checked all available stalls for functioning locks and other issues that prevented stalls from locking, such as the missing lock mechanism seen in Figure 10 left. This serious potential safety hazard was found in a relatively large number of stalls: 16% of men's stalls (32 of 196) and 16% of women's stalls (49 of 300).

FIGURE 10

Photo of Missing Lock Mechanism in St. Mary's Park East Men's Restroom

⁴⁶In 2024, investigators found missing locks in 11% of stalls surveyed in the sample of underperforming restrooms. See NATURE'S CALL, *supra* note 2, at 1. The increased rate (15%) of missing or broken locks in this more representative sample is unexpected.

4. More than a quarter of open restrooms did not have a diaper changing table, and of those that did, more than one in five had significant usability issues or were dirty.

Investigators documented whether each restroom at each site had a diaper changing table available and examined if they were usable (e.g. whether they folded out at a seemingly safe angle or were clean enough for use).

The survey found that changing tables were more common in women's rooms (103 of 129) than in men's rooms (86 of 128). OID found that 34 of the 226 surveyed restrooms listed as having changing tables in the Public Restrooms Dataset did not have them upon inspection.⁴⁷



FIGURE 11

Photo of a changing table at Thomas Jefferson Park Portland Loo that opens at an unsafe angle.

Further, while changing tables were more commonly found in women's rooms, tables in men's rooms were more likely to have an issue impacting usability. Structural (e.g. table slanted, such as the table seen in Figure 11 left) or cleanliness issues impacting usability were observed in 34% of changing tables (29 of 86) in men's rooms but only 17% of tables (17 of 103) in women's rooms. This increases the disparity between usable changing tables in men's and women's rooms: 67% of women's restrooms (86 of 129) had a usable table compared to 45% of men's restrooms (57 of 128).

5. Library restrooms were generally clean; only two library restrooms exhibited any cleanliness issues.

The only two cleanliness issues observed in libraries were single instances of graffiti and litter, each occurring in a different restroom. Notably, no libraries had unclean toilets, sinks, floors, or walls. By contrast, at least one cleanliness problem was observed in 139 of 271 non-library restrooms (51%), as Figure 13 shows in more detail on page 16, making non-library restrooms more than seven times as likely to have cleanliness issues.

⁴⁷ See Public Restrooms Dataset, *supra* note 4. Out of the 259 restrooms surveyed that were marked in the dataset as having a changing table, 129 were women's and 130 were men's. 11 of the 129 women's restrooms and 13 of the 130 men's restrooms did not have a changing table when inspected. (11 of 129 for women, 13 of 130 for men).



FIGURE 12

Photo of Restroom in the Greenpoint Library.

FIGURE 13

Cleanliness Issues in Restrooms

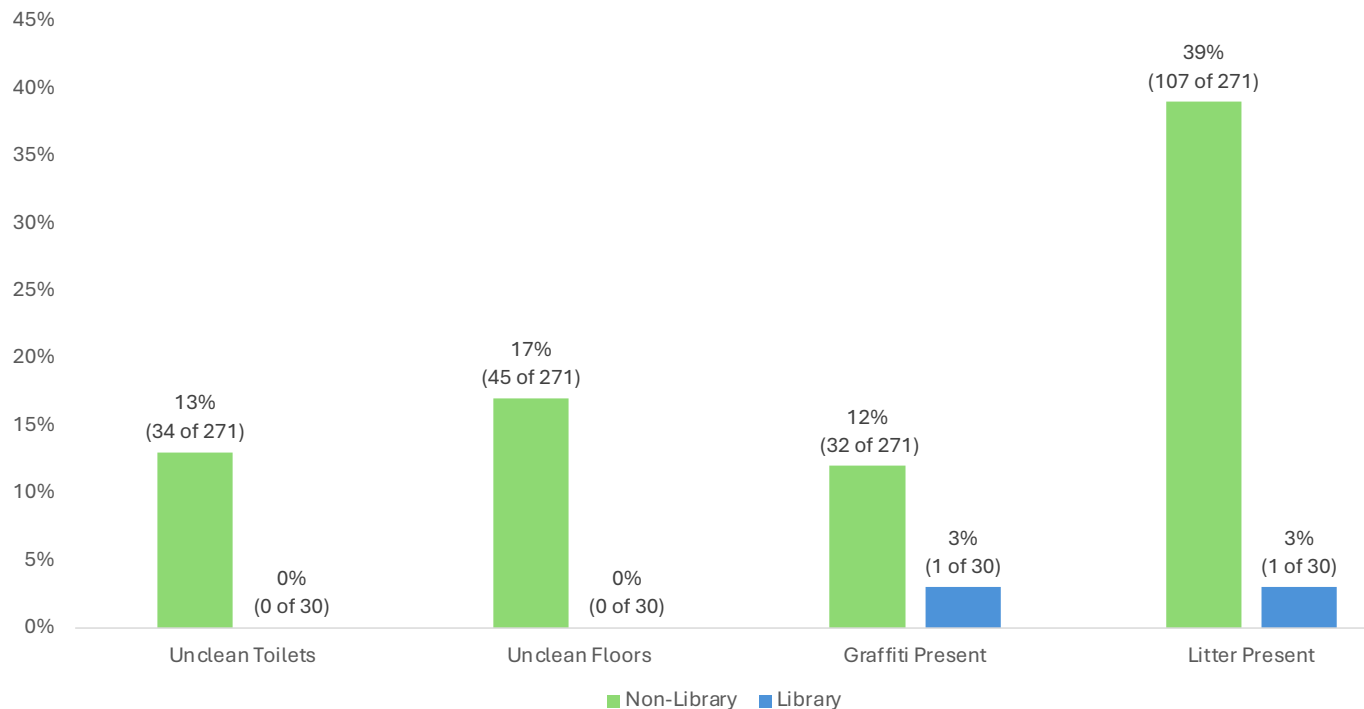


FIGURE 14

Photo of Menstrual Product Dispenser in Greenpoint Library.

6. Public restrooms were not well-equipped for menstrual needs: About four in five stalls in women's restrooms did not have menstrual product disposal bins, and just four sites had menstrual product dispensers.

More than three in four stalls (232 of 300) in women's restrooms did not have menstrual product disposal bins. More than one in four women's restrooms (33 of 129) lacked both disposal bins as well as a garbage can in or near the restroom. Additionally, only three stalls in men's restrooms had any menstrual product disposal bins.⁴⁸ This was less of an issue in libraries, where nearly all (28 of 30) restrooms were single occupancy. While just seven of those restrooms had a designated menstrual product disposal bin, all but one had a trash can, which serves a similar purpose in a single-occupancy room.

⁴⁸ Single-occupancy restrooms with a garbage can were counted as having a disposal bin for this number.

OID also found that menstrual product dispensers were rarely available; investigators found dispensers in only four of the 172 sites included in the survey. Three of the sites were libraries, and one was at the 550 Madison POPS.



FIGURE 15
875 Third Avenue POPS Entry and Information Plaque.

7. The two POPS surveyed did not include their restrooms on their Entrance or Information Plaques.

Under current regulations, POPS must post: (1) Entrance Plaques, which mark entrances to the areas and must contain the POPS symbol as well as hours of operation,⁴⁹ and (2) Information Plaques, indicating what the space provides and other information.⁵⁰ The zoning resolution allows these to be combined into one plaque, such as the one seen in Figure 15 below.⁵¹ City Planning rules require that each POPS provide signs that include the “primary amenities required in the space,”⁵² and the NYC Zoning Resolution is more specific, stating that the Information Plaque must include the “required amenities.”⁵³ However, neither of these terms is defined, and it remains unclear whether the terms “primary” or “required” amenity include restrooms.

At both POPS surveyed as part of the selected sample, investigators found that the combined Entry/Information Plaques failed to list the onsite public restroom available inside, even though the Department of City Planning’s 2025 annual report on POPS includes restrooms as “required amenities” for both sites.⁵⁴

To get a clearer picture of POPS signage practices, OID visited the 11 additional operational POPS with restrooms listed in the Public Restrooms Dataset but not included in the sample. Signage across these sites varied significantly. Only three locations listed restrooms on their Information Plaques. Several sites had no Information Plaque posted at all, and those that did often failed to indicate that a restroom was available. In some cases, restrooms were difficult to locate; without actively searching for them, a visitor could easily miss them. OID also found one POPS fully closed for construction despite being listed as operational in the Public Restrooms Dataset.

⁴⁹ N.Y.C. ZONING RESOL. § 37-751(a).

⁵⁰ *Id.* at § 37-751(b).

⁵¹ *Id.*

⁵² N.Y.C. RULES, tit. 62, § 11-04. The rules, which came into effect in 2020, require that signs include contact information for the operator, a statement that the area is open to the public, and primary amenities included in the space. *Id.*

⁵³ N.Y.C. ZONING RESOL. § 37-751(b).

⁵⁴ *Supra* N.Y.C. DEP’T OF CITY PLAN. note 30 at 280-284, 621-624.

Recommendations

1. The Mayor’s Office of Operations should ensure that the Public Restrooms Dataset and map accurately reflect open and available restrooms.

OID and the Data Team used the City’s Public Restrooms Dataset and map to select a sample of 172 sites listed as “operational” for this investigation.⁵⁵ Investigators found that of the 337 total individual restrooms at these sites, 36 were closed at the time of inspection, of which 12 were closed due to construction projects. This discrepancy between what investigators found and what was listed in the dataset suggests that although the data is supposed to be “updated twice per year, with additional updates provided as needed when restrooms change operational status,”⁵⁶ the Mayor’s Office of Operations is failing to do so in a timely manner.

To reduce the risk of providing inaccurate information to the public and to truly “make it easier to find relief when you’ve got to go,”⁵⁷ the Mayor’s Office of Operations should update the map and dataset accurately to reflect whether a restroom is open or closed in real-time, if possible. In addition, posting clear signs explaining the reason for closure and directing users to the nearest open facility could help minimize frustration and make closures appear less arbitrary.

2. Garbage cans should be provided in all restrooms to decrease the prevalence of litter.

OID’s investigation showed that restrooms with a garbage can were less likely to have litter.⁵⁸ Litter was found in nearly half of all restrooms without a garbage can, and in about a third of restrooms with one. This suggests that operators should simply place garbage cans in all restrooms to improve cleanliness.

⁵⁵ See Operational Public Restrooms Map, *supra* note 4.

⁵⁶ See Public Restrooms Dataset, *supra* note 4.

⁵⁷ N.Y.C. OFF. OF THE MAYOR, *supra* note 10.

⁵⁸ See *supra* Figure 9: Open Restrooms with Litter, With or Without Garbage Cans.



FIGURE 15
Sign in the Ehrenreich-Austin Playground Restroom directing visitors to make reports to 311.

3. DPR should reevaluate their process for addressing maintenance issues, such as broken or missing locks, and should find ways to encourage the public to report these issues to 311.

Although DPR employs a seemingly extensive review and oversight process of its parks, which includes at least two supply and quality checks per day,⁵⁹ OID's survey still found that 81 of 555 stalls did not have functioning locks. This suggests that DPR should take steps to ensure that lock functionality and similar issues are included in their daily quality checks and addressed in a timely manner. In a few cases, OID observed signage in restrooms directing the public to use 311 to file comments or complaints about restroom conditions, such as the sign in Figure 16 at the Ehrenreich-Austin Playground restroom. Prominently displaying such signage in each restroom could encourage more real-time feedback.

4. DPR should ensure equitable distribution and maintenance of diaper changing tables across all park restrooms, regardless of gender.

Local Law 56 of 2023 requires that, where feasible and subject to appropriation, a restroom in every park must include a changing table.⁶⁰ In 2024, DPR announced it had “completed its expansion of new baby changing tables to all public restrooms in city parks, where feasible—more than three years ahead of schedule.”⁶¹ Given that OID's survey found fewer changing tables in men's restrooms and that those present were more often broken or dirty, DPR should evaluate additional options for achieving greater gender equality in changing table distribution and for improving their maintenance.

⁵⁹ See, e.g., 2019 Park Maintenance Hearing, *supra* note 22; 2021 PIP & Park Resources Hearing, *supra* note 23.

⁶⁰ N.Y.C. LOCAL L. 56 (2023).

⁶¹ N.Y.C. OFF. OF THE MAYOR, *supra* note 10.

5. DPR should provide a menstrual product disposal bin in each restroom stall and evaluate the cost and feasibility of installing menstrual product dispensers in every restroom, regardless of gender.

Where menstrual product disposal bins are absent in a stall, restroom users must dispose of menstrual waste in shared garbage cans, compromising privacy and discouraging proper disposal. During inspections, some restrooms had garbage cans propping open the entrance door to the restroom, or outside of the restroom entirely, offering no privacy at all for those needing to dispose of menstrual waste products. In addition, more than one in four women's restrooms had neither disposal bins nor a communal garbage can in or near the restroom. Providing disposal bins in each stall would alleviate these concerns.

In New York City, there have been efforts in recent years to expand access to free menstrual products. In 2016, New York City passed a Local Law requiring the Department of Citywide Administrative Services to provide menstrual products for distribution to residents of temporary shelters,⁶² and a separate law that same year required free menstrual products to be provided in Department of Education public school restrooms.⁶³ Extending access to menstrual products to park restrooms would improve health and hygiene for those who may not have consistent access to these products.

6. Ensure that if a POPS includes a restroom, the POPS Information Plaque indicates the availability, location, and operating hours of the restroom.

Although both surveyed POPS are obligated to offer public restrooms per their agreements with the city,⁶⁴ investigators found that neither posted this information on their required plaques. The pattern extended beyond the sample: of 11 additional POPS with restrooms that OID visited, only three listed restrooms as an amenity. The remaining sites either lacked an Information Plaque, displayed only an Entry Plaque, or posted partial plaques that listed items like seating but failed to mention restroom access.

Only 14 POPS across the city offer public restrooms, yet these few facilities still play an important role in New York's already limited restroom network. When required plaques are missing or fail to list restrooms, the public has no way of knowing if these amenities exist. This undermines the usefulness of the facilities and diminishes the public's return on the concessions granted to developers for providing these spaces.

To address this, the Zoning Resolution should explicitly require that public restrooms be listed on Information Plaques, along with their location and hours. The City must also consistently enforce signage requirements including both the posting of Information Plaques and the inclusion of all required amenity information.

⁶² N.Y.C. LOCAL L. 83 (2016).

⁶³ N.Y.C. LOCAL L. 84 (2016).

⁶⁴ N.Y.C. DEP'T OF CITY PLAN., *supra* note 30 at 280-284, 621-624.

Comparison with *Nature's Call*

This report provides a broad assessment of public restroom conditions by inspecting 337 restrooms at 172 randomly selected sites across all 51 Council Districts. By contrast, OID's 2024 report, *Nature's Call*, examined 102 individual park restrooms at 51 sites identified for poor PIP performance or through Council Member offices' recommendations for problem restrooms in their districts.⁶⁵ While *Nature's Call's* targeted restrooms were already known to have issues, the new, expanded survey conducted for this report revealed that many of the same issues exist throughout the City's public restroom system more broadly.

COMPARISON OF NATURE'S CALL (2024) TO 2025

FIGURE 17

Comparison of Issues Observed by OID in 2024 and 2025

	NATURE'S CALL (2024)	GOOD TO GO? (2025)
No Soap	10%	13%
No Toilet Paper	13%	7%
No Garbage Can	30%	29%
Broken Stall Locks	11%	15%
Closed During Operating Hours	9%	11%

As shown above in Figure 17, while many restrooms are accessible and functional, significant issues have persisted between the two surveys, and surprisingly, certain issues, like lack of soap and broken locks in stalls, are more prevalent in the wider survey than the inspection of reportedly problematic park restrooms.

⁶⁵ See NATURE'S CALL, *supra* note 2.

Conclusion

This report's findings highlight the difficulties that affect the New York City's public restroom system, showing the importance of consistent maintenance and improvements. The recommendations represent some basic steps that the City can take to maintain these critical facilities in a way that meets, if not exceeds, the public's expectations. Ensuring that these facilities are consistently clean, functional, and accessible is essential to public health, equity, and the City's ability to provide a basic standard of dignity in and enjoyment of public spaces.

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Appendix: Public Restrooms Inspection Form 2025

Site Info

1. Your Name
2. Date
3. Route #
4. Site Name (sorted by Route #)
5. Borough
6. Type of Site
7. Was there a sign outside of the building indicating that there is a public restroom inside? (Please take a photo of the outside of the building).
8. Please describe the process of finding the restroom. Include whether there was sufficient signage, whether it was especially difficult to find the restroom, and whether you needed to ask anyone for directions. (Please also take a photo of anything that might be relevant to this question, including signage).
9. Type of restroom (Please take a photo of the outside of the restroom, if there's no one in the picture).
10. Was there more than one of this type of restroom at this site? (i.e. two gender neutral restrooms in the building). If the answer is yes, please complete a separate form for each restroom.
11. Is the restroom available for use? If no, please answer why and take a photo of the outside of the restroom.
12. Is there an accessible sign at the restroom entrance?
13. Is there a line for the restroom?
14. What is the approximate wait time (if any)?
15. How do you access the restroom?

16. Is there a sign indicating where to find the restroom key or access code? (Please take a photo if there is a sign.)
17. How many language(s) is the sign indicating where to find the restroom key or access code in?
18. If you can determine, which language(s) other than English is the sign in?
19. Did you need to ask a person for the restroom key or access code?

Functionality and Amenities

20. Are lights on or able to be turned on in the restroom?
21. Is there a diaper changing station?
22. Please select any issues with the diaper changing station (if any):
23. How many stalls are in the restroom? (If this is a single-person restroom without stalls, please consider that one stall for this and all following questions.)
24. How many stalls have functioning locks?
25. How many stalls have hooks? (for bags, jackets, etc.)
26. How many stalls have toilet paper?
27. How many stalls have menstrual product disposal bins?
28. How many toilets are operable (will flush)?
29. Are there urinals in the restroom?
30. How many urinals are there?
31. How many urinals will flush?
32. How many sinks are there?
33. How many sinks are functional (will turn on)?
34. How many soap dispensers are there?
35. How many soap dispensers have soap in them?
36. Are there paper towel dispensers?
37. Are there paper towels in the dispenser?
38. Are there hand dryers?

- 39. How many hand dryers are there?
- 40. How many of the hand dryers work?
- 41. Is there at least one garbage can?
- 42. How many garbage cans are there?
- 43. How many garbage cans are too full/overflowing?
- 44. Are there menstrual products available (free or for purchase)?
- 45. How much do menstrual products cost?

Cleanliness

- 46. Is there litter or garbage present on the floor or other surfaces?
- 47. Is graffiti present on the walls or other surfaces?
- 48. Please select areas that are unclean beyond what is expected due to daily use. Please also attach photos of any such areas at the end of the survey (if possible/appropriate).
- 49. Please describe what you observed in areas indicated in the prior question.
- 50. Is there a strong, unpleasant fecal odor present?

Accessibility

- 51. Select which accessibility features, if any, are present:

Safety

- 52. Are there multiple entrances/exits to the restroom?
- 53. Select the hazards that are present, if any:

Water Fountains

- 54. Is there a publicly accessible water fountain near the restroom? (If in a park or other outdoor restroom, is there a water fountain within sight of the entrance to the restroom?)
- 55. How many separate water fountains are there?
- 56. How many total spouts are there? (i.e, if there is one water fountain with a higher and lower spout, as well as a water bottle filler, that is three spouts. If there are two such water fountains in the vicinity, that is six spouts).

57. Is there a designated water bottle filler on the water fountain?

58. Is there a lowered, accessible water fountain?

59. How many spouts are working?

60. Is the water fountain clean?

Notes and Comments

61. Any notes or additional comments?

62. Please upload all photos of the restroom - including the outside of the restroom, the cleaning schedule (if posted), and anything of note inside if appropriate/unoccupied.