

COUNTY OF MILWAUKEE
INTER-OFFICE COMMUNICATION

DATE: November 7, 2022

TO: Marcelia Nicholson, Chairperson, County Board of Supervisors

FROM: Stuart Carron, Director, Facilities Management Divisions, DAS

SUBJECT: From the Director of the Facility Management Division, Department of Administrative Services, an Informational Report on how Milwaukee County may modify restrooms in its facilities to be Inclusive Restrooms

FILE TYPE: Informational Report

REQUEST

This Informational Report provides an update on the DAS-Facilities Management Division study on how Milwaukee may modify the restrooms in its facilities to be inclusive restrooms, and the costs of such modifications.

POLICY

File No. 22-895 BE IT RESOLVED, the Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors hereby requests the Director of the Facilities Management Division, Department of Administrative Services, study the costs involved and how Milwaukee County may modify the restrooms in its facilities to be inclusive restrooms with inclusive restroom signage, and report back to the County Board no later than the December 2022 committee cycle.

OVERVIEW

In response to the Board Resolution in September, Facilities Management has convened a County employee subject matter expert task group to study how Milwaukee County may install inclusive restrooms in its facilities. The focus areas of this group include:

- A. Definition of an inclusive restroom
- B. Inventory of current County facility restrooms
- C. Prioritization of facilities
- D. Recommendation of a path forward with cost estimates

Since the Resolution there has been limited time to conduct this study, so this report should be considered an interim report. Information on each of the four focus areas follows.

A. Definition of an Inclusive Restroom

To date we have found no government codes or standards defining an inclusive restroom or its design. Various municipalities, businesses, institutions and other entities have made their own definition and work to achieve inclusive restrooms, but there are generally no common set of design guidelines or requirements. Within our task group, our definition of an inclusive restroom is based on some key principles:

1. An “inclusive restroom” is one available for use by any person(s) and is not designated for use by persons of any specific sex and/or gender.
2. Safety and privacy are key concerns.
3. Accessibility must be a common goal.

The task group is considering the intersectionality of gender and disabilities issues and feels strongly that an ‘inclusive restroom’ must, in addition to carrying proper signage and addressing safety and privacy concerns, be one that is fully compliant with the American Disabilities Act (ADA). Also, that the term ‘Unisex’ is no longer appropriate for signage or general terminology.

The task group is reaching out to various organizations, including the City of Milwaukee, UWM, and other local and national institutions, to help us formulate a standard definition of inclusive restroom for Milwaukee County. One potential barrier: State and international building codes that not only have no inclusive restroom standards, but also define restrooms specifically as ‘male’ and ‘female’ with specifications for each.

B. Inventory of current County facilities’ restrooms

An inventory of the Counties restrooms is in progress and to date has identified 1,655 total restrooms of various capacities (not including CJF). Signage and ADA compliance status of each has not been determined, but it is likely that many are not fully ADA compliant, and that none would be fully compliant with recommended signage, safety and privacy modifications as may be required to be fully ‘inclusive’.

C. Prioritization scheme

Due to the limited resources that the County may have to address compliance gaps in its restrooms, a prioritization of facilities, floors, and specific target restrooms will be needed. Priorities recommended by the task group include:

1. Facilities where either the public or employees have no option but to be in the facility (for example, a juror called to report, or an employee with no remote work option).
2. Facilities that are 'mission critical' as defined by the County Facility Planning Steering Committee (see attachment).
3. Facilities where we may have no- or low-cost options to become compliant.

The Board's Resolution also notes "places of public accommodation (where non-compliance) limits participation in public life for many residents and visitors in Milwaukee County". The task group recognizes that this may imply locations such as our cultural institutions or visitor centers (such as the Domes or the Zoo), which may not fall into the above three categories. Going forward, the task group will seek further definition of priorities from the Board.

D. Recommendation of path forward with cost estimates

Much more information will be required to develop a new guideline for a County inclusive restroom standard. It is our recommendation that the County task group continue outreach and efforts to define a standard or guideline for inclusive restrooms, reaching out to other organizations on a similar path. In the spirit of intentional inclusion, we will reach out to community stakeholders for input in the design and process. While the cost of retrofitting older facility restrooms may be a hurdle, there are likely locations within the County that provide no- or low-cost opportunities to provide an inclusive restroom. Certainly, all new County facilities should be designed up front with inclusive restrooms (e.g. new DHHS admin building). These locations should be identified. Finally, a list of priority locations with preliminary cost estimates for retrofits should be developed, and this information returned to the Board with a follow-up report no later than April 2023 committee cycle.

FISCAL EFFECT

None, report is informational only.

TERMS

None, report is informational only.

ALIGNMENT TO STRATEGIC PLAN

Development and implementation of an inclusive restroom standard aligns with the County Vision and Strategic Focus Area of 'Invest in Equity' by dismantling barriers to diverse and inclusive communities.

VIRTUAL MEETING INVITEES

Stuart Carron, Director, Facilities Management Division, Department of Administrative Services
Lael (Tony) MacLellan, Manager-Contracts, Procurement Division, Department of Administrative Services

Michael Bonk, Director Office for Persons with Disabilities and County ADA Coordinator,
Milwaukee County Aging and Disability Services, DHHS

Anthony Antonopoulos, Architect - Facilities Condition Assessment Program, Facilities Management Division, Department of Administrative Services

PREPARED BY

Stuart Carron, Director, Facilities Management

APPROVED BY



Aaron Hertzberg, Director, Department of Administrative Services

ATTACHMENTS

Definition of County facility mission categories

cc: David Crowley, County Executive
Mary Jo Meyers, Chief of Staff, County Executive's Office
Kelly Bablitch, Chief of Staff, County Board
Janelle M. Jensen, Legislative Services Division Mgr, Office of the County Clerk
Scott Manske, Comptroller
Pam Bryant, Comptroller Office
Aaron Hertzberg, Director, Department of Administrative Services
Joe Lamers, Fiscal & Budget Director, DAS
Vince Masterson, Fiscal & Strategic Asset Coordinator, DAS