



Portable toilets in downtown Austin: council member pushes plan

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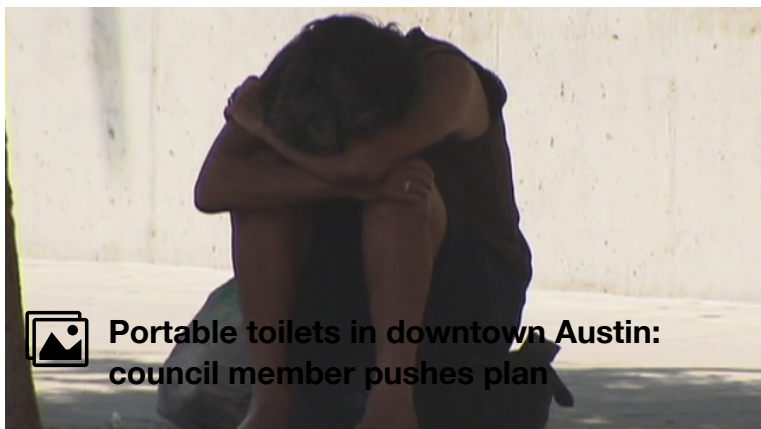
There are some nights downtown Austin really stinks. Part of the problem is the large homeless population who don't always have access to bathrooms.

An Austin city council member now wants the city to provide them with portable toilets. The four-council-member Health and Human Services Committee voted three to one, to move this item to the full city council for consideration.

The homeless population in Austin has been a problem. It requires a well-thought-out housing solution, but council member Kathie Tovo is thinking about what these people go through in the meantime.

“Many of those individuals sleep every night on the streets of our downtown and they are forced to go to the bathroom outside,” she said.

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That led her to make a proposal to the health and human services committee. Tovo wants the city to explore the idea of providing portable toilets in and around the downtown area.

“Members of our community have cited a need for it. Organizations like the downtown Austin alliance have been exploring it for some time,” Tovo said.

She says other cities are using porta-potties. The committee seems to like the idea, however council member Troxclair wanted more time to research the idea before moving forward. She cited an article about the unsuccessful public toilet attempt in Seattle.

“They had become so filthy so overrun with drug abusers and prostitutes,” Troxclair said.

However, Tovo believes the pros can outweigh the cons.

“Other... certainly confronted some challenges in their public restrooms, but there are some real
succe... here and those are the ones we are going to look to for guidance,” Tovo said.
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She says a recent report from watershed protection shows water quality around Austin, including Waller Creek, is being affected.

“They did have an elevated bacterial content in some of those bodies of water,” Tovo said.

The plan is still in the early stages. There's no estimate on the cost just yet. Tovo is hoping she can gain some ground and get the public toilets up sometime this year.



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