

New Taipei City Guidelines for Establishing All Gender Restrooms

To promote gender equality and the acceptance of gender diversity, advanced countries around the world have incorporated the principles of respecting different gender identities and valuing the needs of different gender groups into the construction of public facilities. Men and women have conventionally been required to use distinct public restrooms to maintain the privacy of both groups.

However, given the increasing attention paid to gender diversity and the diverse needs of various gender groups, New Taipei City has started to promote the construction of all gender restrooms. In doing so, the city aims to meet the needs of the public and improve the efficiency of public restroom use while ensuring the privacy of public restroom users, thereby making New Taipei City a more gender-friendly city.

To help management units (i.e., the unit held responsible for the all gender restroom) inspect the status of public restrooms and evaluate the potential for the conversion of conventional restrooms into or construction of new all gender restrooms, the Environmental Protection Bureau of New Taipei City has formulated the following guidelines as a reference.

1. Definition of all gender restrooms

All gender restrooms are also known as “unisex restrooms,” “gender-neutral restrooms” or “family restrooms.” The gender integration of public restrooms enables users of different genders and biological sexes, family members, and caretakers to use public restrooms with ease of mind.

2. Purposes of establishing all gender restrooms

In addition to serving users with various gender characteristics and gender identities, all gender restrooms can help to address a variety of gender-specific usage scenarios. The purposes of establishing all gender restrooms are as follows:

- (1) To improve the utilization rate of public restrooms and solve the problem of the frequent overcrowding of

women's restrooms.

Regarding the usage of conventional public restrooms, the fact that women often require a longer time and more space for using the restroom is often ignored. Although the ratio of male to female restrooms in the general working environment has been increased to 1:3 in accordance with the Building Act, this ratio of male to female restrooms is difficult to achieve in many public restrooms because of space planning problems. The establishment of all gender restrooms can overcome the gender barrier in the use of public restroom and increase the efficiency of use.

- (2) To provide a safe and secure restroom environment for users with nontraditional gender identities.

Individuals with nontraditional gender identities, including non-binary transgender individuals, often experience misunderstandings and inconvenience when using conventional public restrooms, which may cause them anxiety. If gender restrictions on public restroom use can be eliminated, the atmospheres of public restrooms can be improved, and all members of the public can feel more comfortable with using public restrooms.

- (3) To overcome gender-based barriers in public restroom use, including those experienced by parents and children of different genders and individuals with disabilities who require family assistance.

Parent-child restrooms are commonly located in women's restrooms, which not only make them unfavorable for men to use but also contributes to the stereotype that mothers, rather than fathers, should serve as the primary caretakers of children." In addition, when an individual with mobility impairment with a caregiver of a different gender must use a public restroom, their caregiver may feel embarrassed to enter the restroom with them.

3. Key points for establishing all gender restrooms

- (1) Public restrooms should be designed in accordance with the Building Act, the Building Technical Regulations, the design manual for sanitary facilities in public buildings, and other relevant

regulations.

- (2) The spirit of all gender public restrooms should be based on **"efficiency," "understanding," "communication," "privacy," and "safety"** to ensure that people can use public restrooms with mutual understanding and peace of mind. The key points of the current guidelines on the establishment of all gender restrooms are as listed in Table 1.

Table 1
Key points related to the establishment of
all gender restrooms

Spirit of establishment	Serial number	Key points
Understanding the spirit of establishment	1	Post explanations of “gender-friendliness” outside public restrooms.
	2	Reduce the use of stereotypical imagery, such as gendered colors and icons.
Exchange and communication	1	Create a common facility to avoid the potential embarrassment caused by gender segregation.
	2	Convert conventional public restrooms into gender-friendly spaces, rather than establishing separate male, female, and all gender restrooms at the same locations.
	3	Present spatial layout planning of the restroom at the entrance of each all gender restroom.
	4	Revise of promotional texts (e.g., in the usage instructions posted in parent–child restrooms, the word "mother" should be amended to "caregiver").
Ensuring usage privacy	1	Construct independent stalls for all types of toilets (including urinals). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The length of each toilet should be at least 120 cm. ■ The width of each sitting and squatting toilet should be over 100 cm, and the ratio of sitting toilets to

Spirit of establishment	Serial number	Key points
		<p>squatting toilets should be 2:3 or higher (at least 1 of each set of toilets must be a sitting toilet; in case of 2 toilet stalls, at least 1 of the 2 toilets must be a sitting toilet; in case of 3 toilet stalls, at least 2 of the 3 toilets must be sitting toilets).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The width of urinal stalls should be over 80 cm.
	2	<p>Install devices to prevent hidden cameras in all public restrooms.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The height between the top edge of each stall door and the ceiling should be 20 cm. ■ The lower edge of the door of each sitting and squatting toilet stall should be 3 to 5 and 5 to 10 cm from the ground, respectively; this can be adjusted based on ventilation and privacy considerations.
	3	<p>Retain multifunctional toilet stalls (e.g., parent–child and barrier-free stalls) and install children's toilets.</p>
Improve the safety of toilet usage	1	<p>Install safety alarms in all public restrooms.</p>
	2	<p>Install child safety seats and diaper tables in all parent–child restrooms.</p>
	3	<p>Install energy-saving lamps or natural lighting to enhance lighting and improve safety.</p>
	4	<p>Situate public restrooms near crowded areas.</p>

4. Methods for promoting all gender restrooms

(1) Planning the construction of new public restrooms

During the planning stage, management units may convene an "all gender public restroom task force" to review potential installation points and to conduct a demand analysis of public restrooms users during the early stages of construction to ensure that the proposed public restroom designs fulfill the needs of the main target population.

(2) Renovation of existing public restrooms

According to the aforementioned key points, the management unit can renovate existing public restrooms into all gender public restrooms and engage in promotional activity to increase public usage of the new restrooms.

5. High-priority locations for the implementation of all gender restrooms

The implementation of all gender restrooms should prioritize locations with high traffic volumes and a high demand for public restrooms. The highest-priority locations for the promotion of all gender restrooms are as follows:

- (1) Transportation hubs: bus/train stations, rest stops, visitor centers, and others.
- (2) Medical care units: hospitals, health service centers, and others.
- (3) Public institutions: administrative centers and city government agency buildings of all levels.
- (4) Large-scale leisure and recreation venues: gymnasiums, museums, art galleries, libraries, amusement centers, and others.
- (5) Large shopping centers: shopping malls and department stores.

6. Frequently-asked questions regarding all gender restrooms

(1) Are there any privacy and security concerns associated with all gender restrooms?

Because all gender restrooms are open to people of all biological sexes and gender identities, privacy and safety are the first priority. In all gender public restrooms, members of opposite sexes often look out for each other: in a space where men are present, potential lawbreakers

may be more wary of breaking the law.

- (2) What should I do if I feel uncomfortable when a person of opposite sex hears the sound of me using the toilet?

Similar problems also occur in gender-segregated public restrooms and can be solved by playing music or installing a running water sound button.

- (3) Women may feel uncomfortable when they are seen by members of opposite sex when discarding sanitary products.

All discarded items—such as used toiletries, face masks, and baby diapers—are waste items and should not be individually labeled. Lidded trash can also be used to minimize potential embarrassment.

- (4) Are all gender public restrooms transgender-only restrooms?

The term "XX-only" carries a tone of isolation and unfriendliness, which is not in line with the spirit of all gender public restrooms. All gender restrooms are open to people of all genders rather than being "exclusive" for individuals of certain gender identities or with certain gender characteristics.

- (5) Being in the same space with the opposite sex while waiting is awkward and uncomfortable.

The waiting area for all gender public restrooms is located outside the restroom. Individuals waiting may use the light panels installed outside the restroom to check the occupancy status of the restroom stalls and enter when vacancies occur.