

It's where the people are

The great urbanist William Whyte wrote, “What attracts people most, it seems, are other people.” Ten million of us visit Pioneer Courthouse Square each year to attend one of its 300-plus events, get travel information, meet a friend, or have lunch on the steps while watching the human parade.

Harriet Cormack is one of the people who has helped ensure this legacy is enjoyed by many more people for generations to come. She heads the Facilities Committee for Pioneer Courthouse Square, Inc., the nonprofit that manages the Square’s nonstop docket of events. A passionate urbanist with a 30-year history of residential and mixed use development, Harriet, along with her committee, drafted the statement of need that resulted in the repairs funded by the Parks Replacement Bond.

After 33 years of near constant use, the Square desperately needed repairs. “The Square was decaying, and we could have lost it,” Harriet says. The membrane under the famous red bricks has been leaking for years, allowing rainwater to drain down into underground offices, retail spaces, mechanical rooms, and restrooms. Three hundred thousand visits per year to the overtaxed restrooms had taken a toll, and the facilities were not entirely ADA-compliant.

Bond funds are being used to replace the membrane and bricks disturbed in the process, repair the heating and ventilation system, and

upgrade the restrooms—some of the busiest toilets in the city. In the peak use of the summer months, they’re used by over 40,000 people per month: international travelers, locals who work nearby, families, and people of all ages.

“The restroom upgrade,” Harriet says, “mirrors society’s changes toward greater gender sensitivity and accessibility for all.” Eleven private all-user stalls ensure that everyone who visits the Square has their needs met.

Pioneer Courthouse Square, known fondly as our city’s Living Room, is where Portland says, “Welcome! We’re glad you’re here.”

