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## **Bathrooms, benches and other public spaces in Boston - by David Kirk**

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Public space – open, accessible, attractive and integrated – has been on the urban agenda and permitting plate for decades. The details have been inconsistently transparent and enforced. Of course, some results have been essential and elegant. These might be placeholders for an expansive array of public necessities, niceties and entertainments.

Harbor First will soon unwrap a web presence that locates public accommodations that resulted from Section 91 harbor front public facilities. New development along the Boston harbor in at least eight neighborhoods included a lot of stuff, not just a harbor walk. The eight neighborhoods include: Downtown waterfront, North End, Charlestown, East Boston, South Boston, South Boston Waterfront, Dorchester and Fort Point Channel. The preliminary short list of 21 of highlighted public facilities and spaces include: restroom; ferry; lobby; WiFi; museum/exhibit; harbor walk access; water taxi; ferry; dock access; fish pier; kayak launch; plaza; lawn; eatery; BBQ; rooftop access; mutt mitt; seating; drinking fountain, bike rack; playgrounds; beach; and observation deck.

And then the marvelous overlooks all along the walk! The unintended rippling consequences of the generousities of comprehensive planning and permitting displayed and demonstrated by the non-profits and the private development community. A pedestrian can access a bathroom in the new Federal District Courthouse without waiting in line for a body scan, pat down or x-ray tray. Just walk through a corner porchway and open the door! Benches and sitting areas abound. Seat-high walls, berms and lawns and fountain edges welcome the weary and the sunbathers.

Call it infrastructure. Call it street furniture. Build it. Service it. Maintain it. Make the pedestrian welcome, comfortable and safe. Call it parking or its replacement or its companion. For Boston's reputation as a walking city like many old European urban centers, these accommodations are so friendly. They can have simple or elaborate decorative overhangs and shelters from the weather. Emergency communications like our old red fire boxes. Cameras, chargers! Advertising or not! These enhancements can be an extension and refinement of our community security and preparedness. They can make our communities 24-7 and 12!

Not much of this is revolutionary or technologically advanced or futuristic. However, expanded consistency and richness of these features in urban and suburban environments can really make living and walking so much more enjoyable for everybody, particularly seniors, families and physically challenged.

Enjoy the summer!

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