



Adult bathhouses and sex venues: Health and Sanitation Ordinance

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Historical Background

- Pre-ban — Bathhouses were gathering spaces mainly for LGBTQ+ folks; several raids occurred unprompted.
- December 1979 — the largest raid on an adult bathhouse in U.S. history occurred in Minneapolis.
- 1987 — Ban on "high risk sexual behavior" despite the Health Commissioner presenting research indicating that closing bathhouses had no effect on slowing HIV transmission.
- 1988 — Bathhouses formally banned in Minneapolis.



Letters to the Editor in the Minnesota Star Tribune about the bathhouse ban in the Tretter Collection archives at the University of Minnesota. Sam Stroozas; MPR News, 2026.



Legislative Background

- 2023 — former Council President Jenkins and Council Member Payne authored amendments removing stigmatizing language from the High-Risk Sexual Conduct Ordinance.
- 2024 — Council received a Policy & Research report and presentation on Regulations of Adult Bathhouses and Sex Venues.
 - Report delineated City codes to be amended and created to regulate and legalize adult bathhouses/sex venues.
 - Report outlined a landscape analysis of other U.S. cities that have and regulate adult bathhouses and sex venues (ex. Chicago, San Francisco, Duluth, Dallas, etc.)



What these amendments do

- Remove outdated and stigmatizing language that has been used to target and criminalize the 2SLGBTQIA+ community from the Minneapolis code.
- Moves building standards and definitions developed for adult entertainment venues from the High-Risk Sexual Conduct Ordinance into the Places of Adult Entertainment code.
- Maintains protections for employees of adult entertainment venues.
- Maintains the authority of the Health Department to enforce all existing Health code.
- Creates a pathway for the regulation and legalization of adult bathhouses/sex venues upon development of the business license code; eliminating barriers and removing contradictions.





Why these amendments are important

- Address historic harm and discrimination.
- Creates a pathway to a public health response as opposed to the criminalization of bathhouses.
- Removes outdated language used to criminalize predominately 2SLGBTQIA+ communities.
- Advances work of removing fear, stigma and shame for communities in our city, including 2SLGTQIA+ people.
- Allows for the development of public and sexual health education access points within historically underserved communities.
- Aligns with FAST track initiative goals meant to end the local HIV/AIDS epidemic.



