



# Our Story

## Toilet Equity

Creating equitable toilet access for those without, in support of community and environmental health

We all need a place to go to the bathroom, whether that's to pee, poop, or change a menstrual product. Those of us with stable living arrangements are lucky enough to have access to a bathroom whenever we need. For the unhoused community, though, bathroom access can be dependent on business hours, or can even mean a hole by the river.

Toilet Equity is currently partnering with local businesses and organizations in the Grand Valley who host our compost toilets in their parking lots. These toilets help provide 24/7 equitable toilet access for the unhoused population of Mesa County.

Equitable toilet access is crucial for human safety and dignity. Open defecation creates a public health and environmental hazard for those that live and recreate in the Grand Valley. Beyond that, at Toilet Equity, we believe everyone deserves a safe, private place to do their business. Having to duck into an alley or squat in a field to defecate is stressful and potentially dangerous. Everyone should have reliable access to a toilet.

We work to create equitable toilet access in several ways. First, providing public access toilets 24/7 increases access for those who do not currently have it. Additionally, where possible we offer ADA-accessible toilets so that everyone can use them. Finally, we encourage people who use menstrual products to put them into our toilets: we do not think it's fair to ask people to carry used menstrual products to a separate site to dispose of them. We sift these products out of the finished compost once they no longer present a biohazard risk.

Our toilets not only reduce the public health and environmental hazard of open defecation, they work towards the environmental benefit of resource recycling. All our toilets are compost-style, which means users throw in sawdust after use. This prevents odor and flies and starts the composting process. Our volunteers then take the full receptacles to our compost pile, where it is covered in straw and composted, reaching over 131°F, killing all bacteria and viruses within three days at that temperature. The finished compost can then be used to fertilize plants, stop erosion, or suppress weeds.

Toilet Equity toilets are donor-funded, volunteer-built, and volunteer-maintained. Our volunteers round on our toilets every day to ensure that they are clean, fully-stocked, and safe for our users and the surrounding community. We currently have six toilets around the Grand Valley, with a seventh on the way. Our goal for 2024 is to get seven more toilets installed. In future years, we plan on expanding our reach to other communities without sufficiently equitable toilet access.