

Fresno City Hall to accommodate breast feeding, diaper changes

By George Hostetter
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All those tiny political experts visiting Fresno City Hall will soon find it easier to get a quiet meal and a freshened bottom.

The city has received a \$10,000 grant from [First 5 Fresno County](#) to create a breast-feeding-friendly space at City Hall.

There also is enough money to add diaper-changing stations at the four public restrooms (men's and women's) on City Hall's second floor.

Council Member [Esmeralda Soria](#) sought the grant.

"I'm excited for our community," Soria said. "We're showing that our City Hall is accessible to families and children. At the same time we're promoting breast-feeding, which is critical for our young children."

First 5 Executive Director Emilia Reyes said research shows breast-fed babies are healthier in general and less likely to develop illnesses like asthma and diabetes.

"As a community we're working to support mothers who choose to breast-feed and also raising awareness that breast-feeding provides babies with the best start in life," Reyes said.

Soria busted a four-year male monopoly on the council dais when she was sworn in as District 1 representative in January. A good portion of the council chamber was filled with family and supporters. Some well-wishers were mothers with babies and small children.

First 5 is the expert in creating facilities like this.

Council Member Esmeralda Soria on City Hall's breastfeeding-friendly room

"They pointed out that there were no changing tables at City Hall," Soria said. "That's where the idea came from – we've got to fix this."

But Soria didn't act immediately. She settled into her legislative duties. Fiery issues came before the council, most dealing with money, many attracting large crowds.

"I began to notice that, when we had long meetings, parents would come and bring their small children," Soria said.

The little ones are known to make a fuss when they're hungry. Their slightly older siblings have little patience for council debates. That's the makings for public policy.

Soria's idea addresses the imperatives of in-go and out-go.

A seldom-used room near the council chamber will be turned into a retreat for nursing mothers. Soria said work continues on design, but promises an emphasis on privacy, security and convenience.

First 5 is grateful to Council Member Soria for her efforts.

First 5 Executive Director Emilia Reyes

The site appears big enough for mothers to bring young brothers and sisters who need a break from democracy in action, Soria said.

The diaper-changing tables explain themselves.

Soria said everything should be in place this fall.

City Hall has seen nothing like this, at least not in recent years. The cycle of life hasn't changed a bit. What took City Hall so long?

"I'm not quite sure," Soria said. "But I'm excited we're doing this now."

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