

City removes last-standing public payphone from NYC street

nypost.com/2022/05/23/nyc-last-standing-public-payphone-from-street/

Allie Griffin

May 24, 2022



The last standing public payphone in the city was removed from a Times Square street on Monday.

City officials bade farewell to the iconic, coin-operated phone booth as a crane ripped it from the sidewalk at Seventh Avenue and West 50th Street Monday morning.

The phone's removal marks the completion of the city's nearly decade-long effort to replace the outdated technology with LinksNYC kiosks, which offer free WiFi, domestic calling, mobile device charging, 911 and 311 access and other amenities.

Manhattan Borough President Mark Levine, who was at the payphone removal, said he hopes its replacement will bring more equitable technology access for New Yorkers. However, he admitted its removal was bittersweet.

"I won't miss all the dead dial tones but gotta say I felt a twinge of nostalgia seeing it go," he said on Twitter.



The payphones will be replaced by kiosks that offer free WiFi and phone charging.
REUTERS

The city, under former Mayor Bill de Blasio's administration, put out a request for proposals to replace payphones in 2014 with new infrastructure offering free 24/7 public WiFi.

The company CityBridge's proposal to build a LinksNYC system was chosen the same year and the city began swapping out old payphones for the new LinksNYC screens in 2016.

Most of the city's payphones were sent to the scrapyard by 2020. More than 7,500 of the public phones had been replaced with about 2,000 LinksNYC kiosks at the time.



The payphone will be housed in the Museum of the City of New York.
AFP via Getty Images

The Midtown payphone will be sent to the Museum of the City of New York as a relic of the times before cellphones became widely used. The exhibit, “Analog City: NYC B.C. (Before Computers),” opened just last Friday.

However, New Yorkers searching for a bit of nostalgia on city streets aren’t completely out of luck.

“If you grew up in the city in the 90’s and 00’s, you knew the struggle of using one of these,” Dandia Asad wrote on Twitter. “It is now a historical artifact.”

Another social media user simply wrote: “not me crying over a pay phone” along with the crying emoji.

The payphone removed Monday was the last city-owned public payphone in the Big Apple. A few private payphones on public property still exist, and four enclosed phone booths have been permanently saved from removal along West End Avenue on the Upper West Side.