

I am submitting this written comment in support of RES PH 17-122 to deny exception to the Skyway hours requested by the Manager of the Railroader Printing Building.

My name is Jay Severance. My wife and I live in the Lowry Building at 350 St Peter Street. One of the reasons we chose this location when we relocated to the twin cities twelve years ago, was access to the Skyway, which passes through our building.

One of our first experiences with the Skyway, however, was being locked into the Skyway...as it so happens, between the Railroader Printing Building and River Park Lofts. As a result, I became active as a citizen advocate with the Skyway committee in promoting regularized Skyway hours, accessibility and security. The Skyway committee has done a good job over the years of controlling accessibility for residents, visitors and businesses, and it's reasons for denying this request are consistent and sound.

I understand the concerns that are raised in the request for a permanent variance to the skyway hours, but **urge you to support the resolution denying this request.**

There are active programs and work groups studying the issues. There is a public input meeting scheduled for June 26th to address them. These efforts should be supported and brought to conclusion to avoid any action which would jeopardize the integrity of the system. A piecemeal dismantling of the Skyway hours and rules is not in the best interest of the downtown residents, workers and visitors.

Attention Council Members:

I am writing to express my support in keeping skyway open and denying property owner from contributing their share of responsibility. I read Jaunae Brooks letter of request and have to say, I think she's is lying about the police not coming when they call. I live and work downtown and police have come and helped me every time I've asked. They even sat down and spent some time with me at their skyway office and helped me with my concerns.

I rented a store front from Dave Brooks for 2 years in the Alliance Bank Building which he is also part owner. He and the Kelly Brothers refused to answer my calls, emails, and requests for a 10 minute meeting for the last 6 months of my lease and weren't much better the previous months. I paid them \$20,000 over the time I was there and I couldn't even have a conversation with them. They are not concerned about the people who make up this neighborhood, not even their own tenants. The Railroad Building is attached to the River Place Lofts where a lawyer friend of mine who is wheel chair bound lives. I can't believe the nerve they have closing and locking those skyways without permission. It kind of reminds me of the owner of Syrdyk's deciding he was above the law and selling booze on Sunday before everyone else. Please don't let them get away with this.

Rebecca Noeker has been very understanding and helpful of my safety concerns in the skyway when I was renting there and helped me with my business licensing when I relocated in Lowertown. I hope the council members from other districts will respect her advice and options since she is the one who is most involved down here.

I also hope somehow the city can help shape a city where the wealthy investors who are lucky enough to buy up our historic buildings are willing to contribute instead of rip apart our business and artist communities. I am so tired of seeing artists be displaced and affordable housing being lost to investment companies who show no respect.

Thank you for your time and hearing my concern.

Josie Hill

Lowertown Massage and Bodywork (formerly: Skyway Backrub 7/14-12/16)
357 Kellogg Blvd East
St Paul, Mn 55101

Crane Ordway (formerly Minnesota Building 7/15-11/16 and Pointe Condo 8/14-6/15)
281 5th St East
St Paul, Mn 55101

Dear Council Members,

I live downtown St. Paul with my family. I use the skyways all the time and love them.

I understand you are considering allowing some businesses to have different hours in the skyway due to new challenges as St. Paul becomes more "urban".

I too heard the pleas from business owners and felt compassion for their situation.

I attended the latest Skyway Committee and quickly understood the perspective of the Committee and Council Member Noecker.

Please DO NOT make exceptions for certain businesses to the skyway hours. If the whole system needs to be changed to close at midnight for example, let that be the conversation. The whole system needs to be the same, consistent, and predictable.

As a resident it is difficult to learn which doors are open at any given time. For tourists and guests of St. Paul, it is even more confounding.

Union Depot is one of 2 welcoming mats we have downtown (Central Station is the other). Locking this access point earlier than the rest of the system would be a huge mistake. It will confuse people, and in the winter cause potentially harmful situations. I learned the hard with my two small children that if you leave the skyway system after business hours, getting back in isn't a guarantee. Being locked out in the middle of winter (while not properly dressed - because hotels and apartments are connected) then having to find another way in is scary and freezing. Union Depot needs to be a reliably open door during skyway hours - just like the parking garages and Central Station.

It may be at the "end of the system" but because it is a gateway, a public space (from a user's perspective at least), and on the green line, it would be a terrible blow to residents and visitors to have this assumed predictable access point denied.

There are other solutions to the problems being faced downtown. These should be explored and tested before permanently changing something that makes St. Paul so special.

I wrote in depth about [my perspective on the skyway problems](#) on my blog about living downtown St. Paul.

In short:

Central Station needs to be addressed FIRST. This property has been neglected by its owners - the Metro Council - and the city of St. Paul, surrounding businesses, and skyway users have been paying the price.

Both Security Guards and Tourist Information are needed at this critical intersection.

June 26th residents will have their first chance weigh in on this issue. It is important that no changes are made until input has been received from all sides.

Respectfully,
Kati Berg aka Skyway Mom

Big World. Small Apartment. Family Life in the Skyways of St. Paul.

There is no reason for this request except for the convenience of the building who does not want to pay for security during skyway hours or at least security during the evening hours.. There is no land related hardship here. If this request is granted what's to prevent other skyway easement owners from requesting the same thing. There is a committee looking at over all skyway hours to maybe part of the skyway ordinance rewrite. Any changes at this time would be premature.

Sincerely,
Virginia Harris

1xx Kellogg Blvd.E.

I respectfully submit the following for your consideration prior to voting on the proposal to deny an hour exception to Railroader Printing Building. Thank you.

**Why the Saint Paul City Council Should Deny the
Railroader Printing Building's Request for a Permanent Skyway Hours Waiver**

Skyway Governance Advisory Committee

June, 2017

The Railroader Printing Building filed a request with the City for a waiver allowing them to close their skyway doors at 8pm instead of the standard 2am. The Skyway Governance Advisory Committee voted unanimously to recommend denial of this request, for the following reasons.

- The building owner violated city ordinance by closing their skyway at 8pm prior to requesting or receiving a waiver.
- The building owner installed a keypad allowing after-hours access to those she deemed worthy but denying general access to this public thoroughfare. (It is not known if the keypad would remain if the waiver is approved, or if access would then be denied to all.)
- The skyway in question connects the system to River Park Lofts and at least two bars and restaurants. No accurate survey of skyway users has been done to substantiate the building owner's claim that there would be little opposition to closing the skyway early.
- The building owner has not been providing adequate private security for her building as required by the building's easement agreement with the City. Instead, she has been relying on video cameras and calling Police to deal with problems. Other buildings that do provide an appropriate level of security are not having the same problems. An hours waiver should only be considered in cases of need, not for the convenience or financial advantage of building owners.
- Granting the waiver would set a precedent, inciting other building owners to shut down their skyways early and diminishing the value of the system.

Better Alternatives to Hours Waivers

Our committee understands that issues such as homelessness and unruly young people have increased in recent years and have impacted building owners and tenants, as well as other skyway users. Rather than closing some or all skyways early, thereby denying usage to thousands of downtown residents, patrons and employees of downtown businesses and others, we recommend the following, some of which are already in the works.

- Establish and enforce a minimum standard of security required of building owners.
- If building owners do not meet the minimum standard, the City should provide security as needed and bill those owners, thereby maintaining a safe environment.
- Building owners should cooperate to create a comprehensive security system throughout downtown, including the skyways. Funding would be based on building size, perhaps by way of a Business Improvement District or similar mechanism.
- Survey skyway users and businesses to determine optimal skyway hours, and make those hours consistent throughout the system.
- Require buildings to lock their skyways during the hours they are closed. This is not currently required, which has contributed to people getting into the system after hours.

Andy Flamm

Chair, Skyway Governance Advisory Committee

Ladies and gentlemen,

I am a member of the Skyway Governance Committee of the Capitol River Council, and a downtown resident. I just joined the committee a few months ago, but have been impressed with the breadth of discussion regarding the challenges facing our skyway system, the rigor of the committee's review of the issues, and the seriousness of intent on this committee of downtown people.

I am pleased to follow the leadership of the committee, and to concur with their assessment that no hours waiver should be allowed the Railroader Building at this time. The committee has made recommendations about motion toward improvement, and is working with the Advisory Task Force; our discussions and position have been detailed in letters and emails from our chair Andy Flamm, a downtown business owner.

Thank you.

Peg Guilfoyle

Dear Saint Paul City Council Members....

If you honestly value the thoughtful input of downtown residents, **please deny Jaunae Brooks' demands** for special treatment under the city's skyway ordinance.

Ignoring the media-friendly theatrics, your "Skyway Governance Advisory Committee" (I am a member) carefully listened to and debated Ms Brooks demands (after she had already unilaterally locked the public resource). She excused her own admitted rule violations on DSI and the police, but seriously mischaracterized her interactions with them, according to both DSI and police representatives. She also testified as to her own serious under-spending on her own building security. Taken together, these factors were more than enough for us to deny her demands. Ms. Brooks has a number of steps to take to get back into compliance before she has standing to request relief.

Given downtown's exploding residential population it is critical that the City Council's official advisory groups be treated as serious partners and their thoughtful recommendations given serious weight. **The City Council needs to deny Ms. Brooks' demands.**

Respectfully,

Bill Hanley

Member, Capitol River Council Board

Member, Skyway Governance Advisory Committee

Dear Council Members,

I am writing this very short email to encourage you to support Council-member Noecker's position regarding the Skyway. The Skyway system in St. Paul is too important to the City, it's residents, property owners and those who work and visit St. Paul for the Council to make any permanent changes to the system without full input from all of the above mentioned groups.

Thank you.

Dr. Crystal Meriwether, Resident and Airye Condominium Assoc. Board member

St. Paul, MN

Please vote today to deny the request being made regarding Brooks Skyway Hours ...

Keep the 5 am - 2 am hours for the skyway (afterall, the bars and restaurants are open until 2 am) ... and find security options for the entire skyway. Thank you.

St Paul has a long history of recognizing that public rights of way include the skyway system. This allows the system to be viable and consistent throughout the city. Without this policy, a system such as ours (in a small city with a low retail and resident population), would ever have supported even the sparse skyway system we have.

While the safety of the system is important (and wanting), the remedy is to provide more security. It is not helpful to retreat into our shells and shut down access.

The City has already made a policy that the skyway system is important and public, so I don't need to argue that point. Instead, the City Council must recognize that any haphazard effort to shut down a section of the system, is detrimental to the entire system.

Much like closing Nicollet for Kmart in Mpls or 7th Place in St Paul seemed like one small change, the impact ripples out from that, and destroys the entire system. Plus, it will start a cascade of similar waiver requests.

Make the owners provide security. Discuss options for fixing the problems. Don't give into NIMBYs.

Jim Mogen

Lowertown Worker, St Paul Resident, and Skyway user

I am a resident of River Park Lofts (RPL) and have been for 5 years. As you know the Railroader building started locking their door at 8:00 p.m. and gave everyone who lives in RPL a combo so that we would have continued access. Their decision has had a very positive effect on the safety and security of RPL residents.

Our building is at the end of the skyway system and as a result, has numerous problems with vagrants. We have a pass through to the parking ramp whereby anyone has access to our stairwell in our building. We have had numerous problems including people who defecate, smoke both cigarettes and marijuana, urinate, and intimidate the residents of the building if there is an encounter. We have also had gangs of teenagers hang out in the stairwell as well. I have called the police before and it took them 45 minutes to respond. I do not feel it is a priority for them to respond to vagrant calls.

I would hope that you could analyze this issue on a case by case basis. I think that this is a request that is reasonable and would increase the safety of the residents of River Park Lofts.

Thank you for considering my request.

Mary Williams-Greene

I encourage you to allow owners of the Railroader building to restrict skyway access after 8pm. I am a resident of River Park Lofts and have noticed an improvement in the skyway since they started to limit access. The skyways should not be used as restrooms and overnight 'crash pads'

(Gary Gilbertson)

June 7, 2017

Open Letter To: Saint Paul Ward Two Council Representative Rebecca Noecker
Re: Downtown Saint Paul Skyway System, City Council meeting today
Fr: Bill Hosko

Hello Rebecca,

I am writing you today about the serious situation that has arisen concerning the possibility of the skyway system being closed early - even before midnight. There remains some confusion about what will occur at today's City Council meeting.

On the agenda:

"Denying the application submitted by Jaunae Brooks on behalf of Railroader Printing Building located at 235 East Sixth Street for an exception to the general hours of operation for pedestrian Skyway Bridge #15. (Public hearing held May 3 and May 17)"

SKYWAY HISTORY

- As we know, the policy to have them remain open until 2:00 AM (except several links to government buildings) has been in place for years.
- Our extensive skyway system; a public easement thru many of downtown's building's system, open most of each day, seven days a week, is unique, in the world. This creates an environment that is particularly welcoming for Residents of Downtown and for Visitors!
- Of course, there have been security issues associated with the skyway system since its creation.
- I have been a downtown retailer for over 24 years. In the past, there has been worse times concerning security then today. In the mid-late 1990s.
- Today, because of the consequences of city planning:
 - We have a much larger homeless shelter downtown, and an even larger one to come,
 - and a light rail route that concentrates most downtown users in a single location, adjacent to the most problematic bus stops downtown and in the city,
 - security issues have grown again
 - TO BE CLEAR, the great majority of our downtown homeless population and users of public transit have not been disruptive and have been erroneously maligned.

RESPONSIBLE BUILDING OWNERS

- Every downtown building owner today whose property is part of the skyway system, purchased their property with knowledge they have a public easement thru their property, and what their responsibility would be/should be as far as security and maintenance. These skyway connected properties were good investments being they can bring higher housing and office rents.
- Dave Brooks and his daughter Juanae Brooks are smart, successful business people. They have financially benefitted greatly by past and recent policies of Mayor Coleman and the City Council, and I understand, have given generously to elected official's past political campaigns. In my opinion, their decision to close the skyway easement early at 8:00 PM thru their Railroader Building in Lowertown, one of their downtown properties, "Due to Ongoing Unresolved Health and Safety Issues" has been without merit.

I believe it represents a larger effort by a small, but nevertheless, important group of downtown commercial property owners and various organizations, I understand who have also given to elected official's past political campaigns. There can be significant security cost savings in closing skyway easements early.

Ms Brook's story has of course been a unique story for the local media. Particularly when the *aggrieved* has been implying that she is a significant skyway stop for the homeless downtown to 'relieve' themselves, #1 and #2, rather than in a public restroom (Union Depot is nearby and the homeless know it, as is a busy first-floor downstairs bar). Public urination and even defecation, even inside buildings, has unfortunately, but not fatally, always been a part of any downtown's fabric.

The fact is, to do a walk-thru of the Railroader Building; its short skyway level and even smaller first floor vestibule area, and its single elevator, takes two minutes. Security cost are small here, compared particularly to larger properties which are being responsible to their obligations.

PUBLIC INPUT FALLS SHORT

- Downtown's Capitol River Council's Board of Directors (one of 17 publicly funded city-wide district councils) in May, adopted a policy (introduced by its Chair) unanimously, which prohibits citizens from speaking during their monthly meetings - this includes prohibiting the raising of one's hand requesting to speak (A new policy in its 40-year history). The public can no longer add relevant comments/facts to Motions before the board, unless asked to, no raising of hands allowed, until not only the meeting's end, but only after its adjournment, at which time no Minutes will be kept. City staff representing the Mayor's agenda are exempt.

Further, at its subsequent May Skyway Governance Committee meeting, I requested permission to introduce a Motion for the committee take a position, and only after five months of meetings, on whether or not it supported the early closing of the entire skyway system, not just the Brook's building. Against Robert's Rules of Order, permission to introduce this Motion was denied not only by its Chair, but by the present Chair of the Capitol River Council.

The Chair of the Skyway Governance Committee and one of its Committee Members, both CRC Board Members as well, sit on your Skyway Vitality Working Group:

From your office,

"Who is the Skyway Vitality Working Group? The Skyway Vitality Working Group (SVWG) is a diverse group of residents, building owners and managers and advocates meeting to ensure that the Saint Paul skyway system is vibrant, safe, clean and welcoming for those who use, live and do business downtown..."

Members

Kristin Beckmann, Deputy Mayor, Rebecca Noecker, Councilmember

Kathleen Beck, Saint Paul BOMA (Securian), Lynda Bennett, Face to Face/SafeZone

Mary Britts, Downtown Saint Paul YMCA, Bret Byfield, Radies Health

Patrick Connolly, Connolly Kuhl, Marie Ellis, Saint Paul Area Chamber of Commerce

Andy Flamm, Capitol River Council Skyway Governance Advisory Committee (Cedar Printing)

Joel Franklin, Hallie Q. Brown/Ambassadors Program, Bill Hanley, Capitol River Council Skyway Governance Advisory Committee (Downtown resident), John Harrington, Metro Transit Police, Jerry Hersman, Saint Paul BOMA (Thompson National Properties), Marilyn Porter, Metro Transit"

Of note: One of the CRC Skyway Governance Committee members who sits on your group, is apparently, the only Downtown Resident on the 14-member group. How is this possible, and why? The word "residents" is given top-billing in the SVWG's intro?

Also, both the Saint Paul Area Chamber of Commerce and BOMA (Building Owners and Managers Assoc.) have gone to great lengths to survey their commercial constituents - of course most would not be concerned about early skyway closure. Yet downtown residents have had no organizational defender to date.

REMEDIES

1. I recommended early on, the closing of the skyway system at Midnight, versus 2:00 AM. A compromise which most parties can support and live with.
2. Wholeheartedly, I and others applaud your efforts which are "Examining ordinance changes to clarify expectations of building owners and users of the skyways." Long overdue and Security and Police Officer's jobs will be made much easier.
3. Longer-term solutions are still needed. As I have written previously: Years ago, after City Hall settled on the Light Rail route we now have I recommended for the Light Rail Central Station site a combined Security Center for both Metro-Transit & Saint Paul Police, Secured Public Waiting Room with Restrooms and a monitoring station for a new downtown skyway system-wide, security camera with audio system, to be monitored by Saint Paul Police.

Details about the Metro Transit - Public Waiting Room and Security Center concept:

1. Utilizes the small triangular parcel of public land, on Cedar at Fifth, that is currently a poorly maintained lawn (City plans to install a park here instead can only exasperate existing problems)
2. Design specifically compliments the adjoining stair tower and surrounding buildings
3. Fully accessible and is immediately adjacent to bus stops and the LRT Central Station
4. Provides comfortable seating for 50 with room for those standing
5. Provides for two easily monitored Public Restrooms - much needed in the heart of downtown
6. Provides for an elevated security desk area
7. Provides room for Metro Transit Police - 1st floor, instant access to LRT station, bus stops and designated parking
8. Provides room for Saint Paul Police - 2nd floor, instant access to skyway system, designated parking
9. Provides room for a skyway system-wide, security camera/audio system monitoring station
10. Provides a secured rear exit to move in custody individuals to a police vehicle
11. Retains a garden view for 1st and 2nd floor tenants in the adjacent Athletic Club/Hotel 340 building
12. This location and two-level design allows Police to visually monitor a large area

Lastly, it provides not only an affordable to build, needed transit center the City and Downtown can be truly proud of, but a Welcome Center opportunity as well!

CONCERNS

- Rumors that the city council majority may vote to close the skyway system earlier than midnight, sans your vote, are hopefully rumors. Only Quid Pro Quo could be their reason.
- The concept of distributing Access Cards (to closed skyway connected buildings) to downtown residents as a covert way to keep out the homeless would become a logistics nightmare and a warranted national human rights story Saint Paul leaders should dare not want.

Thank you.

Sincerely yours,
Bill Hosko

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