

**To:** #CI-StPaul\_Ward2

**Subject:** Res PH 17-122: Application for skyway hour exception for Jaunea Brooks/Railroader Building

Dear Council Member Noecker:

I recently watched the 5/17 City Council meeting video, which included a motion by the building manager of the Railroader building to allow her to close her building's skyway earlier than the city's mandated 2:00 AM closing time. As a resident of downtown St Paul, I **strongly encourage** you to **deny** this request when it comes to a vote on June 7th.

While I wholeheartedly agree with her concerns about vagrancy and loitering in the skyways - and strongly feel that something needs to be done to address that situation - I do not believe that closing the skyways early is the right solution. It puts an undue burden on those that use them for transport - particularly in the winter months. In addition, I dispute her contention that the only people that use her skyway are the River Park loft tenants - I have used that skyway at least monthly, if not weekly, over the past 3 years in order to reach the bars/restaurants located in that building, as well as a way to get exercise during the long, cold winter months. I am not alone, as I frequently encounter neighbors walking through the skyways for the same reasons.

Living and working downtown, my family uses the St Paul skyway system on a daily basis and often later into the evenings (well beyond 8:00 pm) in order to enjoy the downtown businesses, bars and restaurants. The skyway hours (and city control of the skyway system) is one of the main reasons we chose to live in downtown St Paul (vs. downtown Minneapolis) nearly 3 years ago when we made the decision to sell our home. We tested out living in Minneapolis and needed to carry a parka because certain parts of the skyway were closed at 8:00 pm, requiring us to enter and exit the skyways at certain buildings from the street level, which was very disagreeable situation as a potential resident. I needed to know which skyways had which hours and it was confusing and not a good experience. I also do not support the recommendation from other council members to consider alternate closing hours for all skyways as this is our main form of transport during the winter. We like to support our St Paul businesses and the skyways allow that to happen.

I would ask the city council to focus on a solution to the problem that does not impact the rights of citizens to fully use the skyways as they were intended - to get from point A to point B in a safe environment. At the same time, I also very much encourage the city to do something to address the actual problem - as her assertions that the skyways no longer feel safe and you never know what you will encounter as you round corners is most definitely true - that is the problem to be solved here.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. If there is any further action I can take to express my support of denying the request, please let me know.

**Shannon Waite**