

9/5/17

Comments for St. Paul City Council Hearing on Item 56 (Ord 17-35) on “Amending Chapter 140 of the City Legislative Code pertaining to Skyway Conduct” on Sept. 5, 2017

From: Ron Anderson, Skyway Resident at Park Towers Condominiums in Landmark Tower
59 W 4th St #23a

The St Paul Skyway Neighborhood is one of the best places to live in the world because it is a walkable urban community reducing consumption of fossil fuel. Also, it benefits local businesses by making it easy for people to get to the business every day of the year.

Also, the City has recently made some skyway-related improvements including:

1. The new seating area at Central Station next to the 5th st bus stop
2. The beautiful new screens on skyways 11, 17, and 18 with photos of diverse people in the Twin Cities.
3. And, of course, the revised Codes of Conduct for the skyway.

I support the adoption of the revised City Codes pertaining to our Skyways, but I want to point to some limitations in the proposed revisions.

Big problems remain:

1. Some elderly residents are afraid to use the skyway and Central Station
2. Downtown real estate values are disappointing.
3. The City does not seem to be preparing for the Feb 4th Super-bowl and the thousands of visitors coming to the city.

Passage of the revised City Skyway Ordinance Codes is not enough. An ongoing oversight committee/council is needed:

1. To advocate for and channel RESOURCES to the skyway system. More resources are needed for policing, inspections, cleaning and patrolling.
2. To help build a sense of community among those living and working on the skyway system. For example, volunteer helpers could be organized like garden clubs.
3. To oversee the DSI to make sure they impose fines on the building owners who repeated violate the Code. For example, the Old Pioneer Press Building at 345 Cedar has been a eyesore for two years while under ownership of absentee owners in South Dakota who never made a single improvement in the building. Now a St Paul company, Real Estate Equities, got City approval for \$24M in bonds to turn it into a ‘workforce housing’ building. But they have missed their scheduled milestones and this awful eyesore will probably stick out like a sore thumb to destroy the positive image of St Paul for the thousands of Super-bowl visitors in February.

Thanks to the City for beginning to make progress on all of these issues.