

Greetings:

I would like to add my voice to the concern over the proposed closure of the Skyway through the Park Square building.

My spouse and I have recently purchased a residence in the River Park Lofts (RPL) building, and one of the primary selling points was its presence on the Skyway. I have some mobility and chronic pain issues, and the Skyway offers a stable and predictable surface that means I can patronize local businesses without difficulty. If the Skyway immediately outside of RPL is closed, we are far less likely to utilize local businesses, especially under inclement weather conditions.

In the short time that we have been at RPL, I have already been frustrated with the locked Skyway access at the Park Square building.

I ask that you please require the owners of Park Square to modify their renovation plan in order to maximize the time that the Skyway is accessible during the project. It is evident from conversations that others have completed building renovations without Skyway access disruption - I see no reason that the expectation should differ in the case of Park Square.

Thank you for your time.

Melissa Powers

Ms. Noecker,

I am a resident of River Park Lofts at 6th and Wacouta. I am very concerned about the potential 3 year closure of the skyway proposed by Park Square for construction. The skyway is important for accessibility to needed services and in inclement weather, just a nice place to walk to get exercise. For several RPL residents it is literally a lifeline due to their need for wheelchairs, walkers and other help devices.

It is my understanding that this will come before the city council at an upcoming meeting. I know the skyway committee and DSI have forwarded a unanimous recommendation that this request be rejected. I know several RPL residents would like to make their voices heard as well. Please advise how this may be done. The proposed closure is unconscionable.

Thank you.

The owners of the Park Square Court are proposing to close the Skyway for three years. This is totally unacceptable for the residents of River Park Lofts.

There are 118 or 119 condos in our building. Many of us purchased our unit because of the building's connection to the Skyway. It makes living downtown tolerable in the winter. Several of my neighbors are handicapped and use wheelchairs. They rely on the Skyway to visit various Skyway businesses - Walgreens, banks, dental offices, library, restaurants, etc. They cannot use the sidewalks in the winter.

I am 82 years old. My wife and I use the Skyway a lot - not only to visit businesses but also for exercise. We don't use the sidewalks in the winter because they are not always clear of snow and ice. And sometimes it is too darn cold.

I attended the Skyway Governance committee this morning. About 40 of my RPL neighbors did too. I understand the closure proposal is coming before the council soon. I hope to attend via Zoom to voice our objection.

Robert Grenier

To the Council,

It has come to my attention that Madison Equities is proposing to completely close Skyway #14 for up to three years for construction/renovation purposes. For many of us in Lowertown this would be untenable.

I am a resident of River Park Lofts in Lowertown. I have lived in the building for approximately six years. One of the reasons that my husband and I bought our unit was because of skyway access. We use the skyway frequently to see our dentist, go to Walgreens, use the ATM machine near Wells Fargo, and many other activities. This would effectively cut off our route as there is no alternative.

More importantly, we have a number of residents in our building who suffer from mobility issues and a closure of such an extensive duration would essentially isolate them from their community. Many of them would not have moved into the building if there was no skyway access.

As you may or may not know, Madison Equities tried to initiate the three year closure without City Council approval in mid-March without offering any advance warning. Their presumption was stunning. This occurred on the 17th with an email going to our condo manager late that morning after they had already locked the door. We had walked to Walgreens via the skyway that morning and found it locked upon our return. There was no signage regarding this, also (I might add) absolutely no construction going on. In addition, Madison Equities knew that this was in blatant violation of skyway regulations but did it anyway. In other words, they did it because they could. In this case many of us fought back with phone calls and emails to DSI which caused Madison Equities to walk back the lockout. We also made our voices heard at the Skyway Committee meeting where the committee's final recommendation was to deny Madison Equities' request for a three year closure of skyway #14. We feel that this is the right decision. As skyway users we are supposed to follow the rules or otherwise face repercussions. It seems that developers can flaunt the rules with only a slap on the hand. We feel that this needs to stop.

We know of other buildings in Lowertown on the skyway system that have undergone similar renovation projects who were able to keep their skyway open during the process or at least for most of the process. There is no reason that M.E. can't do the same.

Their complaints of the expense of doing so as an excuse for closure are nothing more than a ploy to get out of paying for security, etc. at a cost to the welfare of the people that use the skyway. Don't buy into this. Closing skyway #14 for three years would set a dangerous precedent for other developers to follow suit and would accomplish nothing for the city of Saint Paul. My fear is that once the project is completed they will refuse to reopen the skyway, this time claiming security issues for their new residents. Lowertown has many more residential units than it had 10 or even 5 years ago. A vibrant downtown where residents work and play needs to be accessible. Otherwise people will go elsewhere.

Respectfully,

Sandra Smith  
605-940-0065

Hello Councilmember Noecker.

I am a constituent of yours who lives in Lowertown at River Park Lofts. I am forwarding an email that I sent to the Skyway Committee recently regarding a request by Madison Equities to close Skyway #14 for up to three years while they convert Park Square Court to apartments. Please see my comments below. Of note, the developers did briefly close access to the skyway on March 17th without going through the proper channels and without advance notice, only reopening after multiple complaints to DSI.

This issue will be before the City Council in the near future. It is my understanding that the Skyway Committee voted to deny this request. I hope that the City Council follows suit as this proposed closure imposes an unnecessary hardship to the many residents of Lowertown not to mention businesses and their employees who depend on this skyway. This would set a precedent for other developers and would conceivably lead to many more lengthy closures throughout the skyway system.

I appreciate your attention to this matter.

Respectfully,  
Sandy Smith

Hi Rebecca,

Approximately two years ago, we met to talk about sidewalks and wheelchairs. You were very gracious and I was very impressed with you.

Now I reach out to you for your help with Madison equities current as well as proposed Skyway closure.

Find attached my planned testimony to the Skyway advisory committee.

I hope to hear from you and look forward to when I can see you in person after the pandemic. I hope you and those you love are well.

Kindest regards,

Bob Wagner LP