

SDOT Director's Rule Briefing

Skybridge Term Permits

Presentation overview

- Background
- Draft Director's Rule
- Process
- Current skybridge under review

Background

Skybridges are permitted by the City Council by ordinance

- SMC 15.64 – Policy of the City to limit the proliferation and adverse effects of skybridges
- Three types of skybridges:
 - Public use: open to everyone and no access barriers; 10% degree of alienation applied to the annual fee
 - Semi-public use: open to everyone, but access may be through private structure; 75% degree of alienation applied to the annual fee
 - Private use: access is restricted for private users only; 200% degree of alienation applied to the annual fee
- The City is more favorable to skybridges for public or semi-public uses (e.g. university campuses and hospitals) and less favorable to strictly private uses (e.g. connecting residential buildings, garages, etc.)
- If a skybridge permit is approved, the owner is required to provide public benefit and address any impacts

Draft Director's Rule objectives

- Clarify roles of the Skybridge Review Committee and the Seattle Design Commission
- Provides applicant clear information on the process and criteria the City uses to evaluate skybridge applications
- Changes the term of the skybridge permit from three 10-year terms to an initial term of 15 years, with one additional term of 15 years
- Timing – get input from Seattle Design Commission, other SDOT departments, Skybridge Review Committee, SDCI, OPCD, and other stakeholders

Process

Skybridge Review Committee (SRC) reviews applications against criteria in SMC 15.64 and makes a recommendation to the SDOT Director

- Skybridges must meet a compelling need that cannot be addressed without the structure
- The SRC evaluates the public benefit mitigation proposal
- Skybridge must address clearance and other impacts

Seattle Design Commission (SDC) reviews applications, including a public benefit mitigation proposal, and makes a recommendation to the SDOT Director

- For new skybridges:
 - How the urban design implications of a new skybridge on the public realm have been adequately addressed?
 - Does the proposed public benefit mitigation package provide appropriate mitigation to enhance the public realm due to the urban design implications of the skybridge.
- For existing skybridges:
 - Has the existing skybridge contributed to adverse impacts on the public realm at or near its location since its approval?
 - Has the proposed public benefit package adequately addressed those impacts, including its relationship to previously provided public benefits features?

SDOT Director makes recommendation to City Council based on the SRC and SDC recommendations

City Council reviews and decides whether to grant a skybridge permit

Seattle Design Commission Review - new skybridges

The SDC review of the urban design implications of a new skybridge will include an assessment of:

- **Availability of reasonable alternatives** to the skybridge
- **Visual impacts** of the skybridge from locations within the right-of-way, including any view corridors
- The extent to which the skybridge **reduces light and air** on the public realm
- **Changes and effect on pedestrian patterns** both at the street level and within any buildings connected as a result of the skybridge
- **Implications on existing and proposed landscape**
- **Use of materials** in context with surrounding development
- Context of the **surrounding built environment**
- **Public benefit package**

Seattle Design Commission Review - existing skybridges

The SDC evaluation will assess whether the existing skybridge has contributed to adverse impacts on the public realm evaluating by evaluating:

- **Visual impacts** of the structure due to change in the quality of materials, or their maintenance and upkeep
- **Changes in the urban context** resulting in changes to pedestrian movement or volumes at or near the skybridge
- Impacts on the extent and **health of landscape** at or near the skybridge
- How current **standards for accessibility, life safety and structural integrity** affect the use of the skybridge
- **Use of materials** in context with surrounding development
- **Modifications to the skybridge** since its installation that create additional visual impacts
- **Public benefit package**

Current skybridge under review

- University of Washington – U District
 - Working with the UW to bring 5 skybridges under 1 permit
 - 4 fully accessible bridges for the public
 - 1 semi-public bridge connecting UW campus and UW Medical Center
 - UW made improvements to the Burke Gilman Trail adjacent to the Campus as the public benefit
 - Status: Legislation is at City Council



Current skybridge under review

- SMRC Marketside – Post Alley
- Working with the owner to renew a skybridge permit
- 1 fully private pedestrian skybridge for residents at Marketside Flats
- Public benefit includes:
 - Street improvements at Western Ave and Union St
 - Paving, landscaping, bench/traffic barrier, 4 ADA ramps, 2 marked pedestrian crossings
 - Signs indicating route for public access elevators
 - Upgrading “Post Alley” sign
 - Historic marker on Marketside Flats
- Status: Legislation is at City Council



Current skybridge under review

- Westin Hotel – Downtown
 - Originally built in the 1980s
 - Permit expired in 2010
 - Westin initially wanted to remove skybridge
 - New hotel owners decided to renew the permit
 - Semi-public access connecting the Westin to a parking garage
 - Status: waiting for updates requested from Westin on proposed public benefit



Current skybridge projects

- Transforming Age – First Hill
 - New skybridge application to connect 2 residential properties
 - Completely private access for residents and staff only
 - Skybridge Review Committee and Seattle Design Commission did not recommend approval
 - Status: it is unclear if owner will proceed to City Council



Questions?

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