

Seattle Permits

— part of a multi-departmental City of Seattle series on getting a permit

Skybridge Permitting Process

Revised November 29, 2017

Skybridges that project over the public right-of-way are authorized under a City Council approved term permit ordinance. This Client Assistance Memo explains the term permit application process for: 1) new skybridges, 2) existing skybridge due for a term permit renewal, and 3) existing skybridge due for a term permit expiration.

Be advised that additional SDOT Street Use and other City permits may be required for any construction-related activity. Contact publicspace@seattle.gov with further questions.

Before you petition City Council for a new skybridge permit,

- Consider alternatives: the City will only issue permits for skybridges in limited circumstances.
- Review the provisions of Seattle Municipal Code (SMC) 15.64 carefully.
- Set a Skybridge Design Guidance meeting with the City's Skybridge Review Committee (SRC). The SRC is made up of staff from SDOT, DPD, and the Seattle Design Commission. A Skybridge Design Guidance meeting will give the SRC the opportunity to:

- Review the proposal and identify issues,
- Offer alternative suggestions, and
- Offer a threshold assessment of the feasibility of the proposed skybridge.

In addition, the SRC will outline:

- The annual fees (see CAM 2701-Term Permit Fee Methodology), and
- Public benefit installation requirements, time frame, and information necessary for a skybridge petition.

1. Proposed New Skybridge Permit Review and Approval Process

- A. Applicant Contacts SDOT Street Use Division:** The applicant/petitioner contacts SDOT Street Use Division in the early stages of their project to discuss the feasibility of a new skybridge over the right-of-way. The applicant can request an early design guidance meeting with the SRC in order to discuss the proposal.
- B. Applicant Petitions City Council.** If the applicant intends to submit a new skybridge permit application to SDOT, a written petition letter must be filed to the City Council indicating the intent of the applicant (SMC 15.64.020).
- C. Applicant Submits Application to SDOT Street Use Division.** The applicant shall submit to SDOT Street Use Division the following items as required by SMC 15.64.040:
- SDOT Street Use permit application;
 - Conceptual drawings of the proposed skybridge, which shall include its location, size, height above ground surface, and cost estimate;
 - Conceptual drawings of alternatives to the skybridge, with cost estimates;
 - Drawings of the proposed skybridge showing its visual appearance;
 - Photographs of the location and immediately surrounding area;
 - An environmental checklist as defined by WAC 197-11-742 and WAC 197-11-960 and adopted by SMC Sections 25.05.315 and 25.05.960;
 - A statement of the reasons for the necessity of the proposed skybridge and intended use, including whether the facility is intended for general public use or more limited private use;
 - Conceptual drawings of proposed public benefit mitigation installations;
 - A deposit of \$1,720 to cover the City's administrative expenses;
 - Pedestrian and traffic studies of the proposed skybridge vicinity; and

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- Any additional information deemed necessary for processing the application.

D. SDOT Street Use Convenes the Skybridge Review Committee. The SRC will meet to discuss the application. The SRC will determine if the applicant should proceed with the skybridge design and petition, proceed at their own risk, or clearly seek an alternative (in case of a view corridor). The SRC may request an additional meeting with the applicant if they have questions, the application is not complete, or to provide feedback. The SRC will verify with the SDOT Traffic Engineer that the proposal is feasible. The SRC will draft a recommendation to the SDOT Director on the proposal.

E. Applicant Presents Proposal to the Seattle Design Commission for Review and Recommendation. The Seattle Design Commission will review the skybridge application and public benefit installation as presented by the applicant. The Seattle Design Commission will then transmit their recommendation to the SDOT Director.

F. SDOT Director Action. The SDOT Director reviews the recommendations of the SRC and the Seattle Design Commission and recommends to Council approval or denial of the the skybridge application.

G. SDOT Notifies Applicant. The applicant is notified of the Director's decision. If denied, the applicant may choose to withdraw their petition and close out the City Clerk file through Council Action or proceed to City Council knowing that the SDOT Director will recommend that Council not approve the proposal.

If approved, SDOT will schedule the application for the Council Transportation Committee and forward the draft legislation to City Council for review and preliminary conceptual approval by Resolution.

H. If Preliminary Conceptual Approved is granted by the City Council:

- Applicant shall submit construction plans to SDOT Street Use Division and DPD for final technical review and construction permitting. The departments shall review the structural adequacy and potential conflict with existing or proposed utilities, street lighting, traffic control devised, or other upcoming transportation projects.
- SDOT confirms that construction plans are in substantial conformance with the preliminary

application, including any requirements or conditions set by Council.

- Upon completion of review, SDOT makes a final recommendation to Council for approval or denial of application. Street Use drafts legislation that specifies the terms, conditions, and fees associated with the term permit. Approval is granted by City Council ordinance.

I. Applicant Finalizes Skybridge Term Permit Ordinance. Applicant submits the following within 60-days of the effective date of the ordinance in order to finalize the term permit:

- Letter accepting the terms and conditions of the ordinance;
- Required insurance, indemnity agreement, and bond documentation;
- Required structural report; and
- Coordinate installation schedule for the public benefit installations.

SDOT will forward the required documents for filing with the City Clerk and prepare the permit for the collection of the annual fee. If these items are not submitted by the deadline, the ordinance will be deemed lapsed and forfeited.

2. Existing Skybridge Permit Renewals Review and Approval Process

Generally, skybridge term permits are approved for a term of 10-years, which can be renewed twice, not to exceed a maximum of a 30-year term. If the skybridge term permit has reached the maximum 30-year term and is due to expire, the owner must follow the requirements of Section 3 below. The owner must contact SDOT Street Use division at least 180 days prior to the expiration date of the term with their intent to renew or remove the skybridge.

A. If an applicant seeks to renew an existing skybridge permit 10-year term, they must submit the following:

- Copies of current insurance and bond documentation as required by the authorizing ordinance;
- A statement of the current use of the skybridge, including whether the use has changed since the skybridge was originally permitted;
- Photographs of the skybridge and immediately surrounding area;
- Plans or drawings of the skybridge, which shall include its location, size, height above ground surface, and any modifications;

- A deposit of \$1,032 to cover the City’s administrative expenses; and
- Any additional information deemed necessary for processing the application.

B. SDOT will review:

- If the right-of-way is needed for any street or utility purpose;
- The fees and adequacy of the insurance provisions, bonds, or maintenance agreements;
- If the skybridge is still in use, maintained, and if the applicant has met all the other conditions of the term permit ordinance; and
- Verify if the authorizing ordinance needs to be amended in order to conform with current standards.

C. If term permit renewal is approved, the renewal may occur in one of two ways:

- If amendments are **not** required in the authorizing ordinance, SDOT may renew the term permit administratively.
- If amendments are required, SDOT will prepare legislation to amend the authorizing ordinance and renew the term. Approval is granted by City Council ordinance. Applicant will then be required to finalize the new term permit ordinance as detailed in Section 1.I above.

3. Existing Expired Skybridge Permit Review and Approval Process

If an existing skybridge has a term permit ordinance that has reached its maximum term and is due to expire, the owner must reapply for a new skybridge term permit or begin the skybridge removal process. The owner must contact SDOT Street Use division at least 180 days prior to the expiration date to inform SDOT of their intent.

If the owner intends to reapply for a new skybridge term permit ordinance, it will be considered and reviewed like it is a new skybridge application. The applicant shall follow steps 1.A-1.F (the application submittals are a modified in 3.A), including review and presentation to the SRC and Seattle Design Commission. The SRC may review for consistency with current City plans, zoning, or code requirements; justification for the ongoing need for the skybridge; whether there are changed conditions in the area; current business needs of the skybridge; and assessment of whether there have been impacts over time on the pedestrian environment and streetscape.

A. Applicant Submits Application to SDOT Street Use Division. The applicant shall submit to SDOT

Street Use Division the following items before a skybridge petition will be accepted and reviewed:

- SDOT Street Use permit application;
- Copies of current insurance and bond documentation as required by the authorizing ordinance;
- A statement of the current use of the skybridge, including whether the use has changed since the skybridge was originally permitted;
- Photographs of the skybridge and immediately surrounding area;
- Plans or drawings of the skybridge, which shall include its location, size, height above ground surface, and any modifications;
- Conceptual drawings of proposed public benefit mitigation installations;
- A deposit of \$1,376 to cover the City’s administrative expenses;
- Pedestrian and traffic studies of the skybridge vicinity; and
- Any additional information deemed necessary for processing the application.

B. SDOT Notifies Applicant. The applicant is notified of the Director’s decision based on the recommendations of the SRC and Seattle Design Commission. If denied, the applicant may choose to withdraw their petition and close out the City Clerk file through Council Action and begin the skybridge removal process. If approved, SDOT will schedule the application for the Council Transportation Committee and forward the draft legislation that specifies the terms, conditions, and fees associated with the new term permit. Approval is granted by City Council ordinance.

C. Applicant Finalizes Skybridge Term Permit Ordinance. Applicant submits the following within 60-days of the effective date of the ordinance in order to finalize the new term permit:

- Letter accepting the terms and conditions of the ordinance;
- Required insurance, indemnity agreement, and bond documentation;
- Required structural report; and
- Coordinate installation schedule for the public benefit installations.

SDOT will forward the required documents for filing with the City Clerk and prepare the permit for the collection of the annual fee. If these items are not submitted by the deadline, the ordinance will be deemed lapsed and forfeited.