

## Meeting Agendas/Info

CITY COUNCIL  
COMMUNICATION:

ITEM \_\_\_\_\_

01-434

**OFFICE OF THE CITY MANAGER  
CITY OF DES MOINES, IOWA**

**AGENDA:**

AUGUST 20, 2001

**SUBJECT:**

REVIEW OF  
SKYWALK  
CORRIDOR DESIGN  
FOR CORRIDOR  
OVER ALLEY FROM  
EMC BUILDING TO  
BRIDGE 8C-9C  
OVER 8TH STREET

**SYNOPSIS -**

Under the skywalk agreement between the City of Des Moines and Employers Mutual Company (EMC), EMC is responsible for the design and construction of the skywalk corridor that connects its new office building westward to 8th Street. This skywalk corridor, located over the east-west alley, is very close to the existing buildings on both sides of the alley, which creates design and construction constraints that limit the corridor width. The Urban Renewal Board has recommended a change in the skywalk ordinance specifying the required width of a skywalk corridor constructed over an alley, where existing buildings restrict the width of corridor, be reduced from 14 feet to a minimum width of 13 feet, free and clear of any obstructions or intrusions.

**TYPE:**

None.

**RESOLUTION**  
ORDINANCE  
RECEIVE/FILE

**RECOMMENDATION -**

**Approval.**

**SUBMITTED BY:**

FLOYD BENTZ, P.E.  
CITY ENGINEER

**BACKGROUND -**

Under their skywalk agreement, EMC is responsible for the design and construction of the skywalk corridor that connects its new office building west to 8th Street. Wells Fargo Financial will be constructing additional skywalk bridges and corridors connecting their new office building and parking garage to this skywalk system and further extending the system west. This proposed corridor is located over the east-west alley, and the close proximity of existing buildings on both sides of the alley creates design and construction constraints that limit the width of the corridors.

Brooks, Borg and Skiles, the design firm for EMC, developed the preliminary design for this alley corridor. The alley under this corridor is heavily used by delivery trucks for the EMC buildings and has a special snow melt system under the pavement. Because of this usage and underground system, column footings for the freestanding skywalk structure need to be kept to a minimum number. In addition, the adjacent buildings do not provide a floor elevation that is close to the elevation needed to match the bridge across 8th Street to connect to the new Wells Fargo Financial building. The buildings are also not suitable for directly attaching and supporting the skywalk corridor structure.

The close proximity of the building facades, especially the south EMC building, make it impossible to construct and maintain the structure with a full 14-foot width as required by the current ordinance. Staff believes the designers have made an exhaustive review of design alternatives and cannot find an alternative that is constructable to meet the required 14-foot width. The selected structural design using a relatively thin truss on each side of the structure is an efficient and cost-effective design solution that minimizes the number of columns in the alley.

The current ordinance recognizes that constructing corridors in existing buildings may encounter conditions that may make it very difficult to provide the full 14-foot width and provides some exceptions for those conditions.

At a joint meeting on July 17, 2001, the Architectural Advisory Committee and Urban Renewal Board recommended that the ordinance be amended to add another exception to the 14-foot width for a corridor over an alley between existing buildings to reduce the minimum width to 13 feet.

The following ordinance change is necessary to implement the exception for reduced skywalk corridor width.

**SEC. 102-329. DEVELOPMENT CRITERIA.**

(f) Skywalk corridors shall conform to the following minimum design standards:

(1) *Width.* Skywalk corridors shall have a minimum width of 14 feet free and clear of any obstructions or intrusions. However, in the following circumstances, the lesser widths specified may be allowed:

a. Where a column, pipe or other

integral structural feature or member of an existing building will intrude into a skywalk corridor, such corridor and the easement therefor shall be for that narrower width for the minimum distance which is necessary to prevent such intrusion.

b. Where a skywalk corridor is constructed over an alley between existing buildings, and where a column, pipe or other integral structural feature or member of an existing building or buildings restrict the available width for construction of the skywalk corridor, such corridor and the easement therefor shall be of the maximum width that can reasonably be constructed, such reduced width shall be for the minimum distance possible, and no portion of the corridor shall be less than 13 feet free and clear of any obstructions or intrusions.

~~b.~~ c. Where the easement for a skywalk corridor is in a building corridor already constructed as of July 3, 1980, such skywalk corridor shall have a minimum width of 12 feet free and clear of any obstructions or intrusions.

~~e.~~ d. The city council in its discretion may accept a right to an easement for a skywalk corridor 14 feet in width and may restrict the actual width of the easement for a skywalk corridor to no less than 12 feet in those situations where on one side of the skywalk corridor any barricade wall or other physical barrier or obstruction, including but not limited to chain-link mesh, clear glass or other material, which stands or is erected or placed between such corridor and the abutting private property interest, meets all of the following criteria during the regular

hours the building or business in which  
the skywalk corridor is located is open:

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