

November 2, 2005

To the Public Works Committee

Subject: Common Council Resolution File Number 050222

Dear Honorable Members:

This letter addresses Common Council Resolution File Number 050222, being a request by Water Street Lofts, LLC for an amended special privilege to construct and keep a platform with steps with iron guardrail and gate to encroach into the public right-of-way of North Water Street, at the building located at 301 North Water Street. Due to the adverse effects upon use of the public right-of-way, we do not recommend that this petition for an amended special privilege be granted.

The request is to amend Common Council File Number 020386, an existing special privilege to Water Street Lofts, LLC, which grants permission for various items into the public right-of-way of East Buffalo Street, to allow a platform with steps with iron guardrail and gate to encroach into the fully paved west sidewalk area of North Water Street. Said steps would descend from the sidewalk level down to the basement level and would provide access to a business at the basement level from outside of the building. The platform and steps would project approximately 4 feet into the north 9-foot wide sidewalk area of North Water Street leaving only 5 feet of sidewalk width available for pedestrian traffic. Where there is full sidewalk, the minimum design standard width for sidewalk is 8 feet. Should this platform and stairs be constructed, the effective width of the walk at this location would only be 5 feet. In addition to restricting the flow of pedestrian traffic, decreasing the effective sidewalk width to 5 feet raises concerns regarding snow storage during the winter months and the possibility of an even narrower section of sidewalk at this location.

In general, the proposed platform, steps and iron guardrail, if built, would become a significant obstruction in the pedestrian clear path of travel. This restricted sidewalk width will cause significant pedestrian conflicts in an area of the city that experiences high volumes of pedestrian traffic both during regular times and during special events, including Summer Fest, other summer festivals, and Gallery Night. Because there is a "no parking/loading zone" in front of the proposed location for this platform with steps, it is conceivable that pedestrians may enter the roadway to pass each other.

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Due to the adverse effects the petitioned platform with steps with iron guardrail and gate will have on the public right-of-way of North Water Street, in particular the west, 9-foot sidewalk area, we do not recommend amending the special privilege to include a platform with steps with iron guardrail and gate. We request that Common Council File Number 050222 be placed on file and that Common Council File Number 020386 remain in force. Should the Public Works Committee choose to act on this matter, a drafted resolution is attached for the Committee's review.

Very truly yours,

Jeffrey S. Polenske, P.E.  
City Engineer

Jeffrey J. Mantes, P.E.  
Commissioner of Public Works

Martin G. Collins  
Commissioner  
Department of Neighborhood Services

MDL:lja