



350 S. Water Street

Request to Deviate from Performance or Design Standards Within an Overlay Zone

Project Overview

Submission Date: 12/16/2025

Revised Date: 1/9/2026

Existing Conditions

Pontis, LLC owns the 14,547-square-foot property at 350 S. Water Street, located along the Milwaukee River within the Milwaukee Riverwalk Site Plan Review Overlay Zone (SPROZ). The parcel is currently vacant and intermittently used for boat storage. No Riverwalk currently exists on the site or on immediately adjacent parcels.

The site is between an approximately 150-foot-tall decommissioned silo to the north and a railroad-owned parcel to the south. The railroad controls a portion of the southeast corner of the site, reducing the buildable Riverwalk length to approximately 29 feet. These conditions are pre-existing and outside the control of the applicant.

Proposed Development

The project proposes construction of a five-story office building. The ground floor includes parking, a lobby, and building support spaces, with office uses on the upper four floors (B Occupancy). The project will deliver the first Riverwalk segment along this portion of the west bank of the Milwaukee River.

Riverwalk Design

The proposed Riverwalk fully complies with all applicable SPROZ design standards and is intended to integrate seamlessly into the future Riverwalk system as adjacent parcels redevelop.

Riverwalk features include:

- Decorative concrete walking surface with saw-cut patterning
- Integrated seating elements oriented toward the river
- In-ground landscaping with year-round interest
- River-oriented harp lighting feature
- A permanent 42-inch-high metal-capped cable railing along the dock wall

KORB

Temporary railing sections will be installed at the north and south ends of the Riverwalk segment to provide fall protection until future Riverwalk connections are constructed on adjacent parcels.

The Riverwalk is designed and graded to allow future physical connections to the north and south when adjacent properties are redeveloped. City-identified public access to this portion of the Riverwalk system is planned via existing public alleys located approximately 100 feet and 575 feet north of the site.

Safety Considerations and Mitigation Elements

At the time of initial construction, several site-specific safety conditions exist:

- The north-side pathway is a code-required building egress-only route, not a circulation path or public access route. The egress pathway terminates at the Riverwalk and does not connect to adjacent parcels, which are currently unimproved and lack Riverwalk infrastructure.
- The configuration of the adjacent silo, the proposed building, and the isolated Riverwalk segment creates a condition that Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) guidance identifies as an entrapment zone—a narrow, confined space with limited visibility, no passive surveillance, and no secondary means of escape. CPTED best practices advise that public access should not be introduced into such conditions. For this safety and security reason this path will be gated.
- The proposed Riverwalk elevation is approximately 3 feet above the grade of the property to the north, and the trestle structure and eroded soils to the south present fall hazards until adjacent parcels are redeveloped.
- There is currently no sidewalk or pedestrian infrastructure on the east side of S. Water Street serving this site from Pittsburg Street to National Avenue, underscoring the lack of safe, continuous public access in the immediate area.

Temporary Safety Elements

To address these interim safety conditions, Pontis LLC will install:

- Removable guardrails at the north and south termini of the Riverwalk segment
- A secured, temporary gate at the street-side entrance to the north egress path



These measures prevent entry into an isolated, entrapment zone and will remain in place only until adjacent parcels are redeveloped and a safe, continuous Riverwalk corridor is established.

Deviation Request

Pontis LLC requests a limited, temporary deviation from the 24-hour public access requirement until the Riverwalk system is extended on adjacent parcels and connected via the City alleys identified by DCD as future public connectors.

At present, connectivity is not possible because:

- The parcel to the south is owned by the railroad and does not include a Riverwalk
- The parcel to the north is undeveloped and does not include a Riverwalk

The proposed Riverwalk segment is fully compliant with all applicable SPROZ design standards and is constructed to be ready for future connection. The requested deviation is narrow, temporary, and necessary to preserve public safety while allowing high-quality Riverwalk construction to proceed now.

Limitation of Approval

The approval of this deviation, as it relates to the Riverwalk SPROZ, is specific to the building plans and design included in this file. If the building is not constructed as approved, this approval relating to the Riverwalk SPROZ is null and void.



350 S. Water Street

Request to Deviate from Performance or Design Standards Within an Overlay Zone

Criteria for Deviation

Submitted: 12/16/25

295-311-9-c-1. The purpose of the overlay zone is met.

The project advances the purpose and intent of the Milwaukee Riverwalk SPROZ by constructing the first Riverwalk segment along this stretch of the riverfront and planning explicitly for future connectivity and public access.

Once the temporary restriction on 24-hour access is lifted, the Riverwalk will:

- Provide public access to the riverfront
- Maintain visual and physical connection to the river
- Integrate into the broader Riverwalk system as adjacent parcels develop
- Advance Riverwalk construction along an otherwise undeveloped river edge
- Preserve public safety during interim conditions
- Align with the City's adopted plan for Riverwalk access via existing public alleys

295-311-9-c-2. The deviation improves the aesthetics of the site.

The site is currently a vacant, fenced parcel. Development of the site and construction of a Riverwalk segment will significantly enhance the appearance and spur future functionality of the riverfront. The requested deviation does not diminish these improvements and is temporary in nature, with the end goal of full Riverwalk connectivity and public access.

295-311-9-c-3. If applicable, the deviation addresses one or more unique site factors that make application of the standard impractical.

Unique site conditions include:

- An isolated Riverwalk condition adjacent to an egress pathway that constitutes an entrapment zone until neighboring parcels are redeveloped
- Grade differentials between the site and adjacent parcels requiring interim fall protection
- Eroded soils and aging trestle infrastructure presenting safety hazards at the Riverwalk termini
- Absence of pedestrian sidewalk infrastructure along S. Water Street

These factors make immediate 24-hour public access impractical and unsafe.



295-311-9-c-4. The deviation is consistent with the comprehensive plan.

The requested deviation is consistent with the City of Milwaukee Comprehensive Plan and Riverwalk policies, which support incremental Riverwalk expansion, high-quality urban design, and safe public access to the waterfront. Constructing a compliant Riverwalk segment now—while deferring full public access until planned connections are in place—aligns with the City's long-term vision and phased implementation strategy for the Riverwalk system.