

DPD

Director's Rule 34 - 2006

Applicant: City of Seattle Department of Planning and Development	Page 1 of 2	Supersedes: N/A
	Publication: 12/7/06	Effective: 12/26/06
Subject: Pedestrian Bridges in the Conservancy Waterway Shoreline Environment	Code and Section Reference: SMC 23.60	
	Type of Rule: Code Interpretation	
	Ordinance Authority: SMC 3.06.040	
Index: Shoreline Master Program	Approved (signature on file) Diane M. Sugimura, Director, DPD	Date 12/26/06

Background:

The City's Shoreline Master Program permits pedestrian bridges in the Conservancy Waterway (CW) environment "that provide public access along or across the waterway when they connect parts of a public park" (SMC 23.60.482). This rule interprets this provision in a way that will make development of pedestrian bridges consistent with the purpose of the CW shoreline designation and other parts of the Shoreline Master Program.

Rule

- A. Bridge Location. Pedestrian bridges must connect dry land that existed on or before April 20, 2006.
- B. Access to Waterway Shorelines: All parcels abutting the shoreline of a waterway that is shoreward of a pedestrian bridge shall be held in public ownership.
- C. Navigation. Development of a pedestrian bridge in the Conservancy Waterway shall not substantially alter navigability of the subject waterway
- D. Bridge Height. Structural supports for pedestrian bridges in the CW environment may exceed the 15-foot height provided that:

1. The deck of the bridge is at or below the 15-foot height limit.
2. The support structures do not obstruct the view of the shoreline of a substantial number of residences on areas adjoining the subject shorelines.
3. The width of any support structure which is over height shall not exceed 50% of the width of the waterway.
4. Exceptions to the height limit for support structures shall not be greater than 3 feet over the 15-foot height limit (18 feet).

Reason

As stated in the Shoreline Master Program,

The purpose of the CW Environment is to preserve the waterways for navigation and commerce, including public access to and from water areas. Since the waterways are public ways for water transport, they are designated CW to provide navigational access to adjacent properties, access to and from land for the loading and unloading of watercraft and temporary moorage.

The Shoreline Master Program generally prohibits creation of dry land in the shoreline environment. Creation of dry land in the CW environment does not advance the purpose of the CW shoreline designation. Permitting pedestrian bridges in the Conservancy Waterway environment is not intended to encourage or allow creation of dry land in the shoreline environment.

Providing shoreline access to water-dependent commercial uses is one purpose of the CW shoreline environment. Permitting a pedestrian bridge in the CW environment is consistent with the purpose of the CW environment only when there are no existing or anticipated commercial uses requiring access to the waterway and navigational access is maintained. Requiring that all parcels abutting waterway shorelines be held in public ownership as a condition for establishing a pedestrian bridge use ensures that no water-dependent commercial uses will lose access to the waterway.

Establishing a pedestrian bridge in the CW environment is not intended to compromise the navigability of a waterway. Because waterways can vary in the degree to which different types of watercraft can use them based on depth, width and other factors, it is difficult to establish a single standard for waterway navigability. This rule establishes a minimal standard that establishment of a pedestrian bridge must not result in a substantial decrease in the type of watercraft able to navigate the waterway.

Permitting bridges in shoreline environments means that in some circumstances engineering requirements may require structural supports that exceed the height limit in the CW environment. The City's shoreline policies (Comprehensive Plan Policy Land Use 270) support an exception to height limits when "greater height is necessary for bridges or the operational needs of water dependent or water-related uses or manufacturing uses." Bridges in other shorelines are exempt from height limits. Allowing for minor exceptions to height limits in the CW environment is consistent with policy LU 270 in that it provides for necessary structural supports that may exceed the 15 foot height limit. Limiting the deck to 15 feet ensures that the intent of the lower height limit is achieved. Visual access is preserved by ensuring that views from upland residential uses are not obstructed and that the width of any structure that exceeds the 15-foot height limit be limited to 50% or less, consistent with CW development standards requiring view corridors. Finally, this rule allows only incidental exceptions by limiting structural supports to a maximum height of 3 feet over the height limit.