

May 15, 2024

To: Mayor and Members of City Council

From: Sheryl M.M. Long, City Manager

202401351

Subject: Emergency Ordinance – Approving and Authorizing a Funding Agreement for the Walnut Street Skywalk Removal with The Model Group

Attached is an Emergency Ordinance captioned:

AUTHORIZING the City Manager to execute a Funding Agreement with The Model Group, Inc., providing for a grant from the City to fund (i) the removal of the elevated pedestrian skywalk bridge above Walnut Street that connects the Mercantile Library Building to the US Bank Tower, and (ii) the restoration of the public right-of-way along Walnut Street, and the exterior, façade, and limited interior portions of those buildings; **AUTHORIZING** the removal of said skywalk bridge and the release and quitclaim of certain public walkway easements over and through the Mercantile Library Building; **AUTHORIZING** the transfer and appropriation of the sum of \$1,753,337 from the unappropriated surplus of Downtown South/Riverfront Equivalent Fund 481 (Downtown South/Riverfront TIF District) to the Department of Community and Economic Development non-personnel operating budget account no. 481x164x7200 to provide resources for the demolition and removal of the elevated pedestrian skywalk bridge above Walnut Street that connects the Mercantile Library Building to the US Bank Tower, restoration of the façades of such buildings, and other public improvements in support of such project; and further **DECLARING** expenditures from such account related to the demolition of the skywalk bridge, the façade restoration activities, and the other public improvements in support of such project to be a public purpose and constitute a “Public Infrastructure Improvement” (as defined in Ohio Revised Code Section 5709.40(A)(8)) that will benefit and/or serve the District 2-Downtown South/Riverfront District Incentive District, subject to compliance with Ohio Revised Code Sections 5709.40 through 5709.43.

BACKGROUND/CURRENT CONDITIONS

With the redevelopment of the Mercantile Building, the Walnut Street Skywalk, which connects the Mercantile Building (414 Walnut Street) and the US Bank Tower (425 Walnut Street), no longer contributes to the downtown pedestrian network, nor does it serve the new use of the Mercantile Building, which is being converted into a primarily residential use. The City intends to enter into a funding agreement with The Model

Group, Inc. to facilitate the demolition of the skywalk, restore the building exteriors, and interior restorations of the former skywalk easement paths.

CONTRACTOR INFORMATION

The Model Group has developed more than \$750 Million in real estate, including over 400 historic properties in Ohio. This includes a diverse mix of market rate and affordable residential, as well as commercial real estate. TMG has extensive experience working with multiple funding sources, routinely layering them together in complex financing structures to maximize the impact of scarce resources and get challenging projects completed. TMG is also presently mobilized for their work on the adjacent Mercantile Center and are best positioned to facilitate the demolition.

PROJECT INFORMATION

The City of Cincinnati intends to enter into a funding agreement, for \$1,753,337, with The Model Group to facilitate the demolition of the Walnut Street Skywalk. The Model Group, who is already renovating the Mercantile Building adjacent to the site, will then demolish the skywalk and restore the facades and limited interior restoration of public easement areas of the two buildings connected by the bridge.

The project will consist of three major public infrastructure improvements:

1. Removal of the existing skywalk bridge between the US Bank Tower and Mercantile Building.
2. Restore and rebuild the façade, exterior wall construction, windows to match the existing adjacent building façade, of the Mercantile Building
3. Restore and re-build the building façade, exterior wall construction, and windows to match the existing adjacent building façade of the US Bank Tower.

The project will also consist of private improvements within the interiors of both the Mercantile Building and the US Bank Tower.

RECOMMENDATION

The Administration recommends approval of this Emergency Ordinance.

Attachment: Project Outline

Copy: Markiea L. Carter, Director, Department of Community & Economic Development

Project Image

