create space : create value

Space Syntax

4 Huguenot Place
Heneage Street
London
E1 5LN
United Kingdom

T +44 (0) 20 7422 7600
F +44 (0) 20 7422 7601

london@spacesyntax.com

London
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Honorable Mayor Ralph Becker,

I am writing with regard to the proposed skybridge in downtown Salt Lake City, part of the City Creek Center Development. The skybridge is at the heart of the City Creek Center Development and is proposed to span Main Street.

As North American Director for Space Syntax Limited, an international design consultancy based in London, England, I was intrigued to read about this proposal on a high profile urban planning website. I contacted Kathleen J. Hill (who was mentioned in the article) and after a short conversation, decided to contact you directly.

Space Syntax is internationally recognized for our urban development, public space, and place making expertise. Our work is based on over 30 years of professional and academic research into the factors that make successful urban places; factors that have been tested and validated in over 1,000 projects worldwide. We are experts on retail layout, urban accessibility, and visitor search and have dealt with the issue of skybridges and their effects on movement, retail spend, and property values on many occasions.

The issue of elevated walkways and skybridges is a familiar issue here in the United Kingdom. We have worked on many similar projects in the past and have learned some important lessons that may be of value to you as you deliberate on this difficult issue. I would like to share them with you below:

1. *Sky bridges don't work complex urban environments* – Skybridges work best in simple settings such as large transit interchanges, airports, or corporate office parks; places where the logic of origins and destinations is simple and fixed. They tend to be much less successful in complex urban environments where people prefer many different routes to many different destinations. Many cities built skybridges in the 1960's and 1970's, only to tear them down again at great expenses in the 1990's and 2000's for this vary reason.

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Space Syntax Limited
Registered Office
30 City Road
London
EC1Y 2AB

Registered in England
No. 2404770

www.spacesyntax.com

2. *When they do work, they tend to remove life from surrounding streets* – Good urban places provide the opportunity to do a variety of things at once; shop, see friends, run errands, sightsee, work, etc. Pedestrians on skybridges are forced to behave in a single, limited way, robbing them of the opportunity to take full advantage of the social and economic activities that open streets encourage. This can have real, negative economic consequences on local businesses and social activities.

3. *There are more creative alternatives to a skybridge that would provide additional benefits to both the Center and its surroundings* – The proposed skybridge is at the heart of the City Creek Center development. Providing a world-class public space at the heart of the City Creek Center would serve the needs of both the Center and the City. This will add value to both in a way that a simple engineering solution could not.

The skybridge is likely to have a significant impact on existing pedestrian movement patterns. This impact can either be beneficial or detrimental. In order to better understand its effect, we recommend the following questions be studied before making any decision:

- What does the current pattern of pedestrian movement look like?
- How do volumes vary across the day and across the week?
- How does the pattern distribute itself geographically?
- How much additional movement will be generated by the new development?
- How will the new and the existing patterns overlap and interact?
- Will the skybridge provide a convenient connection for existing pedestrians?
- If so, how will future pedestrian movement patterns be affected?

Salt Lake City and The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints are about to make a historic decision that will significantly influence the success of the downtown area over the next 30 years. We believe that it is possible to create cities that create a more humane public realm and make successful financial returns, but only if done right. There are necessary and important questions that should be addressed before a final decision is made. Although we cannot comment in detail on such a complex project without further study, it would be our honor to discuss the matter with you further at your soonest convenience.

Yours sincerely,

Noah Raford
Director, North America
n.raford@spacesyntax.com