

Mayor Wheeler and Commissioners:

I urge you to reject the Amendment to the Madison St. Vacation Ordinance, in item 391 (Thursday, April 20, 2:00 PM), that would allow the Portland Art Museum to further restrict access through the route of vacated Madison St. between SW Park and SW 10th Ave.

Since 1968, when the City allowed the museum to "vacate" Madison St. between Park and 10th, the public has been allowed to walk through the passage, between 7 AM and 11 PM, with no doors or buildings blocking the way. In 2007 the Eliot Tower granted a public passage on an adjacent block, between 10th and 11th, extending this pedestrian walkway another block to the west. Here's the space today:



The Art Museum wants to build a building across the plaza, to add more space and improve patron flow. While they propose to let non-patrons to walk through the doors of the building, it will be only from 10 AM to 5 PM, Tuesday through Saturday. This would, of course, exclude those getting to work, going home, walking in the evening or on Sunday, etc. While cyclists can walk their bikes through the existing passage, and walkers can take their dogs, both would appear to be prohibited in the proposal.

The building would look to the passerby like a blockage of the Madison St. easement, and people would not feel like it was a public passageway.



The Art Museum should go back to the drawing board, and direct their architect to think outside this glass box.

This isn't the only way the museum can expand, or can make a connected passage between buildings. The Chazen Museum of art in Madison WI, recently built a connecting second floor to span to a new building, leaving open and welcoming pedestrian access between the buildings:



This is just one of many creative solutions that the Museum should consider before creating a visual blockage and actual prohibition for most of the day, of an important connector between the Park blocks and the Streetcar stop on 10th, as well as hundreds of residences to the west. One count, last May, showed 667 people using the passage in one day! Many of them passed through before 10 AM and after 5 PM, which would now be prohibited.

The Portland Pedestrian Advisory Committee and Bicycle Advisory Committee have both opposed this.

As a long-time pedestrian advocate and co-founder of Oregon Walks, I have been working for decades to keep and improve pedestrian connectivity throughout our city. Please reject this amendment to the vacation ordinance, and direct the applicant to look for another way to meet their worthy goals.

Thank you.

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