



Yovani Baez-Rose
Assistant City Manager/DPD Director

Camilo Espitia
Deputy Director

MEMORANDUM

TO: Thomas A. Golden, Jr., City Manager 

FROM: Yovani Baez-Rose, Assistant City Manager/DPD Director

CC: Brianna Martinez, Design Planner
Sarah Brown, Chief Design Planner

SUBJECT: MOTION RESPONSE: 5/6/25 - C. Scott/C. Yem - Req. City Mgr. have the appropriate department explore the feasibility of installing a floating walkway connecting Dutton Street to Western Ave.

DPD conducted preliminary research into various boardwalks and floating walkways to determine the feasibility of creating a connection between Western Ave Studios and Downtown Lowell via the Pawtucket Canal. DPD expects the desired connection would require approximately 400 linear feet of walkway along the Pawtucket Canal; and accessible ramps to the Canal at Thorndike St. and Western Ave. Studios. The following precedents highlight potential structures, costs, and maintenance requirements:

[Lake Williams Floating Boardwalk: Marlborough, MA](#)

This half-mile long floating boardwalk completes the 1.5-mile-long trail loop around Lake Williams. The boardwalk does not need to be removed for winter each year, but does close to the public. Construction of the boardwalk connection cost roughly \$2 million dollars.

[Troy Marina – Troy, NY](#)

400 LF of docking space, also serving as a walkway, along the Hudson river allows park visitors to get closer to the water. The dock is open May thru October.

[Wild Mile – Chicago, IL](#)

This 700 foot long boardwalk provides educational and recreational opportunities related to the attached floating wetlands. Because the North Branch Canal does not freeze, the floating wetlands and boardwalk do not need to be removed for the winter. This project is part of a phased plan to create a mile-long floating wetland corridor; \$1.6 million was spent on building 12,000 SF of floating wetland and 400 LF of walkway.

To move forward with a floating walkway on the Pawtucket Canal, the following action items would need to be addressed:

- Coordinate with DCR, NPS & Boot Hydro regarding existing canal use and programming.
- Obtain easement agreements from multiple property owners.
- Address any permitting requirements related, but not limited to, impacting a navigable waterway and the Wetlands Protection Act.
- Consult Lowell Historic Board to discuss any design and aesthetic requirements.
- Seek funding for the design, permitting, and construction of the structure, estimated at \$2M.
- Engineer an accessible connection to the canal on multiple properties, and ensure proper safety measures are in place in relation to water levels and pedestrian head clearance below the railroad tracks.

DPD is excited to pursue discussions about this potential project with DCR, NPS and Boot Hydro. After those initial discussions DPD can update the Council regarding a strategy to move this project forward.

BM/ ybr