

**STATE OF MINNESOTA**  
**ACCESS REVIEW BOARD**

In the Matter of the Application of  
Insurance Office Building

FINAL DECISION  
Dated: May 1, 2025

Application No. 25-03

This matter came on for hearing before the Access Review Board (“Board”) on April 11, 2025. The record closed at the conclusion of the hearing.

Board Chair Karen Gridley, Elise Wehrman, and Jim Weaver were present in person, while Board member David Fenley was present via teleconference. Board member Marvin Forbrag was present via teleconference for only a portion of the hearing.

Doug Veilette appeared on behalf of the Insurance Office Building via teleconference.

The issue in this application is whether the application for a waiver of the State Building Code for the purpose of installing a stairway chairlift should be granted.

The Insurance Office Building located in Park Rapids, Minnesota. The building contains a split-level entry with an upper and lower level. The lower level is a dwelling unit while the upper level is an office of a State Farm Insurance business. The owner of the building requested a waiver of the State Building Code to install a stairway chairlift to increase access to the upper level. For clients and the general public.

The Board reviewed the application pursuant to the factors identified in Minn. Stat. § 471.471, subd. 3.

With regard to the first factor, the need for limited accessibility when a higher degree of accessibility is not required by state or federal law or rule, the Board noted that Office Building’s application indicated that the primary purpose for the chairlift is to provide access to business clients and the public in general. The Board discussed that chairlifts are not designed nor intended for the general public and do not qualify as an accessible route for the general public.

With regard to the second factor, the architectural feasibility of providing a greater degree of accessibility than would be provided by the proposed device or equipment and the cost of providing a greater degree of accessibility, the Board noted that the Office Building’s application indicated that there was insufficient room for an elevator or platform lift without encroaching on the dwelling unit on the lower level. The Board discussed the possibility of greater accessibility

through structural alterations to the building and suggested that the Office Building engage a licensed architect to devise a solution for public accessibility.

With regard to the third factor, the total cost of the proposed device or equipment over its projected usable life, including installation, maintenance, and replacement costs, the Board noted that the estimated cost of each proposed device is \$10,000.


With regard to the fourth factor, the reliability of the proposed device or equipment, the Board noted that the proposed chairlifts are manufactured by Harmer Pinnacle, which is a reputable company.

With regard to the fifth factor, the applicant's ability to comply with all recognized access and safety standards for installation and maintenance, the Board discussed that the chairlift device allowed the user to fold the chair out of the way when not in use for safety and to maintain the device in good condition. The chairlift model includes dual call and send remotes.

With regard to the sixth factor, whether the proposed device or equipment can be operated and used without reducing or compromising minimum safety standards, the Board noted that the proposed stairway 65 inches wide and the folded chair for one of the proposed devices protrudes 13.6 inches. The folded chair for the other proposed device protrudes 16.5 inches. The Board determined that 51.4 inches and 48.5 inches, respectively, of clear passing space on the proposed stairway are a compliant clearance as allowed by IBC Chapter 10, Sections 1011.2 and 1014.8 where the occupant load is more than 50. The building does not have a smoke detector system, a fire alarm system, or a fire sprinkler system.

After considering these factors, Board member Fenley made a motion to deny the application for a waiver from the building code to install a stairway chairlift in the Insurance Office Building in Park Rapids, Minnesota because there was no current need for the chairlift among staff and the chairlift is not permitted for use by the general public. Board member Wehrman seconded the motion. Board member Forbragd abstained from voting because he was not present for the entire discussion. The motion carried unanimously.

The application for a waiver of the State Building Code to install a stairway chairlift leading to the second level of Insurance Office Building in Park Rapids, Minnesota is denied.

  
KAREN GRIDLEY, Chair  
Access Review Board