



September 18, 2020

Mr. George Gause
Heritage Preservation Supervisor
City of St. Paul
Heritage Preservation Commission
25 West Fourth St., Suite #1400
St. Paul, MN 55102

Re: HPC Pre-Application Review
University of St. Thomas
Loras Hall Demolition
2115 Summit Ave
St. Paul, MN, 55105-1089

Dear Mr. Gause,

The University of St. Thomas seeks to build a new 120,000-gross-square-foot combined science and arts building on the south campus area of the St. Paul campus. This building, coined STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics), is badly needed to adequately serve the growth in these fields of majors. For example, the number of engineering majors has grown 800 percent over the past 15 years, and new nursing programs will be starting in the next couple of years that will significantly increase the demand on the sciences. This building, along with minor other interior renovations on the south campus area, will afford the complex with adaptable and multiple program space required for this highly technical and equipment-intensive learning.

After exhaustive research and study over the past three years, the University strongly believes the highest value site for the STEAM project is along the south side of Summit Avenue between O'Shaughnessy Science Hall and the St. Paul Seminary. This would require Loras Hall to be removed.

The requested feedback/pre-application engagement with the Heritage Preservation Commission (HPC) is to discuss Loras Hall. A formal application for a demolition permit for Loras Hall will be forthcoming; it is anticipated that permits for new construction for the STEAM project will be required and completed during the design period of the project (estimated January 2021 to January 2022).

Note: This letter is accompanied by several attachments, including a presentation pdf that follows the general outline of this letter. The presentation has illustrations that support the text of this letter.

To date, the University has introduced the STEAM project to SARPA (Summit Avenue Residential Preservation Association), Macalester-Groveland Community Council (site resides within this district council), Union Park District Council (north campus resides in UPDC) and the West Summit Neighborhood Advisory Committee (a city-chartered body), along with other smaller engagements in the community.

Feedback themes have emerged as:

- What is afforded the community as a result of this project (use of interior space, open outdoor space, etc.)?
- Water quality as it contributes to the Mississippi River;
- The character and street scape of Summit Avenue in this western end;
- The reality that a professional workforce of these majors is badly needed, and
- The fate of Loras Hall: What options have been studied, and can the building (and Cass Gilbert) be commemorated if the structure is removed?

University Need

The need for the STEAM project is tremendous. The University of St. Thomas is fully utilizing every square foot of existing viable space for the engineering and science programs. A study in 2018 determined that the program need is over 190,000 gross square feet. The University has set a project budget of \$100,000,000. This budget will provide approximately 125,000 gross square feet. *If Loras needs to be retained, the new STEAM building would be reduced further in size to approximately 100,000 gsf — a size far smaller than the need of 190,000 gsf.* In addition to a new STEAM building, the project includes a south campus utility plant in the basement of the STEAM building to provide heating and cooling utilities to multiple buildings for greater energy efficiency. The STEAM project is seeking Silver certification as a minimum from LEED.

The University master plan, unveiled in 2016, described a possible science and arts building for the south campus but did not define a placement. In the vicinity being considered for the project, the master plan proposed an idea of relocating Loras Hall. Moving the building has been studied and is described later in this information.

In June 2020, the University hired St. Paul-based BWBR Architects in partnership with Robert AM Stern Architects (RAMSA) to complete campus planning and architectural design for the STEAM project. This will be the first collegiate building for RAMSA in Minnesota. Streamline Associates has been retained for historic preservation advising and contribution throughout the project timeline. Program validation concluded September 11, and concept plans are being developed through November 2020. McGough Construction is the building contractor.

Proposed project timeline:

Space Programming/ Concept Planning	June through November 2020
Fundraising	Ongoing through 2021
Design	January 2021 through January 2022
Construction	March 2022 through August 2024
Occupancy	Fall semester 2024

The University of St. Thomas has a long history of investment in building preservation on campus. The University believes in thorough analysis of numerous factors when determining the best strategy of investment in the facilities both in St. Paul and Minneapolis and does not take lightly the removal of historic buildings. Past and recent preservation investment by the University includes St. Mary’s Chapel (1905), Sitzmann Hall (<1943), Ireland Hall (1912), Albert Magnus (1947) (now John Roach Center), Chapel of St. Thomas Aquinas (1919) and Old McNeely Hall (1957).

Project Site

The preferred site is located west of O’Shaughnessy Science Hall/Owens Science Hall and north of the Grand Avenue extension on the south portion of the St. Paul campus. The site is within the Summit Area West Preservation Heritage District. The STEAM building will enhance student amenities and is envisioned to form the hub of a complex of space for science, technology, engineering, mathematics and arts (mainly music). See presentation pdf.

Since 1990, the University property has operated under a special conditional use permit (CUP) for the purpose of establishing a campus boundary, setback requirements, monitoring compliance with Zoning Code parking requirements, and building height limit. This CUP has been modified in 1995 and 2004.

As a result of the CUP, the land boundaries, setback, and height limits imposed have made campus planning and land use study a very important activity. Achieving highest opportunity for use of land is realized only after very careful study both in short- and long-term horizons.

Loras Hall

The Saint Paul Seminary opened on the current south campus of St. Thomas in 1893–1894. Funded by James J. Hill, the seminary originally consisted of a campus of six buildings, including Loras Hall, all of which were designed by Cass Gilbert. Only later, after designing the Saint Paul Seminary campus, Gilbert was awarded the commission to design the Minnesota State Capitol building, which would bring him to national prominence. He would go on to design the Woolworth Building in New York City and the U.S. Supreme Court Building in Washington, D.C.

A 2016 report by Hess Roise and Company evaluated the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) eligibility of the Saint Paul Seminary campus and concluded that, although the seminary campus was historically significant, it lacked sufficient integrity to convey that significance.

In addition to Andrew Schmidt of Streamline Associates, St. Thomas has retained Marjorie Pearson to provide analysis of the historical significance of Loras Hall within the context of Gilbert's career and design portfolio. This study is currently in progress, and the results will be provided at the October 5 HPC meeting.

St. Thomas acquired Loras Hall in 1982 from the Seminary. After acquisition, it was used for a student dormitory in the same fashion as original design for the young men of the seminary.

Today, it is used for a mix of University functions, including faculty offices, music practice rooms, a credit union, and storage.

The building is five floors plus a basement. Floors two through five today resemble the student dorm room scaled spaces that are suitable for officing and small meeting space. See presentation pdf.

The building is approximately 35,500 gsf, including basement level.

The building dimensions are 152' long x 39' wide. Interior room width across the narrow direction of the building is a mere 13' each side of the 6' clear corridor. Floor-to-floor heights vary from 12' on first floor to a short 10' on upper floors and 9' or less on 5th floor in the attic. Ceilings are at 8' or less on floors above first. See presentation pdf.

In 2015 the University conducted a facility condition assessment. The assessment report by Inspec is included as part of this information. The only work done since that report has been to address conditions changed that required immediate attention.

The building is comprised of stone foundation and multi-wythe masonry load-bearing exterior and interior corridor walls (varies from 8"-12"). Corrosion has been reported in the exterior wall brick ties. The building has no exterior wall insulation. The floor framing is 2x Douglas Fir. Structural analysis has determined that removal of the interior load-bearing walls to create larger spaces would require enlarging the building footings.

Status of Loras Hall as a Historic Property

In 1993, the West Summit Avenue Historic District (WSAHD) was listed in the NRHP, encompassing properties along Summit Avenue from Lexington Avenue to the Mississippi River. Loras Hall is a contributing property to the WSAHD and, therefore, is considered a historic property for the purposes of the Minnesota Historic Sites Act.

In addition, a nomination was previously prepared in 1984 to list the Saint Paul Seminary campus in the NRHP as a historic district. The nomination did not proceed, however, and the potential historic district was never listed in the NRHP. As noted above, in 2016, the Saint Paul Seminary campus was re-evaluated for NRHP eligibility, and it was judged as lacking historic integrity.

Loras Hall's status as a contributing property to the WSAHD triggers HPC review of applications for St. Paul city permits, including for demolition. In addition, as noted above, St. Thomas is studying whether Loras Hall has individual historic significance given its association with Cass Gilbert.

Loras: Demonstration of options studied

Per the prior approval of the Trustees of the University of St. Thomas, any work for Loras is to be part of the project scope and cost for the STEAM project.

Exterior rehabilitation consists of the work described in the 2015 Inspec report. It generally consists of repair and repointing of exterior masonry, window/door replacement, new roof and exposed wood framing repaired/replaced, steps and footing repair, and foundation waterproofing and drainage improvements.

Options studied include:

- A. Mothball: save for future use, invest in later
- B. Continue to Use: without incorporating into the STEAM project.
- C. Move it/ Reuse: relocate and incorporate or not into the STEAM project
- D. Incorporate into STEAM: move some STEAM program space into Loras, connect to STEAM
- E. Remove: STEAM program is completely housed in new building

The options were evaluated using the following criteria (in no order after number 1). The criteria were ranked on a scale of 1-5 (5 being highest).

1. **Student Education Value-STEAM:** Does this option create an enhanced student experience and enrich outcomes?
2. **Utility of Investment:** Does the investment provide long-term, highest utility of use per square foot?
3. **Land Use/Opportunity of Highest Use:** Does the option provide highest and best use of land in terms of benefits for the University and community?
4. **Initial Cost:** What is the budget impact (and consequently square-foot reduction in new building) to the new STEAM project?
5. **Community Asset:** Does this option contribute to the community in terms of use of open space, overall character, neighborhood history?
6. **Sustainability:** How does this option rate compare to other options for short-term sustainability, and long-term operational and human wellness sustainability?

A. Mothball

- This option considers vacating the building entirely and incurring little or no immediate rehabilitation cost now since no persons will be actively occupying the building.
- All current occupants would be moved to other, more modern space (building systems and amenities) either on the St. Paul or Minneapolis campuses. Relocation of current occupants is being considered today.
- The University has no known near-term needs for this building. Any STEAM program space that could be a candidate because of small size would be accommodated in the new building. From a faculty to student relationship, separation of faculty offices in a separate building does not result in best outcomes for students.
- Annual operating/service costs still incurred: regular maintenance, utilities, repairs that become necessary, service, security, etc.

Annual costs: \$ 117,500
Total deferred rehab cost: \$ 1,730,000
(minimal investment now)
Future interior
work cost (min): \$ 8,010,000

STEAM Bldg gsf impact reduce minimal gsf

Criteria Scoring	Score	Comments
Student Education Value	2	Most new space afforded
Utility of Investment	5	Investment is to new space
Land Use/ Opportunity of Highest Use	2	Prevents large quad development
Initial Cost	5	Little first investment
Community Asset	3	History recalled (good), limits highest/best use of campus property
Sustainability	2	Saves for a future use (unknown); Bldg. not energy efficient.

B. Continue to Use As-is

- This option considers continuation of use without incorporating any program of the STEAM project. Today, the building does not provide modern ventilation for occupants. Except on fifth floor, air-conditioning is by individual inefficient window units in limited areas. Fresh air supplied only by the operable windows.
- Building can exist as is without code upgrades (fire protection, toilet rooms), but some investment on these items should be made if occupancy continues.
- Exterior rehabilitation repairs would be incurred.
- Likely to have future vacancy as uses relocated to other, more efficient places.
- Future need for 35,500 gsf of limited use space is not known.

Rehab cost now: \$ 450,000
Deferred rehab cost: \$1,510,000
Future interior Work cost (min): \$ 7,780,000

STEAM Bldg gsf impact (est.) reduce 1,000 gsf

Criteria Scoring	Score	Comments
Student Education Value	4	Most new space afforded
Utility of Investment	3	Investment is to new space
Land Use/ Opportunity of Highest Use	2	Prevents large quad development
Initial Cost	4	Upgrades requires some reduction of gsf
Community Asset	3	History recalled (good), limits outdoor opportunity.
Sustainability	2	Saves for a future use; avoids relocation efforts; Building is not energy efficient.

C. Move it, Reuse it

- This option considers moving the building west toward the seminary and reusing it today. The option to rotate it parallel to Summit Avenue creates a disconnect of program space of STEAM and O’Shaughnessy/Owens and was dismissed by the University.
- Risks exist in moving this masonry building. See attachment from Palanisami Associates. Building damage, if incurred, during move is not budgeted.
- Full new foundation and basement construction required. Utilities would be relocated.
- Full interior renovation incurred. Exterior rehabilitation repairs would be incurred after a move.
- Future vacancy as uses relocated to other, more efficient places is a possibility.
- 7,250 sf of STEAM program could be accommodated into the new STEAM building.
- Negates original “box-car lineup” of Gilbert seminary dormitory buildings.

Move cost: \$4,980,000
Deferred rehab cost: \$1,730,000
Interior work cost (min): \$8,010,000

STEAM Bldg gsf impact (est.) reduce 21,400 gsf (7,250 sf STEAM is moved into Loras)

Criteria Scoring	Score	Comments
Student Education Value	1	Incurs largest expense of any option
Utility of Investment	1	Investment is to move a bldg. with little use
Land Use/ Opportunity of Highest Use	4	Helps ability to create medium size green quad
Initial Cost	1	Upgrades requires large reduction of STEAM gsf
Community Asset	4	History maintained for most part
Sustainability	3	Partial use for STEAM program; not as energy efficient as new STEAM building.

D. Incorporate into STEAM

- This option considers keeping Loras Hall in the current location, building the new STEAM building to the east, and connecting the two buildings above and below grade for best interaction between faculty and students.
- There will be alterations to the east façade of Loras.
- Future projects west of Loras may “sandwich” it,, limiting views to and from Loras.
- Difficult to connect to STEAM building because floor-to-floor heights will not match.
- Exterior rehabilitation repairs would be incurred.
- STEAM program would use only two floors (all other space too large to fit).
- Future need for 24,000 gsf of limited use space is not known.
- Likely to have future vacancy as departments are relocated to other, more efficient and productive places.

Rehab cost now: \$ 1,730,000
Interior work cost (min): \$ 8,010,000

STEAM Bldg gsf impact (est.) reduce 11,480 gsf (7,250 nsf STEAM moved into Loras)

Criteria Scoring	Score	Comments
Student Education Value	2	Separation of faculty and students
Utility of Investment	2	19,000 sf of limited use/need space
Land Use/ Opportunity of Highest Use	1	Prevents large quad development
Initial Cost	2	Upgrades reduces STEAM gsf
Community Asset	3	History recalled (good), limits outdoor planning
Sustainability	3	Partial use for STEAM program; not as energy efficient as new STEAM

E. Remove it

- This option considers removal of Loras Hall. The 7,250 nsf of STEAM program that could fit in Loras would be built in the new building. All STEAM programs can be in modern, energy-efficient space. Close proximity of faculty and students affords many student-experience benefits.
- This option allows St. Thomas to build what is needed and not excessively renovate inflexible and limiting space that the University doesn’t need.
- Large green quad created for all to use could be planned and used by larger community. Open footprint for future building is achieved on west side of new quad.
- Highest opportunity for limited campus land.
- Operational and energy savings for single building instead of STEAM and Loras in operation.

Rehab cost now: \$ 0
Deferred rehab cost: \$ 0
Interior work cost (min): \$ 0

STEAM Bldg gsf impact 0 gsf (Demolition cost included)

Criteria Scoring	Score	Comments
Student Education Value	5	Most new space afforded
Utility of Investment	4	Investment is to new space
Land Use/ Opportunity of Highest Use	5	Affords large quad development and future site development capacity
Initial Cost	5	Construction of one building
Community Asset	4	Significant public outdoor space achieved Budget would allow other interior community amenities (music space, maker space for youth programs, etc.). With Loras Hall removed, could there be commemoration on site or in new building of Cass Gilbert's legacy and impact on St. Paul and St. Thomas?
Sustainability	4	All programs are in new, highly energy-efficient, durable, flexible and adaptable facility. There are some marks not achieved since a building is not being reused.

Summary

The University of St. Thomas is pleased to be proposing the addition of the exciting STEAM project to the St. Paul campus and the incredible educational experiences this facility will afford for many generations to Tommies to come.

The University also realizes its role in the community and the value of being a partner in keeping the vision and heritage of the West Summit Avenue district alive and looks forward to working with every local agency and with our various community groups to secure the highest and best outcomes for our students.

Thank you for your consideration and comment at this early stage of the project development.

Regards,



Mark Vangsgard
Vice President for Business Affairs and Chief Financial Officer
University of St. Thomas

Attachments:

1. Conditional Use Permit (1990, 1995, 2004 combined), pdf
 2. Presentation of information, dated 9/18/2020, pdf
 3. STEAM Space Program, dated 9/11/202, pdf
 4. Loras Hall Building Envelope Assessment, dated 12/18/2015, pdf
 5. Stubbs building move estimate, dated 8/3/2016, pdf
 6. Structural engineering opinion- Loras relocation, dated 9/16/20, pdf
 7. Hess Roise UST-Cultural Resource Assessment, dated 1/26/17, pdf
- c: Amy McDonough, chief of staff, University of St. Thomas
Greg Fenton, BWBR
Andrew Schmidt, Streamline Associates
Brian Lapham, BWBR
James Brummer, associate vice president for facilities management, University of St. Thomas
Amy Gage, director of neighborhood and community relations, University of St. Thomas