



Lot K Permanent Proposal: a community-focused, multi-modal lot

Lot K is a 33-space parking lot on the northwest corner of Grand and Cleveland. The University of St. Thomas' agreement with the city's Planning Commission to use the corner as a parking lot expires on March 11, 2021. At that point, according to the McNeely Hall site plan submitted to the City in 2005, the lot must return to green space if St. Thomas does not build student housing on that space.

The university has sought and received two three-year extensions for Lot K to remain a parking lot — one in 2015 and one in 2018 — from the Planning Commission. City planner Josh Williams suggested that a “longer-term solution” be found for the Grand-Cleveland corner, rather than St. Thomas continuing to ask for extensions.

Lot K is used not only by local businesses, but it is an accessible lot to those visiting campus. McNeely Hall hosts many community groups that use the large gathering space in room 100. McNeely Hall is also a Ramsey County polling location, and the lot makes voting more accessible during election days.

History of Lot K

When St. Thomas was building McNeely Hall in 2005, the original site plan approved by the Planning Commission said that permanent construction of a surface lot at that location and at that time to be inconsistent with the 2004 Conditional Use Permit that governs campus boundaries.

Since that time, St. Thomas has come back to the Planning Commission twice to ask for three-year extensions to the agreement. An agreement to rent 16 of the spaces to Davanni's, on the southwest corner of Grand and Cleveland, has been part of both proposals.

Residence Halls Update

The agreement in 2005 to limit the life of the lot was intended to urge or force St. Thomas to build more residence halls. The neighbors at the time were urging St. Thomas to build on Grand and Cleveland. The constraints of the CUP regarding setbacks and height make it difficult for the university to build a cost-effective residence hall on that corner.

Since the last extension, St. Thomas has built two new residence halls, one at Selby and Cleveland for first-year students and one at Cleveland and Ashland for sophomore students. The intention was to prepare for the university's first residency requirement. Beginning in fall 2021, first-year students will be required to live on campus for two years. This will have a positive impact on the neighborhood by keeping students on campus longer, as they mature, and by providing training before they move into the neighborhood.

In short: The intent of that pressure to limit the use of Lot K has been realized.

Lot K Permanent Proposal

The university hopes to retain some of the parking, with improvements that are consistent with current limitations set forth by the city in the CUP and current goals of the city to promote multimodal transportation options. These improvements will increase the livability of our neighborhood, beautify the corner and promote multimodal transportation. St. Thomas would:

1. Add two **electric car-charging stations** available for commuters working at St. Thomas as well as for those visiting the campus or neighborhood members. Macalester has done something similar with car-charging stations and we would like to duplicate their reservation system, serving neighbors who sign up and want to participate. Add sidewalk to make the path from the charging station to the sidewalk accessible.
2. **Beautify** the space. Add three deciduous trees to the Grand Ave boulevard and add a pollinator bed on the north side of the lot.
3. Replace the north row of parking with much-needed **bike racks**.
4. **Increase multi-modal transportation among students**. Currently, Davanni's rents 16 of the 33 parking spaces in Lot K. We will retain spaces for Davanni's (and Coffee Bene, when it reopens) with rental funds going toward multi-modal/green initiatives, including Metro Transit passes for students.

Next steps: If this initial plan meets neighbors and city planning approval, St. Thomas will hire a landscape architect and engineer and submit final plans.