

July 10, 2013

Saint Paul Mayor Chris Coleman
15 West Kellogg Boulevard, Rm 390
Saint Paul, MN 55102

Minnesota Governor Mark Dayton
130 State Capitol Building - 75 Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd
Saint Paul, MN 55155

Dear Mayor Coleman and Governor Dayton,

I am contacting you today concerning the imminent destruction of the Gillette Building in downtown Saint Paul which will clear a site for the Saint Paul Regional Ballpark development.

This past Monday evening a group of thirty people gathered in a former courtroom on the third floor of Landmark Center to discuss the ballpark development. Landmark Center as we know, once almost met destruction as well.

A concept which reuses the Gillette structure for the ballpark development has, since its inception in early 2011, never been about historic preservation, but rather about economic preservation and expansion. Two things this City needs to remain competitive, in a very competitive, first-rate metropolitan area.

Our group Monday evening was diverse in gender, age, education and economic status. We care about the well-being of Saint Paul and generally support, as do most Saint Paulites, baseball coming to Lowertown. However, we continue to have legitimate concerns about how this Regional Ballpark as planned will ultimately fare and are rightfully disappointed in the process by which the City involved citizens in the ballpark development to this time where a ground breaking is days away.

We believe our sentiments are shared by many at this point.

Regarding Gillette, its reuse can in fact provide both the premier minor-league ballpark and a multi-use facility unlike any in America.

- It can provide far more new jobs and year-round economic activity. Beyond the ballpark component the concept envisions over 400,000 square feet of remaining interior space becoming taxable, privately owned commercial property.
- Cost estimates provided by both Mike Hahm - Saint Paul Parks and Recreation and DONLAR Construction in April of this year show the Gillette plan can be repurposed for \$54 million, or less.
- The Gillette plan requires minimum soil remediation (being most of the building remains in place and the playing field is generally level with the existing parking lot). Months can be saved on the construction timetable and millions of dollars can instead be invested in the physical portion of the facility.
- To address the City's primary concern's, the Gillette plan's orientation has been turned to face north/northeast thereby providing the ideal direction for baseball, ideal seating opportunities and wider interior corridors. The concept remains 100% ADA compliant.
- As far as the building being called unsightly, dilapidated and structurally outdated, these are unfair labels. This 1969 building remains structurally sound and one of the larger reinforced concrete buildings in America. The Gillette plan conceptual illustrations which show the building's blank-canvas exterior transformed, are indeed achievable.

This is a project not only for Saint Paul, but Minnesota as well to be very proud of. In part it can accommodate: 7,000 seats with room for 10,000, 650 parking spaces – most indoors, the largest, most complete ‘Artisan Centre’ in the Midwest, a new home for ‘The Twin City Model Railroad Museum’ - rescued from Bandana Square and brought back to Lowertown, a large Indoor Farmers’ Market, unmatched amenities for ball fans and a massive rooftop event and activity space offering tremendous views of downtown, the Capitol, the Vento Sanctuary, Mounds Park and the Mississippi.

There are opportunities for tailgating just outside the main entrance (and on the roof). To ease congestion, traffic can circulate around the site via an extended 6th St. The ball-field can easily convert to the Minnesota amphitheatre and a home for Minnesota Cricket. The design can accommodate an inflatable seasonal roof and a truly fantastic, affordable spot for an indoor Minnesota Wild practice rink, a phase-two Minnesota Velodrome atop the adjoining LRT Maintenance Building – Saint Paul becomes the bicycling center of the Midwest. It is skyway compatible – all the way to the XCEL/RiverCentre.

The Gillette concept is the ultimate sustainable and ‘green’ project. It can receive international recognition. The concept is based upon community input – since its inception in January 2011.

Chris, I have known you a long-time. You rejected the Gillette concept initially and have perhaps been receiving inaccurate information about it since. If Gillette is destroyed a wondrous opportunity this city can never have again will be gone. I will not be hurt, but this city will be.

Gentlemen, I have dedicated my life to Saint Paul, particularly downtown. My business will remain here, my art of Saint Paul - sold to countless people locally, nationally and around the world, will endure after I am gone.

I am delivering this letter personally to your offices and to one other respected person who will be in touch soon. You have to see the benefits this proposal can bring to this special city and state and your legacies. Please don’t deny Saints fans, the people of this city and even this state to not know what is available to them. Please let them help chose our course.

At Monday’s meeting I asked those in attendance to share five thoughts they would like included in a coalesced request to you. I have decided to send you their remarkable responses instead. Chris, they are not sent to hurt you or to antagonize you. You are a big man figuratively and literally and hopefully will take their thoughts in stride.

Hopefully both of you will take them to heart as well.

Have your groundbreaking as planned, but delay the demolition. Perhaps the demolition contract can be revised and you can do the best thing by the public. You can be rewarded for it many times over and well into the future if you do.

Thank you for your time and consideration. Call upon me if I can be of any assistance.

Sincerely yours,
Bill Hosko

400 North Robert St, Ste 250
Securian Center
Saint Paul, MN 55101
651-222-4767
Bill@Billhosko.com

Enclosures;

July 10, 2013

The Following are comments from people in attendance at the Community Ballpark Meeting at Landmark Center on July 8. They were emailed to Bill Hosko on July 7.

1. There has been scant, if any, opportunity for public input about the use of the Gillette/Diamond site. This is an egregious violation of the Saint Paul community spirit. Such a major decision about the use of this valuable space deserves and demands wide-spread community involvement. For the current administration to force their will upon the city is sure to create division and dissension, and will do nothing to promote citizen "ownership" of the proposal. The ultimate success of any proposal for the site will need the wholehearted civic-minded support of the people. The best use of the site has not yet been determined since a variety of possible uses has not been publicly considered and debated.
2. Given that a community ballpark is very likely to be built on the G/D site, it is imperative that the best possible plan be adopted. The city administration seems to have given little attention to any alternatives to its own proposal. One proposal that has obvious merit, and therefore ought to be considered is to keep the G/D building and reconfigure it for multiple uses, including a ballpark. Multiple uses, and the retention of the parking spaces on the lowest level of the building will go far to make this a unique and special place, and ensure the long-term success of this venture. Everything reasonably possible must be done to reduce the possibility of failure. Plans have been devised that creatively uses the G/D building for a ballpark and other activities that utilizes the available space wisely, promotes the interests of the existing and growing Lowertown community, and which will satisfy the requirements of the governmental agencies that have lawful oversight for the use of that area of the city. Furthermore, the existing building seems to be structurally sound and would lend itself well to the design of an appealing facade that would blend nicely with the surrounding buildings -- an occasion of civic pride for all. By working together and in good faith, a wonderful result can be achieved.
3. The proposed financial arrangements are scandalously deficient. Even a cursory reading of the plan reveals that there is no long-term direct benefit to the city for future revenues, that Saint Paul becomes permanently obligated financially, and that a few private enterprises will reap practically all of the benefits. This is what may be justly described as a "sweetheart" arrangement. As it stands, the current proposal is unconscionable and deserving of scorn.
4. The design of the proposed ballpark is unappealing and inadequate. While city designers would no doubt improve on the preliminary drawings, public comment about the amenities desired and the actual configuration of the park would go a long way in "selling" it to the people. There is nothing to be lost and much to be gained by fostering public participation in its design. Give the people a good reason to be happy about the results.
5. There is no compelling reason to make an irrevocable decision about the use of the G/D site at this time. A postponement of the proposed demolition will provide time for the much-desired public input and debate. Only in this way will the city be able to arrive at a decision that will use the site in the best possible way and promote the unity and goodwill among the people that the city needs.

Leo and Susan of Saint Paul

* There was no true community input into the Ballpark design, and not sure if there will be for construction. When the community asked to participate and ask for design options at meetings, they were told it was not the forum for this.

* The city did not due its due diligence in arranging, planning, and estimating the Ballpark, I can foresee that \$63MM will not be enough

* The city did not ask, "What might be good uses for the Ballpark", from surrounding residents and businesses, and perhaps could have given several real options

* An ugly building does not mean you tear it down, look at the city hall building, perhaps they should move to the Gillette facility?

* What about the location on the south side of the Mississippi by the US Bank Treasury office? It's huge, there is ample parking, restaurants, no residents (currently) to contend with, and it's very close to the light rail. In fact it's right next to a rail road track for those nostalgic at the current site.

Chuck of Saint Paul

It was disappointing, but not surprising that yesterday's meeting was not mentioned in either The Star Tribune or The Pioneer Press today.

We are glad that we attended and learned of so many longtime St Paul citizens who are extremely unhappy with the Saints Ballpark deal and the misplaced priorities of the City Administration. Work will soon begin on the ridiculously irresponsible 6th Street Sidewalk widening. Meanwhile, most of the city streets and sidewalks are an unsightly patchwork of ill fitting repairs and holes. Walking and driving both are hazardous to our health.

You asked us to list points that we would like to see included in the letter to the Governor and Mayor, they would include:

1. We must demand that the demolition of the Gillette Building be stopped. That was the one item on which everyone agreed,
2. It is imperative that the City demand a much larger contribution from the owners of the Saints.
3. The deal must not give all of the revenue derived from this facility to the Saints.
4. Since this is a community facility and taxpayers are contributing so much to the expense of its construction, it should be a year-round attraction.
5. The process must be slowed down, with more input from the community in the design, contract negotiations and consideration of the needs of the Lowertown residents.
6. The design city is pushing is a very poor one and does not justify the cost. The design that includes the use of the Gillette Building is far better, would leave the contaminated soil capped and would not require moving the soil to another location. Whether the ballpark is built at that site or elsewhere in St Paul, the Gillette Building is a natural for all of those attractions and vast parking areas for Lowertown that were mentioned.

Larry and Barbara of Saint Paul

In your last minute appeal to the Mayor and the Governor, I do not think you should get into the details and promote the Gillette alternative too much. There still are differing opinions on it, as you can tell last night. Most would like the Gillette repurposed but others 1- Want no publicly funded stadium at all, 2- Want it in Midway, 3- Highland, etc. I think you should concentrate on issues which have unanimous appeal, such as,

1- The present Lowertown Ballpark plan was crammed down with no public input. The Saints Ballpark, as presently planned, is considered a boondoggle by nearly everyone. This is a perception which will grow over time if the present plan is not modified.

2- How can construction/demolition begin BEFORE funding is assured and BEFORE there is a contract/lease agreement with the Saints? THIS IS A MOST IMPORTANT POINT.

3- The Farmers Market will be decimated

4- With the net loss of convenient parking, Lowertown's growth potential will be restricted

5- We will be stuck with the results and paying for the Saints Ballpark for many years. THERE SHOULD BE A TIMEOUT. There should be a period to reevaluate all alternatives with citizen input, which has never been done.

If there is a fair evaluation, I am confident the Gillette repurposing will win in the end....it just makes too much sense. I think the emphasis now should be on the necessity of slowing the process down and doing a through evaluation of all alternatives with the goal in mind of the best product for the Saints and the public.

Tom from Saint Paul

Thank you for your patience and persistence last night. The meeting was a sad example of several citizens trying to push their own agenda instead of listening to the presentation of ideas for which it was arranged. Even worse interrupting and then repeating the same extraneous items. They were doing just what we all condemned "the city government" for not listening to someone's point of view (Midway, No Ballpark downtown, deficiencies of City Parks & Rec dept and Tom's negative mayoral candidacy. Negative prejudiced talk rather than rationally examining opportunities.)

Your plan to present the questions and material to Governor Dayton and Mayor Coleman seems to me the most diplomatic and sensible one.

Instead of just dismissing their CONCERNS, as Mr. Hahm and the Saints representative did our questions at the big earlier meeting, the petition should take points 1-7 from the agenda and briefly correct the misinformation as you did last evening with an addenda indicating sources. Point 8 is the reason for the petition. It is not too late to have a proper study of the site, subsurface, true parking needs etc. if the demolition is delayed a few months. Then the merits of reuse vs demolition could be presented to the taxpayers for open discussion.

Those of us who have listened understand that you are truly concerned about our copying other cities mistakes and want us to avoid them. The irrational disrespect shown by some last night indicates the danger of personalizing the discussion.

I hope the above will be useful. I do not want to be quoted but you may include me on the petition as an 89 year old resident, 3rd generation in Saint Paul.

Glad you called me yesterday morning re the meeting. I was a day ahead of myself and thought I had missed the meeting.

Here are my priorities regarding the Gillette site:

1. Very important to maintain adequate parking for patrons of the Farmer's Market and parking for residents of the condos in that area.
2. Hopefully, item 1. can be accomplished by reusing the Gillette building.
3. City should get a large share of revenue from concessions as well as an appropriate amount from admissions. The Saints ballclub is getting a stadium free and St. Paul gets no revenue from property tax.
4. There needs to be a contract provision between the City and the Saints ball club requiring a substantial penalty if the ballclub fails financially or leaves the City before, say 25 years have elapsed as well as a provision the Club files audited financial statements annually with the City.

You are a good writer, so I trust your judgment on wording of the email or letter to Governor Dayton and Mayor Coleman. I would make it URGENT but not too long.

Warren of Saint Paul

Here are our thoughts about last night's discussion. In view of the fact that City administration has been unwilling to accept citizen concerns, suggestions and warnings, we feel you should address our letter only to Governor Dayton, with copies to Mayor Coleman and City Councilmembers:

1. Ballpark planning was entirely done by City administration without Citizen input. Planning committee meetings were public BUT citizen input, questions or concerns were not permitted to be voiced.
2. Citizen interest and concern about the details of the ballpark were evident by their attendance at ad-hoc meetings during the last 6 months- not attended, in spite of invitations, by Mayor Coleman and City Council.
3. Since the State of Minnesota is footing a substantial portion of the staggering costs of this Minor League ballpark, and we are citizens/taxpayers- both of the City and the State- we ask you, our Governor, to intervene and stop the implementation of the current ballpark plans. Recent drillings at the ballpark site have demonstrated the shoddy planning and raised the cost to the taxpayers by millions of \$. How much more will be needed if the Gillette Building would be destroyed- as imminent- and similar soil conditions are found? Has anyone any information, hard data?
4. Is it unreasonable to ask what taxpayers can expect this ballpark will contribute to the City budget? Destruction of the Gillette Building will effectively and greatly diminish the potential returns. Also, there is no information what the St. Paul Saints organization will contribute from its ongoing activities at the new Ballpark.
5. Current plans run rough-shot over the interests of Lower Town citizens and business (Farmer's Market). Better plans are available but have not been considered seriously so far. We need your help!

Peter and Katherine of Saint Paul

Until your presentation last night, I was unaware of all the time and energy you had put into creating the renderings for what a ballpark anchored within the Gillette Building might look like--no small feat in itself--nor did I appreciate the breadth of your efforts in trying to organize the Lowertown community in support of the idea.

Having since read your very thoughtful email to the City Council and mayor several weeks ago, as well as Tom Erickson's op-ed piece from March, I now recognize that the city should have been listening to you all along and exploring the reuse possibilities during the past year rather than simply green-lighting what the Saints wanted. Of course, it's possible that the reuse might involve some unanticipated expenses or obstacles that pose legitimate cost or structural concerns, but it seems incredibly shortsighted to tear down a massive building that would appear to still have sound "bones" simply because certain folks perceive it as an eyesore that is better off gone.

At the very least we should be exploring the possibilities that you outlined, and I apologize that I didn't fully appreciate those possibilities until I had a chance to more closely look at the materials after last night's event. (Putting this and other events together around the ballpark is also the kind of citizen activism that has been sorely lacking around the city, so thanks for doing that as well.)

I wish I could tell you that I believed some sort of citizen effort at this late date could somehow alter the demolition process, but absent citizens protests at the site or a last-minute injunction, I'm not sure that much can be done--which obviously is a very disheartening situation. However, if the email you put together in June and Tom Erickson's very logical op-ed piece have done nothing to persuade the city council or mayor to pause and reconsider, I can't imagine them changing anything at a point when contracts have already been let and the demolition process is already happening inside.

That's not to say that a last-minute appeal shouldn't occur; I just think all of our elected officials are disengaged around this issue. In the 1980s in Detroit, members of the Tiger Stadium Fan Club were able to put together two "stadium hugs" of that ballpark, turning out thousands of fans to encircle the building and hold hands. Perhaps if that level of support were present in Lowertown, or the 300 signatories of your petition were willing to turn out and form a human shield to block demolition, there might be some publicity angle, but absent a compelling legal argument that could be used to obtain an injunction, this mayor will not be deterred because he just doesn't care and will continue to use his office to promote his image rather than what is best for the city.

In any event, I'm happy to lend my name to an effort aimed at halting the demolition process, and even to assist a legal effort if someone with greater knowledge about municipal powers than myself can think of some due process angle that might have been violated by the city council or mayor in light of the recent findings regarding soil pollution and the city's malfeasance in not conducting tests prior to acquiring the Gillette building viz a vis the Port Authority. Undoubtedly with enough money and some bright legal minds, a case could certainly be made, but that seems like a long shot as well.

Please keep me in the loop.

Tom of Saint Paul

#1 Art Gallery, 15-18K sq. ft. for local artists. A large percentage of Lower town artists have moved to Minneapolis because of the greater opportunity provided by art promoters to sell to the public. A manned artisan area featuring authors, artists and cultural events would draw patrons from Minneapolis and help promote the light rail.

#2 Bike Valet, a manned bicycle valet area accessible to the public would create bike traffic to Lowertown providing more customers for area retailers with less traffic congestion.

#3 Roof top viewing area would be the "Summer ticket" to have. Roof top food and beverage is the current rage in restaurant design internationally. The ballpark in it's new orientation and with the reuse of the Gillette Building would be featured in National Restaurant Design magazines and cable channels as well as enjoy great seating demand. Could easily increase capacity by 1,000 patrons.

#4 The basic recycling of the Gillette Building for use as a commercial community space as well as a regional ballpark would be the front page story of every Architectural Publication in the world.

#5 The removal of the Gillette Building will seriously impact the character and ambiance of the entire Lower town area. The gentile and quiet the residents of the area enjoy will be permanently and negatively degraded.

Charles of Saint Paul