

## HISTORIC SAINT PAUL

November 30, 2020

Saint Paul Heritage Preservation Commission  
25 West Fourth Street, Suite 1400  
Saint Paul, MN 55105-1089

Re: Demolition Permit Application filed by the University of St. Thomas for North Dormitory (Loras Hall), 2260 Summit Avenue, Saint Paul, MN Saint Paul

Dear Members of the Saint Paul Heritage Preservation Commission;

Historic Saint Paul supports denial of the application for demolition of North Dormitory/ Loras Hall per information and recommendations outlined in the staff report for your 11/30/2020 public hearing.

Unfortunately, despite urging of the commission during its pre-application review on 10/5/2020, development options that would preserve North Dormitory/ Loras Hall and incorporate it into the continued evolution of the University of Saint Thomas campus have not been seriously considered.

The Commission's charge is to review and evaluate the application for demolition of the North Dormitory/ Loras Hall utilizing criteria contained in Chapter 73 of Saint Paul's Legislative Code. We concur with key staff findings that support the recommended denial of the application, including the following:


- North Dormitory/ Loras Hall possesses significant architectural and historic merit,
- Its demolition would have a negative impact on surrounding buildings, and
- Alternatives to demolition have not been adequately explored.

Historic Saint Paul works to preserve and promote the cultural heritage, character, and vitality of Saint Paul neighborhoods. We are keenly aware of the importance of preserving and investing into buildings that reflect the architectural and cultural history of Saint Paul.

Saint Paul is a richer, more complex and interesting city thanks to the work of the Heritage Preservation Commission combined with efforts of local residents, historians, and community leaders who have worked together to identify and protect historic resources that hold and tell our important stories – at times in the face of strong opposition and pressure.

North Dormitory/ Loras Hall embodies essential elements of the Saint Paul story, and we support Heritage Preservation Commission efforts to protect and preserve it.

Sincerely,



Carol Carey  
Executive Director

I do not believe a permit for demolition of Loras Hall on the University of St. Thomas campus should be issued. Such a permit would be antithetical to the mission and integrity of both St. Thomas and the St. Paul Seminary, as well as destroying a significant architectural and historic landmark in the city of St. Paul. The desires of the University to grow and attract more students need to be considered, but so too should the values upon which the University depends for its existence.

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November 23, 2020

Mr. George Gause  
Heritage Preservation Supervisor  
City of Saint Paul  
Heritage Preservation Commission  
25 West Fourth Street, Suite 1400  
Saint Paul, MN 55105-1089  
George.gause@stpaul.gov

Re: Opposition to Demolition Permit Application filed by the University of St. Thomas concerning North Dormitory (Loras Hall), 2260 Summit Avenue, Saint Paul, MN

Dear Mr. Gause and Heritage Preservation Commission:

I write to oppose the application made by the University of St. Thomas (the “University”) to demolish Cass Gilbert’s North Dormitory (also known as Loras Hall<sup>1</sup>), which was constructed in 1893-1894, and is the oldest non-house structure in the West Summit Avenue Historic District. Preserving North Dormitory is important to all of Saint Paul and to future generations.

**North Dormitory Reflects our Architectural, Cultural, and Social History.**

The story of North Dormitory begins in 1885. Archbishop John Ireland had a vision to develop a Catholic institution of higher education in Saint Paul and commenced the development of what today is the University of St. Thomas, which began on the University’s current North Campus. It was always the Archbishop’s dream however, that there would be a separate seminary.

In 1890, the Methodist James J. Hill offered to build and endow a separate seminary for the training of Catholic priests. Mr. Hill was motivated to do this in honor of his wife, who was a devout Catholic. Mr. Hill had some very definite ideas about how this new seminary should be built. So, instead of simply giving the money to the Archbishop, Mr. Hill hired 32-year-old Cass Gilbert, a Saint Paul native, to plan the entire seminary campus and design its structures. Gilbert

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<sup>1</sup> In Cass Gilbert’s original Seminary plan, the building was identified as “North Dormitory.” The structure kept that name until 1913 when a new dormitory was erected to the south of “South Dormitory.” To eliminate the directional confusion, the three dormitories were renamed after former bishops, with North Dormitory being renamed as Loras Hall. It has recently been revealed that Bishop Loras, who was never in Minnesota, was a slave owner. The University is presently considering whether the Loras name should be removed. I will use the name given by the architect, as its 1913 renaming and potential new name are not the reasons why the structure is significant and why it should be preserved.

had previously worked for Hill when in 1887 he was given the task of assisting with the powerhouse, fence, and gates, for Hill's mansion at the opposite end of Summit Avenue.

Cass Gilbert came up with a plan to build the Seminary campus with seven separate buildings surrounding by spacious landscape. In 1891, Gilbert personally designed each of the first six buildings: North Dormitory, South Dormitory (today known as Cretin Hall), the Refectory Building, the Classrooms Building, the Administration Building, and the Gymnasium. The first six buildings were designed by Gilbert in the Renaissance Revival or Northern Italian Revival style. Gilbert was the Superintendent of Construction in the 1893-1894 timeframe. The sixty-five seminarians moved to the new Seminary Campus on September 6, 1894. In a September 4, 1895 ceremony, Mr. Hill transferred the six buildings to the Archdiocese of St. Paul. In Gilbert's original master plan for the Seminary Campus, the seventh building was a chapel was to be built just west of North Dormitory.

Gilbert's commission from James J. Hill to design the campus and each of the buildings for the new Saint Paul Seminary came at an important juncture in his career. In 1891, Gilbert had ended a six-year partnership with James Knox Taylor and had just established his own architectural firm. "For Gilbert, the Seminary buildings were an important job during a formative period of his professional life." [Charlene Roise, "The University of Saint Thomas, the St. Paul Seminary, and Historic Summit Avenue: An Assessment of Historic Resources at 21 (January 26, 2017) (hereinafter "Roise"). "The Seminary was an early and important commission for architect Cass Gilbert" and "a significant milestone for his career." *Id.* at 3. The year after the new Seminary's completion, Cass Gilbert was awarded the commission to design the Minnesota State Capitol Building, and thereafter became one of this country's leading, progressive architects.

Reverend Patrick Danehy, an early Seminary professor, described the six campus buildings as "in the North Italian style simple, solid, and impressive." [cited in Roise at 22]. He noted how "[t]hey are all built of red pressed brick, have either plain gable or hip roofs, and by the solidity of their walls remind one strongly of the monastic edifices of a bygone age." *Id.* The dormitory buildings were unique for their time in that each seminarian was provided a two room suite, consisting of a bedroom and study.

Gilbert's original campus plan was completed in 1905, when St. Mary's Chapel, designed by Clarence H. Johnston, was constructed at the top of the hill overlooking the Mississippi River, just to the west of North Dormitory. In 1913, a third dormitory was added to the Seminary Campus and was named Grace Hall.

The original Cass Gilbert designed Seminary campus remained unaltered for many decades. In 1968, after McCarthy Gym was constructed, the original Gymnasium was converted into the Seminary's service center. The Classrooms Building was demolished and replaced in 1972. The Refectory Building was razed in 1978 when the Binz Refectory Building was added to the Seminary campus. In 1982, the University acquired North Dormitory as a residence hall for students in its St. John Vianney undergraduate seminary program, eight years prior to when North Dormitory was designated as a historic structure.

In 1987, the University acquired most of the acreage of the St. Paul Seminary campus, bounded by Summit, Cretin, and Goodrich Avenues, and Mississippi River Boulevard. The

Seminary retained a small seven-acre campus at the northwest corner of this area. By this time, two of Gilbert's original six buildings – the Rectory and Classrooms Buildings – had already been demolished. Later in 1987, the Administration Building was demolished. Thus, only three of the original Seminary buildings remain today: North Dormitory, South Dormitory, and the Gymnasium.

For many years after the University's acquisition, the three dormitories on the former Seminary Campus continued to be used as student residences. North Dormitory was later remodeled and converted into office space, which is the building's current use. North Dormitory's exterior, however, has had only minor alterations and presents substantially the same appearance today as when it was constructed 126 years ago in 1894.

**North Dormitory is a Contributing Structure to the West Summit Avenue Historic District.**

The West Summit Avenue Historic District was locally designated as a heritage district by the City of Saint Paul in 1990. On May 4, 1993, the West Summit Avenue Historic District was added to the National Register of Historic Places, because it met the qualifying criteria of historical interest (Criteria A) and architectural interest (Criteria C). The Areas of Significance noted in the National Register Form for the District were for Community Planning and Development and for Architecture (Sec. 8). The Period of Significance is identified as from 1885 to 1938. *Id.*

The noted Architects for the District include Cass Gilbert, the planner and designer of North Dormitory. (Sec. 8, p. 54). The noted builders include James Carlisle and Sons, the contractor for North Dormitory. *Id.* In the Narrative Statement of Significance, it is noted how the Historic District is comprised of two main elements; architect-designed houses and “the three campuses which are integral to the history of west Summit: [Macalester College, University of Saint Thomas, and the St. Paul Seminary which] pre-dated all but a handful of residences on west Summit.” *Id.* at 55.

North Dormitory is presently the fifth oldest remaining structure in the West Summit Avenue Historic District; the four oldest are houses. Thus, at over 125 years old, North Dormitory is the oldest institutional structure within the entire Historic District. The next oldest is North Dormitory's immediate neighbor to the west, St. Mary's Chapel, which was completed in 1905. Wallace Hall at Macalester College was opened in 1907. St. Paul's Church on the Hill, designed by Emmanuel Masqueray, was not built until 1913. The University's Aquinas Hall, the first with a Collegiate Gothic style, was not built until 1931. North Dormitory, St. Mary's Chapel, and Aquinas Hall were each found to be contributing structures to the National Register historic designation, as they “were constructed in the period of significance” and “contribute to the streetscape”. National Register Form at 64.

Charlene Roise stated in her Assessment: “The local heritage preservation commission, which reviews applications for building and demolition permits in the historic district, resists proposals to demolish or substantially modify contributing properties.” Roise at 2. “In addition, National Register properties are covered by the Minnesota Environmental Rights Act, so any interested party can initiate a lawsuit to protect a threatened historic property under the act.” *Id.* at 4.

**The University has Plans to Demolish All of Cass Gilbert's Seminary Buildings.**

In October 2003, the University's Board of Trustees adopted a set of Campus Plan Studies prepared by Richard Dober, a campus planning consultant. The Dober Study noted how "UST anchors the west end of St. Paul's Summit Avenue, a prestigious 19<sup>th</sup> century boulevard connecting the landscaped Mississippi River frontage with the State Capitol and Roman Catholic Cathedral several miles to the east." Dober at 6. In describing the South Campus, the Dober Study stated: "Of special interest are the genesis, current use, and future of three structures designed by Cass Gilbert as part of the Seminary's original master plan and now assigned to University use. Grace and Cretin halls are dormitories. Loras Hall is a multi-function administration building." *Id.* at 8.

As a part of its concurrent 2003 campus expansion project, the University submitted to the City of Saint Paul its "Anticipated Growth and Development Statement," dated March 5, 2004. The University reported to the Saint Paul Planning Commission that it intended to replace some of its older residence halls including "Cretin and Grace on the South Campus." Illustrative drawings from the Campus Plan Studies show new dormitories in the locations where Cretin and Grace now stand. Cretin Hall is labelled as "scheduled for demolition." The University noted: "construction of the South Campus halls could occur before 2009." The Plan studies show North Dormitory remaining in place, surrounded by its landscaped grounds.

In November 2016, the University's Board of Trustees approved a new ten-year Campus Master Plan, which it developed with the campus planning firm of Hastings + Chivetta. In a contemporary Press Release, the University explained that the Master Plan's future projects included "a third science and engineering building on the south campus, an arts building on Summit Avenue west of McNeely Hall (Opus College of Business), an expansion of the Chapel of St. Thomas Aquinas, four new residential buildings and additional parking spaces." The Press Release highlighted: "In his presentation to the board, Chris Chivetta, president of Hastings + Chivetta, said he was pleased the plan would allow St. Thomas to construct another science and engineering building while retaining Loras Hall by moving it 100 feet to the west. Constructed in 1894, Loras is the oldest building on campus and is in the West Summit Avenue Historic District."

The 2016 Master Plan identified the anticipated size of the new Science and Engineering Building to be 137,000 square feet (the University is now proposing a smaller building of 120,000 square feet). New parking spaces are to be added to the Anderson Parking Facility to compensate for the loss of parking from the elimination of the surface parking lot identified as the site for the new Science and Engineering Building. The Plan also proposed eliminating residential uses of part of Murray-Herrick Hall and the two University-owned apartment buildings at 2171 and 2175 Grand Avenue. The Master Plan proposes that those facilities would be renovated and repurposed to create 34,000 square feet of additional administrative space, i.e. office space.

It is in the context of the 2016 Master Plan that Charlene Roise prepared her Assessment which is dated January 26, 2017. The Executive Summary of the Assessment begins by referencing the University's "ten-year master plan." The Roise Report states that its focus is on two topics: (1) evaluating the historical significance of properties owned by St. Thomas on Summit Avenue and (2) to reevaluate the St. Paul Seminary Historic District, for which a nomination was prepared in 1984, but it was never adopted by the City of Saint Paul or listed in the National Register of Historic Places.

In evaluating the historical significance of North Dormitory, the Roise Report repeatedly refers to its historic and architectural significance, and notes that both North Dormitory and St. Mary's Chapel are already protected resources and are designated as "contributing structures" in the West Summit Avenue Historic District. The Report's conclusions state that by 2017, demolitions of the Rectory, Classrooms, and Administration Buildings, and the intrusion of acres of surface parking lots, had "compromised the integrity of the St. Paul Seminary Historic District." This conclusion is not remarkable, given the University's previously stated intention to demolish both Cretin and Grace Halls. But, that is as far as the Roise Report goes. It is inappropriate for the University to now attempt to use the Roise Report to support the demolition of North Dormitory, a purpose completely at odds with the text of the Assessment and the reasons why the Roise Report was prepared. The HPC should conclude, instead, that the Roise Report supports and amplifies the many reasons why it is appropriate to conclude that North Dormitory has historical, architectural, social, and contextual merit, and should not be demolished.

Last year, on June 7, 2019, the University submitted a Site Plan Review Application to the City of Saint Paul for a project which was described as "New permanent parking lot west of Loras Hall." The accompanying "Loras Hall Demo Plan" depicted the removal of all of the existing trees and lawn between St. Mary's Chapel and Loras Hall, and replacing the green space with a 59-stall bituminous parking lot. The Estimated Construction Start was stated as August 1, 2019. The University subsequently withdrew the Application. Curiously, the site for the proposed "New permanent parking lot" is the same site as had been identified by the 2016 Master Plan as the location to which North Dormitory was to be moved.

**Demolition of North Dormitory is Contrary to and Would Violate the Minnesota Environmental Rights Act.**

The Minnesota Environmental Rights Act proclaims that "each person is entitled by right to the protection, preservation, and enhancement of ... historical resources." See Minnesota Statutes Section 116B.01 and 02, Subd. 4. The Legislature has found that it is in the public interest to protect historical resources from "impairment or destruction." *Id.* The State law applies whether the building is publicly owned or whether it is privately owned. As noted by Charlene Roise, under this law "any interested party can initiate a lawsuit to protect a threatened historic property."

In considering the rights of the public in preserving historic resources, several questions are asked. First, is the structure a historic resource? Here, there is no question. North Dormitory "is considered a historic property for purposes of the Minnesota Historic Sites Act." November 6, 2020 letter from the University to the HPC at 5. In community meetings, the University's representatives have acknowledged North Dormitory's historical status. By its designation as a "contributing structure" in both the Saint Paul and National Register Historic Districts, North Dormitory is a "historical resource" under MERA.

The second question asked is whether the conduct of the building's owner is likely to cause the "impairment or destruction" of the historical resource. Minn. Stat. § 116B.04(b). The demolition of North Dormitory would unquestionably cause its "impairment or destruction."

Finally, the owner of the historic resource may "show, a way of an affirmative defense, that there is no feasible and prudent alternative and the conduct at issue is consistent with and

reasonably required for promotion of public health, safety, and welfare in light of the state's paramount concern for the protection of its [historic resources] from pollution, impairment, or destruction. Economic considerations alone shall not constitute a defense hereunder." Minn. Stat. § 116B.04(b). In interpreting this statute, the Minnesota Judiciary has focused on the Legislature's "paramount concern" for protecting the State's historic resources. *See State By Archabal v County of Hennepin*, 495 N.W.2d 416 (Minn. 1993). Just three months ago, the Minnesota Court of Appeals considered the case of the historic Pastoret Terrace building in Duluth and held that the trial court was wrong to issue a demolition permit, even though there had been a fire in the building and it was uninhabitable. *See Ringsred v. Duluth EDA*, No. A19-2031 (Minn. Ct. App., Aug. 31, 2020). So, that's the legal side of the historic preservation argument.

In this particular instance, the University has already acknowledged that it can build its proposed four story, 120,000 square foot STEAM Building entirely on the surface parking lot to the east of North Dormitory: see "South Campus Master Plan – Loras Remains Option." The University asserts that its "preferred" alternative is to have the "front door" of the new building facing Summit Avenue. "South Campus Master Plan – Loras Removed Option (Preferred). Thus, the University's assertion in its November 6, 2020 letter to the HPC, that it "strongly believes that its preferred option requires the removal of Loras Hall" is neither compelling nor with any legal impact. The University's preference simply does not justify destruction of a "historical resource."

In the University's November 6 letter, it also asserts" "[T]he economic value or usefulness of [North Dormitory] as it exists now, even as modified or altered, cannot compete with the economic value or usefulness of the proposed structure that will replace the present building. The University also argues that it does not want to spend any money in renovating North Dormitory. This argument also fails in light of the Legislature's specific rejection of "[e]conomic considerations alone" as allowing destruction of a protected historic resource.

The University's other arguments also are overstated. Just to the south of the location for the proposed STEAM building are acres of surface parking lots which can be used for future expansion of related University science and engineering programs.

North Dormitory currently functions as office space. The University's 2016 Master Plan calls for the conversion of existing residential spaces in other campus locations to office uses. Instead, the proposed office space needs identified in the 2016 Master Plan could be housed in North Dormitory. Or, North Dormitory could be reconverted to its original use as student housing. The point here is not to argue reuse possibilities, but simply to note that there are potentially viable reuses of North Dormitory which could meet the University's stated needs.

**The Heritage Preservation Commission Should Deny the University's Request to Demolish North Dormitory.**

Saint Paul and its citizens pride themselves on living in a Historic City. We oftentimes talk about context and historic buildings. It's important to keep in mind that as one comes east from the Mississippi River along Summit Avenue, you first come up a landscaped hill, then you see St. Mary's Chapel, and then blocking the view of the existing Engineering and Science Buildings, there's North Dormitory. So, North Dormitory is important, not only as a historic



Mr. George Gause

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building itself, but also for the way in which it helps provide historic context for St. Mary's Chapel and the West Summit Avenue National Register Historic District.

North Dormitory showcases a different type of architecture than the newer St. Thomas buildings on Summit Avenue and what the University will build in the future, assuming yet another Collegiate Gothic building is constructed on the surface parking lot to the east of North Dormitory. So, North Dormitory is important in its architectural context. I certainly hope that the University does not spend millions of dollars moving Loras Hall. I would prefer that Loras Hall stay where it is and that the

University provide improved landscaping, both to the west and to the south of North Dormitory. There are existing grassy areas there with large trees that could be a very fine and positive landscaped part of the South Campus. North Dormitory is also important as the only one of the six original Cass Gilbert structures to be historically designated. Given its Summit Avenue location, it is the building best suited for preservation.

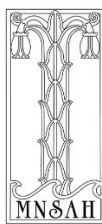
To summarize: the preservation of North Dormitory is important because of the people with whom it is associated; Archbishop John Ireland, James J. Hill, and Cass Gilbert. Cass Gilbert earned the commission to build the Minnesota State Capitol the year after he finished with the Seminary campus project. Preservation of North Dormitory is important for the building itself: its Renaissance Revival or Northern Italian Revival architectural style is unique and distinguishing on Summit Avenue. North Dormitory is a contributing structure to both the local and national historic districts. It provides context to St. Mary's Chapel, to the slope and the ground going toward Mississippi River Boulevard, and to Summit Avenue's landscaped setting. North Dormitory is a community treasure, to be cherished, which is why you should deny the requested demolition permit.

Very truly yours,

*/s/ Marc J Manderscheid*

Marc J Manderscheid

cc: Historic Saint Paul  
Ramsey County Historical Society  
Rethos  
Summit Avenue Residential Preservation Association  
Cass Gilbert Society



Minnesota Chapter of the Society of Architectural Historians  
105 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue South Suite 485  
Minneapolis, MN 55401

November 27, 2020

George Gause  
Heritage Preservation Supervisor  
Planning and Economic Development  
15 Kellogg Boulevard West  
St. Paul, MN 55102

Dear Mr. Gause:

The Minnesota Chapter of the Society of Architectural Historians submits the following comments on the proposed demolition of Loras Hall at the University of St. Thomas.

Loras Hall was one of six buildings constructed in 1894 on the then-new campus of the St. Paul Seminary. All six were designed by Cass Gilbert; three remain. Loras Hall is in a section of the campus adjacent to Summit Avenue and is included within the West Summit Avenue Historic District.

This historic district extends 2.5 miles from Lexington Avenue to the Mississippi River, and is comprised of a landscaped parkway lined by residences, schools, and churches. Noted landscape architect Horace Cleveland provided inspiration for the parkway, which was installed in the 1880s, and the city later established restrictions on construction in adjacent areas. The result is a highly cohesive early 20<sup>th</sup> century residential corridor.

As a contributing element of the West Summit Avenue District, Loras Hall merits preservation.

- It is one of the earliest buildings on the westernmost stretch of Summit Avenue, dating from the period when the parkway was built, and the Seminary and St. Thomas campuses were being established. This area of the city was largely undeveloped. The connection between the parkway as a well-designed transportation corridor and the three adjoining educational campuses (including Macalester) is an important part of the story of the district.

Mr. George Gause  
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- Loras Hall and the other two extant original buildings of the St. Paul Seminary illustrate aspects of the early career of noted architect Cass Gilbert. The contrast between their minimalism and Gilbert's later work provides insight into his evolving approach to design and his client relationships.

We urge thoughtful consideration for continuing uses of Loras Hall. St. Thomas might consider consulting with specialists in the architecture community. For example, the American Institute of Architects-Minnesota (AIA-MN) sponsors the Minnesota Design Team, which provides assistance with design issues. Such a team might be able to assist St. Thomas in formulating options as they discuss current as well as long-range plans that impact the former St. Paul Seminary site, and discuss how St. Thomas might better utilize Loras Hall to meet its needs.

Sincerely,

Rolf T. Anderson  
President

# CASS GILBERT SOCIETY

P.O. BOX 4066 ST. PAUL, MN 55104

Mr. George Gause  
Heritage Preservation Supervisor  
City of St. Paul  
St. Paul Heritage Preservation Commission  
25 West 4<sup>th</sup> Street, Suite 1400  
St. Paul, Minnesota 55102

November 5, 2020

Re: University of St. Thomas  
Loras Hall Demolition  
2115 Summit Avenue West  
St. Paul, Minnesota 55105

Dear Mr. Gause:

The mission of the Cass Gilbert Society is to preserve and enhance the nation's cultural heritage through advancing scholarship and appreciation of Cass Gilbert's contribution to American architecture.

As such, the Cass Gilbert Society believes that this goal is ideally achieved through the preservation of Cass Gilbert designed buildings.

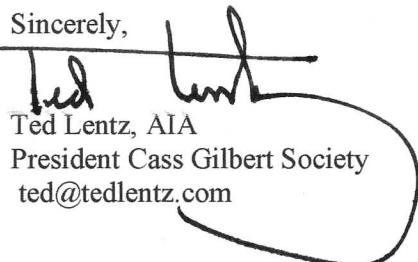
Consequently, the Society is opposed to the proposed demolition of Loras Hall, a contributing building in the Summit Avenue West Heritage Preservation District and the Summit Avenue West National Register Historic District. The University of St. Thomas states its intention to replace Loras Hall with a new academic building currently titled the "STEAM Building."

In 1891, Cass Gilbert was commissioned by railroad magnate James J. Hill to develop plans for a new Saint Paul Seminary campus, located on 40 acres of land donated by Archbishop John Ireland at the west edge of St. Paul, south of Summit Avenue. Saint Paul Seminary and its buildings, including Loras Hall, are an underappreciated part of Gilbert's career. Constructed between 1892 and 1894, the Saint Paul Seminary marks the first of Gilbert's educational complexes; it was his first project that involved several buildings on a site with an incorporated landscape plan. This work serves as a precursor to his later highly regarded educational and institutional work.

Three of the six original Saint Paul Seminary buildings -- Loras Hall and Cretin Hall (originally the North and South Dormitories) and the Services Building (originally the Gymnasium and Power House) -- survive as manifestations of Gilbert's original campus plan. All three retain a high integrity of form and materials, displaying Gilbert's mastery of design as well as Hill's insistence on structural excellence. While Loras Hall has been converted to office and meeting space, its character and significance remain.

The Cass Gilbert Society urges the Heritage Preservation Commission to deny the application for a demolition permit for Loras Hall and encourages the Commission to work with the University of Saint Thomas to develop alternate uses for Loras Hall that would be compatible with the proposed new building.

Sincerely,



Ted Lentz, AIA  
President Cass Gilbert Society  
ted@tedlantz.com



November 24, 2020

Mr. George Gause  
Heritage Preservation Supervisor City of Saint Paul  
Heritage Preservation Commission  
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[George.gause@stpaul.gov](mailto:George.gause@stpaul.gov)

Re: Opposition to Demolition Permit Application filed by the University of St. Thomas concerning North Dormitory (Loras Hall), 2260 Summit Avenue, Saint Paul, MN.

Dear Mr. Gause and the Saint Paul Heritage Preservation Commission:

The Summit Avenue Residential Preservation Association (SARPA) is dedicated to the preservation of the historic, residential, and the urban park character of Saint Paul's historic Summit Avenue. The SARPA board of directors on November 2, 2020 approved the following statement in **Opposition to the Demolition permit application filed by the University of St. Thomas for the North Dormitory (Loras Hall) at 2260 Summit Ave., St Paul.**

**SARPA opposes the demolition permit requested by the University of St. Thomas for the North Dormitory/Loras Hall at 2260 Summit Ave., St. Paul.**

The reasons for SARPA's opposition are as follows.

1. The **North Dormitory/Loras Hall was identified as a "contributing structure"** in the West Summit Avenue Historical District with the period of significance identified as 1885 to 1938. The North Dormitory/Loras Hall was completed in 1895. The noted architects in this district included Cass Gilbert, the architect and designer of the North Dormitory/ Loras Hall. According to [the application](#) for the West Summit Avenue National Register of Historic Places, "*In cooperation with Bishop Ireland, James J. Hill gave money to erect the first six buildings on the Seminary campus. Three of these structures still survive: North Residence (Loras Hall), South Residence (Cretin Hall), and the Gymnasium (Heating Plant) — all designed by Cass Gilbert.*" [https://npgallery.nps.gov/NRHP/GetAsset/NRHP/93000332\\_text](https://npgallery.nps.gov/NRHP/GetAsset/NRHP/93000332_text) Two Cass Gilbert designed buildings form the bookends of St. Paul's historic Summit Avenue with the Minnesota State Capitol building on the east end of Summit and the North Dormitory/Loras Hall on the west end of Summit Avenue. As a "contributing structure", the North Dormitory/Loras Hall should not be demolished because of its historical significance.

2. **There are other options for placement of the proposed University of St. Thomas Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Math (STEAM) building that are possible without demolition or re-location of the North Dormitory/Loras Hall building.** The University of St. Thomas (UST) staff and faculty are to be commended for their fundraising and initial planning for the proposed STEAM building proposed for the site adjacent to the North Dormitory/ Loras Hall and for their outreach to community organizations with information about the project. SARPA supports the University of St. Thomas efforts to build a STEAM complex for the increasing number of engineering students. An additional Health building is also being proposed by the University of St. Thomas for the south campus in future years. An alternate design exists from the UST staff for placement of the proposed STEAM complex and a new Health building without demolishing or moving the North Dormitory/Loras Hall. While not preferred by UST, there may be options to integrate a portion of the North Dormitory/Loras Hall in the planned complex or leave it free standing.

For the above reasons, SARPA opposes the demolition permit as requested by the University of St. Thomas and urges the Saint Paul Heritage Preservation Commission to not grant a demolition permit for the North Dormitory/Loras Hall at 2260 Summit Ave., St Paul.

Summit Avenue Residential Preservation Association

By its Interim President /s/ Wendy Caucutt

and its Board Members /ss/ Katherine Cairns, Thomas Darling, Francis Luikart, J. Gray Quale, Harry Walsh, and Carolyn Will