

**From:** Inga Oelschlager [mailto:[inga.oelschlager@gmail.com](mailto:inga.oelschlager@gmail.com)]  
**Sent:** Monday, August 10, 2015 9:37 PM  
**To:** #CI-StPaul\_Ward3  
**Subject:** 1916 Fairmount Avenue Variance Hearing

Dear Councilmember Tolbert,

I am well aware of your strong commitment to preservation of the historic buildings in Saint Paul in general and Ward 3 in particular, I was one of many neighbors signing the petition to preserve original character of the Grandview movie theater that you championed. In light of that commitment, I am writing to ask for your support of my request for a zoning variance (BZA File #15-126189) for my property at 1916 Fairmount Avenue. The zoning variance is aimed at preserving the existing 1925 house in its original condition and was originally approved by the Board of Zoning Appeals (BZA) after extensive debate and careful consideration at its June 22 and July 6, 2015 meetings; that decision has been appealed by my neighbor Daniel Thees and is scheduled for a public hearing at the City Council meeting on September 2, 2015.

The documents relating to my variance request are extensive, including 57 pages of application materials, letters from neighbors in support of and opposed to the request, minutes of two BZA meetings, as well as detailed drawings of my proposed new home and multiple 3-dimensional studies of the character of the house and how it would fit into the existing neighborhood. I do not want to take your time reiterating all of that information, since I believe it has already been submitted to all the City Council members, but would like to briefly summarize the issues:

- I have owned the two 50-foot lots at 1916 Fairmount Avenue and have lived in the existing house for over 22 years, I have lived in the Macalester-Groveland neighborhood for over 35 years, and my family would very much like to stay in the neighborhood we all love. My husband and my 90 year old mother live with me in the home; the traditional house with bedrooms on the second floor is becoming increasingly difficult to navigate for my mother, so we need a home with a main level bedroom suite. After searching extensively but unsuccessfully over the past 12 months for another existing home in the area that would meet our needs, we have determined that our best option to stay in the neighborhood is to build a new home on the undeveloped half of the property I already own.
- The lots can be split as originally plotted without a variance (see finding 3 of BZA resolution dated July 20, 2015), but dividing the lot evenly would require removal of the original sunroom on the existing Georgian Revival house, which overlaps the dividing line by 3 feet, and would alter the character and integrity of the historic 1925 structure.

- I am requesting the variance so that I can subdivide the property and build the home we need without removing the sunroom on our existing home; the variance creates a 9 feet wide by 36 feet long jog in the lot line around the existing sunroom, complying with all the required set-backs, while still allowing me to build a highly functional home on the remaining land. After carefully considering the variance request, the BZA concluded in their July 20 resolution that “the proposed jog is a creative way to retain the sunroom and the integrity of the house”.
- The variance granted by BZA is conditional on building my proposed house, which is designed to blend into the historic block with traditional materials, articulated massing and appropriate scale. It limits the width of the new construction to 29 feet, while construction on the whole 50-foot lot could extend to 38 feet and still respect the required 6-foot side set-back. Thus, upholding the decision of the BZA will help further preserve the character of the neighborhood by limiting the frontage of new construction and enabling me to keep the historic 1925 home in its original form.

As a professional architect who deeply cares about our neighborhood, I have taken great care to design my new home in a way that would not alter the essential character of the surrounding area. In the spirit of being a considerate neighbor, my proposed plan also voluntarily steps away from both the north-east and south-east corners to preserve more open land and mitigate the perceived effect of reduced green space on Mr. Thees’ property immediately to the east.

I would greatly appreciate an opportunity to answer any additional questions you might have and to show you more information in person.

Thank you very much for your consideration,

**Inga Oelschlager**

[651 329 4261](tel:6513294261)

[inga.oelschlager@gmail.com](mailto:inga.oelschlager@gmail.com)